



# Master of Public Policy and Administration (PPA) California State University, Sacramento

**TO:** Graduate Students, PPA 200

**FROM:** Dr. Sara McClellan

**SUBJECT:** Welcome and Summer Course Preparation

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## *Welcome to the MPPA Department and to PPA 200!*

PPA 200 provides an introduction to the foundations of public policy and administration—to the issues and ideas that guide our understanding of public policy making and analysis, and to how public organizations implement those policies in pursuit of the public good. PPA 200 also serves as an introduction to graduate study at Sac State and in PPA.

Before we get in to the nuts and bolts of PPA 200, I'd like to share a few thoughts about the complexity and scope of PPA as both an area of academic study and applied professional work.

### PUTTING PPA AND PPA 200 IN CONTEXT

PPA represents an enormous body of theory, research, and practice. It cuts across disciplines and seeks to improve the development, implementation, and study of government policy. Ultimately, PPA aims to ensure that public services are effective, fair, and aligned with meeting the goals of the state. This broad and ambitious definition intersects with legal, economic, social, and political disciplines and encompasses countless public policy topics.

Therefore, it is safe to say that none of us will ever become expert in all things PPA. We enter this journey in different places and will apply what we learn in unique ways throughout the course of our careers. Some of you are brand new to PPA—you've arrived in this program after completing an undergraduate degree or working in the private sector. Others among you have several years of experience in a PPA-related profession. If you try to benchmark yourself against the knowledge and experience of others you will set yourself up for frustration.

In my humble experience, most of us will be more successful with our PPA study if we focus on:

- **Developing a shared PPA foundation** by learning and applying those theories, methods, practices, and tools that will serve us well across virtually all policy arenas and organizations.
- **Clarifying our interests** by identifying the policy and administration topics that interest us most and exploring PPA questions and issues that inspire us or spark our curiosity.
- **Exploring options before narrowing our focus** by expanding our exposure to different policy arenas and scholarly perspectives before we define and sharpen our own unique areas of expertise.

## PPA 200 COURSE OVERVIEW

PPA 200 will orient you to reading, thinking and writing analytically and through different disciplinary lenses. The course is designed to immerse you in both content and skills to prepare you for later course work and for your thesis. You'll need to successfully complete both PPA 200 and PPA 220A before you progress in the program. We will begin with a broad review of democratic institutions and the roles of policy making and administration, and we'll cover the State of California in some detail. We'll then progress to a project that allows you to practice examining a policy area in detail and produce oral and written reports about the topic.

Course content will generally be organized around the following topics:

- Perspectives on U.S. Public Policy and Administration
- Public Policy and Administration Theory, Strategy, and Analysis
- California Public Policy and Administration Context
- PPA Writing and Thesis Preparation

You will receive the initial course syllabus by mid-June, but this memo includes all of the information you'll need to get started with your summer prep. Please note that the syllabus will be a *working* syllabus, and I anticipate making minor modifications based on our experiences together throughout the semester. Beginning in August, you will be able to access the most recent course syllabus and additional course materials online through the Canvas system. I have attached a summer reading list to this memo so you can begin preparing for PPA 200 as soon as possible.

Since PPA 200 also serves as an introduction to the larger PPA experience, the design and schedule of this course is different than that of other PPA courses. You will need to read most of the course material over the summer to prepare for an intensive weekend at the start of the fall semester.

## PPA 200 SCHEDULE AND TIME COMMITMENT

The PPA 200 schedule includes a Fall Welcome/Orientation, an Intensive Weekend and ongoing Monday evening classes. Please put the following dates on your calendar:

- **PPA 200 Welcome/Fall Orientation:** Monday, August 31 from 6pm to 8pm (Downtown Campus, 304 S Street, Room 110)
- **Intensive PPA 200 Weekend:**  
Saturday, September 12 from 9am to 4pm; Downtown Campus (304 S Street, Training Room)  
Sunday, September 13 from 9am to 4pm; Downtown Campus (304 S Street, Training Room)
- **Ongoing PPA 200 Classes:** Monday evenings beginning September 14 from 6pm to 8:50pm (final class on November 23; Downtown Campus (304 S Street, Room 110)

This class will require you to do a significant amount of reading and writing. All of this will be manageable as long as you pace yourself, practice reading for key concepts (see my recommendations below), and complete the required summer readings and assignments before our intensive weekend in early September. I am always happy to discuss strategies for planning and managing workload!

## SUMMER PREPARATION FOR PPA 200

### ***Assigned Summer Readings:***

In preparation for our intensive weekend, obtain and read the texts included in the attached reading list. Most of the reading for PPA 200 is front-loaded so that you have a fairly significant amount of reading over the summer, and a fairly modest amount of reading throughout the semester. I recommend that you set reading goals (e.g., one major reading per week) throughout the summer and take some targeted notes about key ideas in each text. I've attached a worksheet you can use or modify to help you take reading notes.

Please come to our initial welcome session and the intensive weekend with questions about these readings—and about the PPA program.

### ***Summer Assignments:***

You will need to complete three assignments in preparation for our summer intensive weekend. Here is a brief overview of these three assignments, and you will find a more detailed description of each assignment along with due dates attached to this memo:

- Paper #1: Write a 3-page memo about a current public (governmental) problem that you are interested in; you will find an example of memo format in the Guy & Ely (2018) textbook.
- Paper #2: Write an analysis of California fiscal conditions based on class readings.
- Policy Brief Examples: Bring copies of three policy briefs you believe are particularly effective—and be prepared to discuss what you believe makes them effective.

Please arrive rested and ready to go on our first day of class! Bring your assignments, your texts and your reading notes along with plenty of questions.

I anticipate traveling overseas and may be unavailable via email between June 15 and June 30. Throughout the rest of the summer I will check email more regularly. Please feel free to reach out to me via email (sara.mcclellan@csus.edu) with any questions about our upcoming class, and I will do my best to get back to you in a timely way.

I look forward to working with you all and getting off to a strong start in the MPPA Department together!

Best,

Sara

**PPA 200 REQUIRED SUMMER READING LIST**  
(With reading instructions)

**Books to Purchase in May/June:**

- Baldassare, M. (1998). *When government fails: The Orange County bankruptcy*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Epstein, D. (2019). *Range: Why generalists triumph in a specialized world*. Penguin.
- Meltzer, R., & Schwartz, A. (2018). *Policy analysis as problem solving: A flexible and evidence-based Framework*. Routledge (also required for PPA 220A).
- League of Women Voters (2015). *Guide to California government*. Sacramento, CA. League of Women Voters of California Education Fund (provides important background for those with less California government experience).
- Guy, M. E. & Ely, T. L. (2018). *Essentials of public service: An introduction to contemporary public administration*. Irvine, CA: Melvin & Leigh, Publishers (for use in PPA 200, 240A, and 240B.)

You may access other readings required below for free via online sources.

<b>Intensive Weekend Public Policy &amp; Administration Foundations</b>	
<b>Essentials of Public Service: An Introduction to Contemporary Public Administration</b> Guy, M. E., & Ely, T. L. (2018). <i>Essentials of public service: An introduction to contemporary public administration</i> . Irvine, CA: Melvin & Leigh, Publishers.  Read only the following chapters for PPA 200, but keep this text for further reading in PPA 240A/B: Introduction Chapter 1: Running a Constitution Chapter 8: Public Economics and Policy Chapter 12: Legal Dimensions of Public Administration Chapter 13: Public Integrity Chapter 15: Public Services, Well Delivered	
<b>American Society of Public Administration (ASPA) Code of Ethics</b> Review ASPA Code of Ethics and explore the ASPA site: <a href="http://www.aspanet.org">http://www.aspanet.org</a> Click on “About ASPA” and “Code of Ethics.”	
<b>Managing for Value: Organizational Strategy in For-Profit, Nonprofit, and Governmental Organizations</b> *Download this article from Canvas when the PPA 200 site is available in August: Moore, M. H. (2000). Managing for value: Organizational strategy in for-profit, nonprofit, and governmental organizations. <i>Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly</i> , 29(1_suppl), 183-204.	
<b>Policy Analysis as Problem Solving: A Flexible and Evidence-Based Framework</b> Meltzer, R., & Schwartz, A. (2018). <i>Policy analysis as problem solving: A flexible and evidence-based framework</i> . Routledge (also required for PPA 220A).	
<b>Federalist Papers #10 and #51</b> These are short, but important—read them thoroughly! Available online at sites including Yale’s Avalon Project: <a href="http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/fed.asp">http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/fed.asp</a>	

## Intensive Weekend Public Policy & Administration in California Foundations

### Guide to California Government

League of Women Voters (2015). *Guide to California government*. Sacramento, CA. League of Women Voters of California Education Fund.

*\* I recommend simply skimming this if you already have a fairly solid background in California government; otherwise, I recommend giving it a closer read. This book will serve as a resource to you throughout your time in this program.*

### California Bankruptcy Case Readings

Read the following book and article on bankruptcy and consider how these authors make sense of the various factors they believe contributed to the bankruptcies:

Baldassare, M. (1998). *When government fails: The Orange County bankruptcy*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Rosenthal et al. (2017). Exuberance & municipal bankruptcy:

A case study of San Bernardino, Stockton & Vallejo, CA (Working Paper Series). Berkeley, CA: Goldman School of Public Policy. <https://gspp.berkeley.edu/research/working-paper-series/xuberance-municipal-bankruptcy-a-case-study-of-san-bernardino-stockton-vall>

### Cal Facts and Legislative Analyst Office (LAO) 2018 Report on State and Local Finance

You can retrieve and review this report at:

<https://lao.ca.gov/reports/2018/3905/calfacts-2018.pdf>

### Update(s) on California Fiscal Outlook (Given COVID)

*\* Please anticipate reviewing an additional report on California fiscal changes stemming from COVID (to be assigned in August)*

## Intensive Weekend Special Topic

### Range: Why Generalists Triumph in a Specialized World

Epstein, D. (2019). *Range: Why generalists triumph in a specialized world*. Penguin.

## READING STRATEGY

I admit it—the amount of reading looks daunting! Nevertheless, by developing a reading schedule and practicing efficient reading strategies, you can control the time you spend on this challenge.

### 1. *Develop a Reading Schedule:*

I recommend that you glance through all of the required readings briefly before you dive in. Figure out which readings are likely to take the most time and attention. Then, build a basic reading calendar with reading goals for each week/month leading up to our fall intensive. I suggest you tackle readings in the order in which they show up on your reading list, but begin with what you are able to access most quickly (e.g., if the Guy & Ely book is going to take several days or weeks to arrive, move on to the next available reading). Also, set aside a specific time each day to read—even if it's only 20 minutes on some days—so you form a habit.

### 2. *Be Methodical About Your Reading Process:*

You won't have time to read every word of every sentence of every paragraph in every assigned text. You'll need to read most closely for key themes which authors typically include in their introductory and closing paragraphs.

First, **scan** the material you are about to read to determine the main idea or argument. Scan the title, the table of contents, the preface, introduction and conclusion if appropriate. Get familiar with any chapter topics, sections, and sub-sections. As you scan, look for context, topic, main ideas, the author's(') perspective or bias, main arguments, etc. Think about: how does this fit with other material you've read about this topic? Next, **review guiding questions** you will use as you read and take notes (see suggestions below). Once you have confirmed your guiding questions, begin to do the reading. Read more quickly through the areas that make sense at first glance, and read more thoroughly in the areas you don't understand as well. Look closely at graphs, charts, tables, and other sources of summary information.

Set reasonable goals in terms of how much you read in one sitting. As soon as you find yourself straying mentally, stop reading! Stretch, get up and move around!

### 3. *Adopt a Consistent Format for Reading Notes:*

Pay special attention to the author's conclusions and jot down notes to answer a set of consistent questions. Consider using—or adapting—the questions on the attached "Reading Notes Worksheet" to help you move through texts more quickly and jot down your thoughts and questions. If you get used to focusing on these big ideas, you'll begin to read more efficiently over time. You'll also find that your collection of notes will help you write papers for this and other PPA courses.

## READING NOTES WORKSHEET

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Author: \_\_\_\_\_

Publication Year: \_\_\_\_\_

1. **What are the big ideas and/or findings?** What is the author arguing or writing? What is she/he most concerned about?
2. **What is the context?** When did the author write this piece? What else was going on in society, in the economy, in politics at that time?
3. **How does the author support her/his big ideas and/or findings?** What methods does the author use (e.g., surveys, analysis of existing data, comparisons, personal experience)? What are the primary observations and conclusions?
4. **What is at stake here?** Why does the author argue that these ideas or findings matter? Why do you think they matter and to whom? What are the implications for everyday people? For public administrators or policymakers? For scholars?
5. **What questions do you have after reading this?** What surprises you? What else would you want to know? What is unclear to you?



## PPA 200 REQUIRED SUMMER ASSIGNMENTS

*\* Unless you receive different instructions, assume that all papers are due to me via the Sac State Canvas online course system. You will receive access to this system a few days prior to the start of the semester.*

### PAPER #1: Due September 1

Complete this paper only after you have read all the material for our intensive weekend class.

Identify a current public (governmental) problem that you are interested in and provide a decision maker—such as a state legislator or city council member—with a three-page (not including references) memo about the issue and possible options to deal with it. You will find an example of memo format in the Guy and Ely (2018) textbook.

Be sure to tell me who your audience is. As appropriate, consider the ethical, economic, political, organizational, and policy dimensions of the issue (other dimensions are fine – those are examples); think about the readings you did over the summer and how those authors discussed these kinds of issues. Help the reader understand the complexities of the issue as well as how the issue might be understood differently by different groups of interested people. In your analysis, be careful to distinguish between fact and opinion.

Please do not ask me for additional instructions on this first assignment. The instructions are purposely a bit vague in order to mimic the kinds of assignments people often receive at work. I want to give you flexibility to determine how best to complete it.

This paper will provide me with a baseline assessment of your writing skills, and a sense of the decisions you make when synthesizing and analyzing information. I will grade your paper quickly so you will know early on in the semester if I have initial concerns about your writing. This first paper is worth 5% of your grade.

Few people do a perfect job on this; that is not the goal. Just do your best and know that this is a fairly low stakes way for me to become familiar with your thinking and writing. We will use the papers to start thinking about policy-related writing and analysis.

### PAPER #2: First draft due September 8 and final paper due September 22

Again, complete this paper only after you have read all the material for the intensive weekend.

The California city bankruptcy case readings identify several factors (or underlying conditions) that contributed to city bankruptcies. Beginning with these factors and conditions, think broadly about other California governance reading themes that may impact fiscal policy and administration. Write a paper (five pages or less) that:

1. Outlines the (bankruptcy case) lessons you believe future California administrators in other cities should take most seriously and why (based on what evidence).
2. Identifies (bankruptcy case) lessons you believe are relevant for the State of California as a whole and why (based on what evidence). Please be sensitive to the importance of transferring “lessons” from one context to another. In other words, do the lessons from a city-level experience transfer directly to the state level? Which changes must be made to transfer lessons to a different level of government? If you need background on the state’s current fiscal



condition, review the State Budget introductory pages or the Legislative Analyst's budget discussions.

You will receive instructor and/or peer feedback on your drafts and your final paper will be due September 22. This paper is worth 15% of your grade (based on your grade for the final draft, not on the first draft).

### **Policy Briefs: Due in Class on Sept. 13**

After you complete the summer readings, identify three examples of policy briefs you think are particularly effective. Bring a copy of each brief to share in class on Sept. 8 (no need to email them to me) and be prepared to discuss why you think they are effective. These briefs should be:

- no more than 5 pages in length (excluding cover pages, references, etc.);
- focused on any policy field (environmental policy, education policy, criminal justice policy...);
- designed for audiences with policy interests (e.g., policy makers, policy staff).

## SOME WRITING GUIDANCE

Thomas Jefferson once wrote to a friend, “*Had I but more time, I would have written less.*” Please make it your goal to write the best, not the most. A tightly organized, thoughtful paper of fewer pages is more successful than a lengthy paper that rambles. I value clear and lively writing, and I believe that excellent writing takes:

- Time
- Practice
- Openness to feedback
- Revision

We will work together to clarify writing expectations during our initial classes. For now, please keep the following advice in mind as you prepare your initial assignments.

### 1. **Be Intentional About Your Writing Style.**

Over time, you’ll develop your own *voice* to communicate who you are to readers. You’ll also need to adjust your style for different audiences and different situations. For example, a chatty letter to your family won’t look anything like your master’s thesis designed to please your review committee or your own provocative book review. Begin by recognizing your audience for each assignment, and work in the appropriate style. Who is your audience and what is their interest? How much can you reasonably assume your reader knows?

### 2. **Be Concise.**

Compelling writing is concise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences. Excellent writers stay away from jargon and tighten up sentences to say only what is necessary to convey a point.

### 3. **Organize Your Thoughts.**

To write clearly you must think clearly. Take the time to organize your thoughts in an outline, diagram, or other visual format. Create a coherent framework for your papers—a line of thought and a structure that defines and answers the questions posed. **Use headings and subheadings.** This helps you make sure your writing is logical and it creates a roadmap and flow for the reader. Tell the readers what you are going to say—where you will go and where you have been. It is much easier to read analytical work if you know where the author is going, and it is common to offer such direction in the very first paragraph. We will not be looking for you to write a mystery novel. Assume that your audience has much to do, limited amounts of time, and needs to understand the argument at hand quickly and accurately.

### 4. **Be Analytical, Not Editorial.**

Make statements that you can support with evidence as opposed to beliefs. Unless your explicit task is to write an editorial, you’ll need to analyze and synthesize information, using a critical lens. Use relevant literature (hopefully multiple authors) and cite solid evidence to ground your work. Make sure you’re clear on the difference between using evidence and advocating for an issue. Do a logic check: “this is a topic sentence and it is supported by the following evidence...This is the analytical tool I am using because...”

### 5. Use the APA Manuscript Format.

Follow the APA format. The MPPA faculty has adopted the APA manuscript format. You will find the recommendations in Hacker's *A Pocket Style Manual*. Please use one-inch margins, 12-point type, a readable typeface, double-spaced text, page numbers, and a cover page that follows Hacker's samples. You can also learn about APA format via the following website:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

### 6. Use Active Voice Wherever Possible.

Use the active voice. Writing is inherently political. Your writing communicates values and analytic interpretations. Assign ownership to yourself or someone else! This means, you should stay away from passive voice whenever possible.

*Example:*

Passive Voice	Active Voice
The paper will be completed.	Hector will complete the paper.
Your permit was denied.	I denied your permit.

Sometimes people think that using passive voice sounds more formal and academic, but it really makes writing convoluted, and it takes responsibility away with regard to the action in the sentence. If you can add "by zombies" at the end of your sentence, that is an indication that it is in passive voice. (e.g., "The paper will be completed...by zombies." ☺)

On a related note, PPA faculty members believe it is acceptable to write in the first person, at least to a limited extent (this means using the pronoun "I"). This is especially the case when you want to clarify your own claims and distinguish them from those of others. Thus, it is perfectly acceptable to use something like the following in a paper, "While some scholars have argued that urban sprawl leads to X and Y, I will argue that it results in Z." Using the first person pronoun often makes it easier to write in the active voice.

You can read more about passive voice online. See, for example:

- [http://www.slate.com/blogs/future\\_tense/2015/04/01/scientists\\_should\\_stop\\_writing\\_in\\_the\\_passive\\_voice.html](http://www.slate.com/blogs/future_tense/2015/04/01/scientists_should_stop_writing_in_the_passive_voice.html)
- <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/539/03/>

### 7. Use Consistent Language.

Make it easy on your readers by using consistent language. In other kinds of writing, it may be interesting to change it up a bit by substituting a synonym here and there. But, if you do that in analytical writing, you may lead the reader to think you are introducing a new concept. For example, if you are discussing "underrepresented" populations, use that term consistently once you've defined it rather than switching to "underserved," or the reader may wonder if you are introducing a slightly different concept.

### **8. Don't Conflate Feelings and Beliefs.**

Do not write that "someone feels" something when what you really mean is that someone "thinks" or "believes" something to be the case ("Students feel that there is too much homework."). Here's a NY Times Op Ed about this issue ("Stop Saying I Feel Like"):

[http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/01/opinion/sunday/stop-saying-i-feel-like.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/01/opinion/sunday/stop-saying-i-feel-like.html?_r=0).

### **9. Avoid Common Grammatical Errors.**

Avoid the basic writing errors that distract readers from the important things you want them to read. Use proper grammar, capitalization, punctuation, source citation, italics, etc. Never use contractions (e.g., "we've" for "we have") in papers for this program or in professional writing unless you are quoting someone else's use of contractions.

### **10. Edit and Edit Again.**

No one ever gets it right the first time. You'll improve your writing if you draft, wait, and rewrite your work. Organize your schedule so you can outline your paper, produce a first draft, and then let it sit for 24-48 hours before you return to rewrite it. If you produce a first draft against a tight deadline you're less likely to catch the flaws you will discover with a second look. Reconsider your structure when you return to rewrite it. Do your original headings and subheadings work now that you've written the paper? If not, move things around and do major editing. Read it again. Are you happy with it?

Always reread through your papers at least once for content and once for grammar before you turn them in. If possible, ask someone else to read your paper and provide feedback. Use MS Word to check for grammar, spacing, and spelling problems.

### **11. Give Credit Where Credit is Due and Cite Sources According to APA Style.**

Always use the APA documentation style to cite your sources when you use someone else's ideas or direct quotations (both in the body of your text and in a final reference section).

Please use a reference like Purdue University's OWL Guide to make sure you are correctly following APA style:

[https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/apa\\_style/apa\\_formatting\\_and\\_style\\_guide/general\\_format.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/general_format.html)

There is nothing wrong with borrowing someone else's ideas if the final product is your own work and you acknowledge others' contributions. Sacramento State has a strong policy against academic dishonesty, and plagiarism deprives the original author of rightful credit.

### **12. Seek Out Writing Resources and Expert Assistance.**

Consider picking up a used copy of the following books to strengthen your writing:

- Hacker, Diane. (2011). *A Pocket Style Manual*. 6<sup>th</sup> Edition. Boston, MA: Bedford Books. (any version in the past 2-3 years will be sufficient; the basics do not change.)
- Zinsser, W. (2013). *On writing well*. New York: Harper Collins.

Communicate with your professors to identify additional writing assistance available through the university or via online tutorials.