

PPA 500 Syllabus
Fall 2019

Master's Program in Public Policy and Administration
Master's Program in Urban Land Development

Sacramento State

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Office: 230 Sac State Downtown Center Building (3rd and S Streets)

Class Time, Location, and Dates: Wednesday, 6 - 8:30 p.m.; 108 Sac State Downtown Center Building; August 28, September 11 & 25, October 9 & 23, and November 6 & 20

Office Phone: (916) 278-6304 (campus) or (916) 278-4556 (downtown)

Office Hours: Monday, 3:30 – 5:30 p.m.; Wednesday, 4:30 – 5:30 p.m. (on evening of class), and by appointment if necessary

Textbooks:

PPA Thesis FAQs, available free on web at <https://www.csus.edu/college/social-sciences-interdisciplinary-studies/public-policy-administration/internal/documents/guide-ppa500faq.pdf>;

CSUS Guide For Thesis Format, available free on web at <https://www.csus.edu/graduate-studies/current-students/thesis-project-dissertation.html>;

A Pocket Style Manual, Diana Hacker, Bedford Books; available for purchase at [Amazon.Com](https://www.amazon.com); PPA/ULD students should have already purchased this for an earlier class;

Writing Literature Reviews: A Guide for Students of the Social and Behavioral Sciences, Jose Galvin, 4th Edition or later, Pyrczak Publishing; available for purchase at [Amazon.Com](https://www.amazon.com); PPA/ULD students should have already purchased this for an earlier class.

Policy Analysis as Problem Solving, 2019, Rachel Meltzer and Alex Schwartz, available for purchase on web at [Amazon.Com](https://www.amazon.com) (only if doing "Bardach-style" CAM analysis),

Objective:

This course provides you (as a MPPA or MSULD student with a PPA faculty primary advisor) with faculty and peer guidance in preparation of material to satisfy the master's thesis requirement. This

includes clarification of general program expectations and appropriate deadlines, support in completion of your thesis, and provision of basic support in a structured environment of feedback. The goal of this culminating experience course is to assist PPA/ULD master's students in the completion of a minimum of two polished (defined as involving at least two iterations of submitting a draft to advisors and responding to comments) chapters of their required thesis, and at least a draft of a third chapter by **December 16, 2019**. This earns the assigned grade of "reasonable progress" (RP) so that you complete it the following semester under "continuous enrollment".

If you are confident that you can complete your thesis this semester by December 6 (i.e., you have two complete chapters done before starting PPA 500 and a good grasp of your methodology), then you should make plans for thesis format review at the Office of Graduate Studies through <https://www.csus.edu/graduate-studies/>. If you will not finish this semester, then this appointment is unnecessary and should subsequently be made in the semester you will finish.

Format of Course and Expectations for Students:

I have structured this course in a two-hour block that meets every two weeks. **A necessary, but not sufficient requirement to receive a reasonable progress grade in PPA 500 is your attendance at every class (I will take attendance) and on-time completion of the products you list on your personal timeline/schedule.** My goal in doing this is to put you in the mind set of achieving significance advancement on your thesis or completing it all together. This is done through the establishment of a schedule unique to you with specific products to complete for the every-two-week class meetings. Though this is subject to discussion and consensus on the first night we meet, I envision every meeting to follow a format like:

6:00 to 6:30 p.m.: Announcements from me and questions/discussion from you that would benefit all.

6:30 to 7:30 p.m.: Personal writing time and individual check-in with me regarding set goal achieved.

7:30 to 8:30 p.m.: Peer editing of written document with me available to answer questions/concerns.

Prerequisites:

To enroll in PPA 500, you must have completed all but one of your core courses in the Public Policy and Administration Program (PPA 200, 205, 207, 210, 220A, 220B, 230, 240A, 240B) plus one elective, with at least a B in each course and an average grade of B or better in all. (Or the equivalent for a MSULD student). Accordingly, students cannot enroll in PPA 500 until their last semester of course work and with no more than two other courses along with PPA 500. It is also necessary to have advanced to candidacy before enrolling in PPA 500. Only the PPA Chairperson can modify these restrictions (except the advancement to candidacy mandate, which is a University requirement), and this will only occur in exceptional circumstances.

Primary and Secondary Advisors:

In the month before starting PPA 500 (July 28 to August 28), if you have not already, you must develop a thesis question, produced a prospectus on expected content of thesis (see Appendix I and II below), chose a student research partner also enrolled in PPA 500, and secure a primary advisor who has agreed to supervise and assist in the completion of their thesis based upon your thesis question and prospectus.

The PPA Department intends to have primary advisor roles divided up equally among PPA professors. Thus, it is essential that you secure the permission of your desired primary advisor as early as possible. If a primary advisor already has their share of thesis supervision, they will suggest another PPA professor that you should contact. **If you have not already, secure your PPA primary thesis advisor now!** You may choose your primary advisor from Professors Cabaldon, Lascher, McClellan, Venezia, or Wassmer. Jez is not available due to being on academic leave for 2018-19 academic year.

You will also need a secondary thesis advisor, but I suggest waiting to secure that individual after you have completed a written prospectus of your intended thesis that has been approved by your primary thesis advisor. Your secondary advisor comes from the same group of PPA primary advisors, or part-time PPA Instructors, or other part and full-time professors and instructors at Sacramento State. In some cases, you may work with retired PPA faculty. Preferences about reading/comment turn-around time differ for all thesis advisors, and different pairs of primary and secondary readers work differently. Please look over this document for an explanation of the secondary thesis advisor's role (https://www.csus.edu/ppa/documents/thesis_forms/PPAsecondreaderguidelines.pdf). Some secondary advisors like to see each stage of writing, others prefer to see a complete draft. Check first with your primary advisor as to how they would like the editing process to occur regarding them and your secondary reader. Though remember that both your primary and secondary advisors must sign off on your final product. It is essential that they be both be "kept in the loop" throughout the semester.

Research Partner:

Before the first meeting of PPA 500, you should pair with another PPA student intending to enroll in PPA 500 in the same semester. This person will serve as your research partner in a quest to finish the thesis. This partner can serve as a sounding board, confidant, and a third set of eyes to read your drafts. This is a reciprocal relationship where your help gains the help of another. The last hour (or more) of each meeting is devoted to your research partner reading a written portion of your work and offering comments

Assignments and Grading:

There are only two grades possible for this class: Reasonable Progress (RP) or No Credit (NC). An Incomplete, under any circumstances, cannot be assigned. As noted above, to receive the RP you must attend every scheduled class session and complete the products designated in the personal schedule we finalize at the first meeting. Once this necessary condition satisfied, I will ask your primary advisor if they are satisfied with your minimum of two completed chapters and draft of a third. If they are, then you have met the sufficient condition for a RP.

A grade of Reasonable Progress (RP) means that you either finished your thesis this semester or are capable of finishing in the next semester. When you complete your thesis, and turn it into the Sac State Graduate Studies Office, the RP grade converts to a Credit on your transcript for PPA 500. If you do not receive a passing grade in 500, you may take it one more time. If you do not pass the course a second time, you receive a dismissal from the University and must reapply to the MPPA or MSULD to finish. Given the constraints on admissions, this would require you to compete directly with incoming students for a seat. We will not look favorably on these petitions. Please expect to finish the thesis the semester you take PPA 500, or at the latest, the semester after.

You will have three semesters to complete your thesis after receiving a reasonable progress in PPA

500. In each of these semesters you must pay continuing enrollment fees. If you do not complete your thesis after the end of this third semester of continuing enrollment, you will need to reenroll in PPA 500 in the semester immediately after that. If you do not, you will be disenrolled from the university.

Schedule:

By August 21 (prior to first meeting on August 28), for those not previously working on Chapters 1 through 3:

- (1) send completed electronic copy of "PPA 500: Thesis Question and Primary Advisor Name" (given below in Appendix I) to rwassme@csus.edu and your primary advisor;
- (2) send electronic copy of prospectus/memo defining your problem and explaining why it is important, and the general scope of issue (see Appendix II for questions to consider when completing this) to your primary advisor.

By August 21 (prior to first meeting on August 28), for those previously working on Chapters 1 through 3:

- (3) send approved Chapters 1 and 2, and draft of Chapter 3, to your primary advisor.

First Meeting on August 28, 2019

Assignment Due: Bring a paper draft of a schedule of products that you will complete for each of the meetings. Below each product, offer dates on when preliminary draft delivered to primary advisor and when they will return to you to get the required product in at class time.

I offer two examples below of what this could look like below; Schedule Example One for those only seeking to complete the first two chapters and a draft of a third chapter, and Schedule Example Two for those already having this done and wanting to finish the entire thesis by early December.

Schedule Example One: RP through Three Chapter Completion

<u>Meeting Number and Date</u>	<u>Product Completed</u>
(1) August 28	Copy of prospectus/memo defining your problem and explaining why it is important, and the general scope of issue
(2) September 11	Outline of complete Chapter 1 (Introduction) and first five pages written Deliver draft to Wassmer September 4 Wassmer returns with comments by September 7
(3) September 25	Chapter 1 (Introduction) in approved primary advisor form Deliver draft to Wassmer September 18 Wassmer returns with comments by September 21
(4) October 9	Outline of complete Chapter 2 (Literature Review), first five pages written, and complete reference list in typed APA form Deliver draft to Wassmer October 2

	Wassmer returns with comments by October 5
(5) October 23	Chapter 2 (Introduction) in approved primary advisor form Deliver draft to Wassmer October 16 Wassmer returns with comments by October 19
(6) November 6	Outline of complete Chapter 3 (Methodology) and first five pages written Deliver draft to Wassmer October 30 Wassmer returns with comments by November 2
(7) November 20	Draft of complete Chapter 3 (Methodology) Deliver draft to Wassmer November 13 Wassmer returns with comments by November 16

Schedule Example Two: RP through Thesis Completion

<u>Meeting Number and Date</u>	<u>Product Completed</u>
(1) August 28	Complete drafts of Chapters 1 and 2 approved by primary advisor, and draft of Chapter 3
(2) September 11	Chapter 3 (Methodology) Deliver draft to Wassmer September 4 Wassmer returns with comments by September 7
(3) September 25	Outline of complete Chapter 4 (Findings) and first five pages written Deliver draft to Wassmer September 18 Wassmer returns with comments by September 21
(4) October 9	Chapter 4 (Findings) in approved primary advisor form Deliver draft to Wassmer October 2 Wassmer returns with comments by October 5
(5) October 23	Outline of complete Chapter 5 (Conclusion), first five pages written, and complete reference list in typed APA form Deliver draft to Wassmer October 16 Wassmer returns with comments by October 19
(6) November 6	Chapter 5 (Conclusion) in approved primary advisor form Deliver draft to Wassmer October 30 Wassmer returns with comments by November 2
(7) November 20	Complete thesis done Deliver draft to Wassmer November 13 Wassmer returns with comments by November 16

These examples give you an idea as to what I am looking for you to bring in paper form the first night we meet. You should try to compose this with the advise of your primary advisor and add in the date that you will get a draft to your primary advisor for comment, and the date they will get the comments back to you so you can satisfy the product goal. This depends on the expected turn-around time that is unique to each advise. I offer some dates above that fits my personal style in doing this. Check with your advisor for their expected time needed.

Meetings 2 through 7

Assignment Due: Based upon products listed in the specific schedule you will finalize after first meeting and return to me by September 4.

Appendix I: Thesis Research Question and Primary Advisor Names

Student Name: _____

One-Sentence Thesis Research Question (Use the format suggested by Bardach in his Step One of the *Eightfold Path*):

Primary Advisor Name: _____

Student Thesis Partner Name: _____

Appendix II: Prospectus Requirements

Use these questions to write a narrative to (a) answer each question and (b) begin the process of integrating the concepts you have learned throughout the PPA program into a coherent approach to writing the thesis. The purpose of these questions is to start/continue conversations with faculty members to help you find a first reader, and to help you think about a second reader who might fill in certain knowledge and skills the first reader might not have, and to make sure that you are on track to complete a high-quality thesis. You might want to write out answers to questions I through III and then talk with your advisor before completing the entire narrative.

Your advisor(s) might ask you to revise your answers to these questions multiple times to help you prepare for PPA 500. The intent of this part of the process is to make sure that you are conceptualizing the thesis process appropriately. One component of writing a thesis is having an over-arching framework that drives the structure necessary to provide coherence across all the chapters. Feel free to read through theses in PPA's thesis bank to help you understand the expectations <https://www.csus.edu/college/social-sciences-interdisciplinary-studies/public-policy-administration/thesis-project-bank.html#ppa-thesis/project-bank>. You will notice quite a bit of variation across theses. The questions to address are as follows:

- I. What is (are) your main research question(s)? What do you want to know? This can be a surprisingly difficult part of the process and framing a good question is critically important because it drives the rest of the process. Go back to approaches from PPA 200, 205, and 220A and re-read the information presented about research questions.
- II. Who is your ideal audience?
- III. Why do you think this topic is important (for policy, practice, etc.)? What is the theoretical justification for government to get involved if tackling a policy issue for your thesis (think Munger's Triangle).
- IV. Do you have any hunches about what you might find out? If so, what is the evidence that supports your current assumptions? (It is ok if you do not have any hunches right now.)
- V. What kinds of variables, issues, or criteria will you need to analyze/discuss to answer your research question(s)? Why are those the most important ones?
- VI. What kinds of literature will you plan to read to prepare to write your thesis? List 3-5 examples of articles or books you will read and include a summary of how they will provide you with the information you need to describe the importance of your variables, issues, or criteria (this information will inform your introductory chapter). Some topics/questions are extensively researched and, therefore, you will be adding to a body of existing knowledge. In other cases, you may need to think about parallel issues or broader concepts to understand how to frame your question. ***These variables, issues, or criteria are the components that will help you create a framework that will drive the structure of your thesis.***

VII. What are your initial thoughts about how you will gather/find and analyze data/information to answer your question(s). In other words, what kind of methodology(ies) are you planning to use? In your answer, clearly discuss how you will operationalize/measure your variables, issues, or criteria discussed in IV above. Make sure your proposed methodology(ies) are appropriate for your research question. For example, if you want to investigate *what* relationships are between certain factors, you will likely use quantitative methods. If you want to look at *why* or *how* certain things are happening, you will likely want to use qualitative methods. If you want to do all the above, you will probably want to use mixed methods. Your research question will drive your choice of methodology(ies), not the reverse.

Where will your data come from? Does it exist already? Can you get permission to access and use them? Do you have to gather data on your own? Will gathering data require human subjects review? If you must gather data on your own, how will you do so (surveys, interviews, what will be your sample...)?

VIII. Discuss your initial thoughts about the kinds of caveats or limitations you will need to anticipate, given the sampling/measurement choices you are planning to make. If you need help understanding this question, please re-read the discussions about sampling/measurement limitations in *Approaches* (from PPA 205). This is an area that will evolve as you do your research, so you do not need to anticipate everything now.

Appendix III: Suggested Five Chapter Outline for Traditional PPA Thesis

Below is one way to think about the organization of master's thesis in a traditional five-chapter format. You should work out the specific format of your thesis with your principal advisor. Ten to 12 pages would be the suggested lengths for each section.

Chapter 1: Introduction

What is the question you are investigating? In theory and application, why is this question important? Relate the topic to the public policy and/or administrative material you have learned in this program, cite general interest publications that raise the importance of this topic. Describe how the rest of your thesis/project will flow.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

What do we know about this issue? Review a select sample of academic literature, existing reports, and/or policy/administrative history of this issue. Reference the relevant material learned in PPA Program. Conclude with a summary of what gaps in our understanding/knowledge of the topic your research will fill. Identify the specific variables involved in your study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

What is the method you will use to gather the facts to answer your research question? Include data collection and data analysis methods. Be specific and detailed.

Chapter 4: Results

Present your findings with an analysis. Save the major findings and conclusions for Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Implications

Summarize what you have done in each of the previous chapters and then draw conclusions. What does your analysis say? What are the answers you have derived to your research questions? What surprised you? What could you not find? Offer any suggestions on how to do this differently.

Appendix IV: Suggested Outline for PPA “Project” Thesis

A project thesis can look different from a traditional thesis. Your project may have additional sections or chapters; it will depend on what your audience needs to know. You should work out the specific format of your thesis with your principal advisor. Ten to 12 pages would be the suggested lengths for each chapter.

Chapter 1: Introduction

What is this project trying to address? What is the genesis of the project? Who is the audience? What issue(s) are you investigating? Most project-oriented theses have a clear practical application, what is it? How will you be using more traditional theory and research to help inform the issue? Relate the topic to the public policy and/or administrative material you have learned in this program, cite general interest publications that raise the importance of this topic. Describe how the rest of your thesis/project will flow.

Chapter 2: What do we know and what am I adding -- a somewhat modified literature review and methodology section

What is driving the need for this project, what background information is important? What do we know about this issue? Review existing reports, and/or policy/administrative/political history of this issue. As you talk about how you are going to tackle the issue (your approach or methodology), you will likely be including some “theory” or framework. Make sure you talk about this literature as well. Reference the material exposed to in the program as appropriate. What is the method you will use to gather the facts to answer your research question? Include any data collection and data analysis methods. Be specific and detailed.

Chapter 3: Results/analysis/Your Work

Describe your work? What did you discover? Present your findings with an analysis. This should be readable! Remember to show your information/findings in multiple formats, “pictures, words, and numbers.” Make your findings a delight to read.

Chapter 4: Conclusions

Summarize what you have done in each of the previous chapters and then draw conclusions. What does your analysis say? What are the recommendations and/or implications of what you found? What surprised you? What could you not find? What else should practitioners and researchers need to do to help address this issue? Make sure you return to the big questions you raised at the beginning in your concluding write up.

Appendix V: Suggested Six Paragraph Outline for Thesis Based on CAM Analysis

Below is another way to think about the organization of master's project in a six-section format. You should work out the specific format of your thesis with your principal advisor. Ten pages would be the suggested lengths for each section.

Chapter 1: Define the Problem

- Specific problem
- Larger context and background
- Others' experiences
- Literature review

Chapter 2: Environment

- Political environment and constraints
- Legal mandates and issues
- Economic factors
- Social issues

Chapter 3: Alternatives

- Analyze causes of problem
- Define the variables inherent in alternatives
- Reduce and simplify number of alternatives

Chapter 4: Criteria

- Select and justify criteria for evaluating alternatives (e.g. cost/benefit, equity, political feasibility, accountability)
- Relative weighting of criteria
- Methodology

Chapter 5: Analysis of Alternatives

- Project outcomes of all alternatives
- Analyze outcomes in terms of criteria
- Summarize and contrast alternatives
- Confront the trade-offs

Chapter 6: Recommendation and Conclusions

- Tailor recommendation to proper audience/clients
- Long-term versus short-term issues
- Pay attention to implementation

Thoughts from recent alumni...

Helpful to:

1. Have the problem statement defined and signed off by both advisors before first night of class.
2. A completed review of literature needs to be done before first night of PPA 500.
3. Thought needs to be given to the entire research process (sampling, methodology, analysis) before PPA 500.
4. Develop a schedule of completion.
5. Update advisors frequently (about every other week) even if it is to tell them bad news.
6. Once beginning writing process, just sit down and write whatever came into my head and not worry about how it sounded, citation, etc.
7. Buy and read *Writing for Social Scientists* (available at [Amazon.Com](https://www.amazon.com)) - this for me because I was nervous about sitting down and writing.
8. Have good working relationship with advisors.
9. If you are doing a survey, start the university paperwork going right away. Do a trial run to make sure you are going to get meaningful responses to the questions.
10. Get the thesis format right from the beginning. Changing formatting midway can really mess with your text and table alignment.
11. Have person other than (and before and after) your advisors proofread your thesis for clarity and grammar.

About the thesis completion process:

1. Plan to go to the graduate studies thesis sign-off people at least twice (once with a final draft on regular paper, and once with the final draft on the pretty paper). Plan to spend a couple hours there each time.
2. Before going in for graduate studies thesis check, do use a ruler to check your margins on every page. Check the margins for the page numbers, text, and tables.
3. Coordinate availability with your advisors and the department chair so that you can get all of your signatures on time and without running around to fifty different places.