

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO
PPA 500: Public Policy and Administration Culminating Project
Spring 2025

Professor: Dr. Shane Nordyke
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Class meeting time: Wednesday
 6-8:50 p.m., Sacramento State Downtown
 Room 108

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 Sacramento State Downtown, Room 226

Email is my preferred form of contact, but feel free to text or call me as needed.

Course Description:

PPA500 represents the beginning of the end of your MPPA journey. Through a scaffolded approach, this course will help you complete your culminating project by the end of this semester. This is not a lecture-based course but there will be instruction provided on key topics specifically related to the writing and development of your culminating project. Each class session will also include in-class writing time for you to work a specific component of your culminating project. **There is no required textbook but there will be occasional required readings provided in Canvas.**

The culminating project has three goals:

1. Integrate, synthesize, and apply. Over your MPPA journey, you have studied various frameworks, concepts, and analytical lenses from public policy and management, economics, political science, research methods, and more. In this capstone, we weave these strands together and apply them to an actual policy and/or administration problem.
2. Demonstrate learning objectives. Conferral of the MPPA degree represents the achievement by a student of 19 learning objectives in three general groups: (1) critical and integrative thinking, (2) practical application, and (3) professional role. The full list is on page 8 of the Graduate Handbook (https://www.csus.edu/college/social-sciences-interdisciplinary-studies/public-policy-administration/internal/internal/documents/mppa_graduate_student_handbook_september_2025.pdf)
3. Showcase your capabilities. Demonstrating your learning is crucial for professional employers, future education, such as doctoral study or fellowships, and yourself. The products of your culminating experience are an opportunity to showcase what you can do in multiple ways and for varied audiences.

This syllabus is a living document, subject to revision as the course progresses.

Culminating Project Options

As described in the graduate handbook, there are three options for the Culminating Project. If you are enrolled in this course, you have chosen to complete option 2 or 3. General guidelines for each project type are provided on the website:

<https://www.csus.edu/college/social-sciences-interdisciplinary-studies/public-policy-administration/thesis-project-overview.html>

More specific guidance for each option will be provided throughout the course.

Style and Formatting

Your culminating project should use either APA or Chicago Style formatting. APA is more common in Public Administration; Chicago tends to be more common in Economics and Public Policy. There are numerous style guidelines available online for each. Be careful in trusting AI to properly format your citations; it often makes mistakes.

The Office of Graduate Studies provides a template for “Projects” on this page:

<https://www.csus.edu/graduate-studies/current-students/thesis-project-dissertation.html>

You are only required to use the template if you are submitting the full project to OGS for publication in the library archive. PPA does not require students to do that, instead we publish culminating projects internally and just submit the title and executive summary to OGS for publication. However, the template still provides a useful guide for style and the various sections you should include. It is more relevant for those who have chosen option 2 and even then, not all sections will be necessary.

Statement of Respect & Inclusion

This course provides an opportunity for us all to learn from each other. We must strive to affirm and value each individual’s beliefs, backgrounds, and experiences. Every member of this learning community must be treated with dignity and respect.

Land Acknowledgment

Sacramento State is proud to recognize the California Native Nations, communities, and peoples throughout the state and acknowledge the diverse Indigenous peoples connected to this territory.

Our campus operates on the traditional and ancestral homelands of the Miwok, Wintu, Maidu, Nisenan (Southern Maidu), and Patwin Native peoples.

Course Grading

Only two grades can be obtained in this class: reasonable progress (RP) or no credit (NC). Reasonable progress means one of two things (1) that you either finished all elements of this class, present your showcase, and earn your advisor's approval at the end or (2) you made substantial progress on your culminating project but did not complete it (this is most often because of an unavoidable personal situation). In the case of (1), OGS will change your grade to CR (Credit) as soon as they process all of your degree. In the case of (2) you still have not successfully completed the course, but you are permitted to take a semester of Continuous Enrollment (PPA 599) rather than having to retake PPA 500. If you do not make substantial progress on your project, or do not actively participate in the course, you have to retake this course and repay for these credits. Therefore, it is essential to work closely with me throughout the semester and attend and participate in class sessions

***Participation in the course, including receiving multiple rounds of feedback on your work is a required component of your culminating experience. A student who submits a final project at the end of the semester but does not attend class or submit work throughout the semester, will not be awarded credit for their culminating project.**

SPECIAL NEEDS RELATED TO DISABILITIES

Should you need assistance with portions of the class due to disabilities, please let me know as soon as possible. The University offers services to students with disabilities, and I would be glad to refer you to the appropriate campus unit.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

I take issues of academic honesty (including avoiding plagiarism) seriously and you should as well. If you are unfamiliar with the specifics of University policy in this area I recommend you review the appropriate section of the on-line University Policy Manual: <http://www.csus.edu/um anual/AcademicHonestyPolicyandProcedures.htm>.

The department policy on the use of AI allows each individual faculty member to decide on what appropriate use looks like. It is up to the student to know and follow the policy set forth by each faculty member and for each class. In this class, you may use AI tools for the following:

- Identifying initial sources to draw from (you should always double check that they exist and are relevant to your question).
- Provide basic spelling and grammar support for your writing. In addition, you may also ask an AI tool to review sections of your paper for writing clarity as long as you are responsible for implementing the suggestions to improve the clarity and not accepting large rewrites. You should document this use in footnotes.
- Assist in writing code for or performing data analysis as long as you are

transparent about the ways in which you used it and document such use in footnotes.

The following uses of AI are inappropriate:

- Writing initial or final drafts of whole paper sections
- Relying on AI to summarize articles without reading them or checking their accuracy.

If you are in doubt about whether a use of is appropriate, ask in advance. In all cases, you should keep track of the prompts you ask, and the responses provided by your AI tool.

CLASS SCHEDULE (subject to revisions)

All readings and assignments are to be completed BEFORE the class period for which they are scheduled.

Date	Topic	Assigned Readings and Assignments
28-Jan	Expectations for the Culminating Project	*Read the 4 Culminating Projects posted in Canvas before class. *Come to class prepared to discuss your artifact from a previous course.
4-Feb	Your Research Plan	*Brief description of analytical/theoretical approach and "Here to There" plan due at the beginning of class.
11-Feb	Expanding and revising your literature review	*GANTT chart or Roadmap due at beginning of class
18-Feb	Operationalizing theory	*Complete the tasks on your chart or roadmap
25-Feb	Managing, analyzing, and displaying your "Data"	*Complete the tasks on your chart or roadmap
4-Mar	Structure and voice, pulling back and finding continuity	*Complete the tasks on your chart or roadmap
11-Mar	Peer Review and Workshopping	*Bring as full a draft as possible for peer review and workshopping before your solo writing time.
April 1-29	Nordyke available for questions and edits	
1-Apr	*Rough First Draft Due to Nordyke	
8-Apr	Rough First Draft Returned	
15-Apr	*Final Draft Due	
22-Apr	Final Draft Returned	
6-May	Practicing Presentations	
15-May	*Final formatting finished and submitted to Nordyke	
<i>TBD</i>	Culminating Project Presentations	<i>TBD</i>

Student Services Information and Links

1. [Services to Students with Disability \(SSWD\)](#)

"Sacramento State is committed to ensuring an accessible learning environment where the course or instructional content is usable by all students and faculty. If you believe that you require disability-related academic adjustments for this class, please immediately contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSWD) to discuss eligibility. A current accommodation letter from SSWD is required before any modifications, above and beyond what is otherwise available for all other students in this class will be provided."

2. [Student Health and Counseling Services](#)

"Your physical and mental health are important to your success as a college student. Student Health and Counseling Services (SHCS) in The WELL offers medical, counseling, and wellness services to help you get and stay healthy during your time at Sac State. SHCS offers Primary Care medical services, including sexual and reproductive healthcare, transgender care, and immunizations; urgent care for acute illness, injuries, and urgent counseling needs; pharmacy for prescriptions and over-the-counter products; mental health counseling, including individual sessions, group counseling, support groups, mindfulness training, and peer counseling; athletic training for sports injury rehabilitation; wellness services, including nutrition counseling, peer-led health education, and wellness workshops, and free safer sex supplies; violence and sexual assault support services. Most services are covered by the Health Services fee and available at no additional cost."

3. [Crisis Assistance & Resource Education Support \(CARES\)](#)

"If you are experiencing challenges with food, housing, financial or other unique circumstances that are impacting your education, help is just a phone call or email away. The CARES office provides case management support for any enrolled student"

4. [Drop and Withdrawal Policy](#)

5. [Information Resources and Technology](#)

6. [Support Centers and Programs](#)

7. [Reading & Writing Center](#)