

PPA500: Culminating Experience

Instructor: Dr. Ahrum Chang (ahrum.chang@csus.edu)

Office hours: DTN 230, M & W 4:30-6 pm and by appointment

Office of Graduate Studies Workshop

Workshop Registration	Sep 8-Nov 6
Workshop Completion Deadline	Nov 13

Project Timeline

Pre-check-in (optional)	By appointment
Group Check-in	Sep 13, 5 pm
Tentative Outline Due	Sep 13-20
First Draft Due	Sep 30-Oct 3
Group Check-in	Oct 18, 5 pm
Second Draft Due for Peer Feedback	Oct 21-24
Peer Feedback Due	Nov 1
Final Draft Due	Nov 18-21
Final Draft Returned	Nov 27-28
Project Completion Deadline	Dec 2
Showcase	TBD

Course Description

This course will help you complete your culminating project by the end of the semester. The culminating project is distinct from a class term paper. It is a comprehensive work that should be **developed gradually** throughout the semester. Thus, meaningful progress in this course means tangible performance and written output, not verbal intent or stated plan. Successful students will demonstrate consistent and documented progress on their projects at every meeting.

To keep everyone on track, we will hold virtual group sessions throughout the semester. These meetings are interactive check-ins in which everyone shares their progress and provides peer feedback. These sessions aim to make your consistent progress and track the viability of your one-semester timeline; they do NOT serve as a cramming deadline. Please arrive with work thoughtfully developed over the preceding weeks/days, rather than content rushed specifically for the check-in date.

The culminating project has three goals:

- 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. We weave these strands together and apply them to a real policy and/or administrative problem.
- Demonstrate learning objectives: Conferral of the MPPA degree represents the achievement by a student of [19 learning objectives](#) in critical and integrative thinking, practical application, and professional role.
- Showcase your capabilities: Demonstrating your learning is crucial for working professionals.

Outline and Assignments

Date	What to Prepare
8/24 through 9/10	Optional Pre-Check-In Students are welcome to connect with an instructor (e.g., emails, Zoom, or in-person chat) to discuss their topic and the overview of their project before our first group check-in.
Zoom 09/13, 5pm	First Group Check-In - Please read the general guidelines of the culminating projects: https://www.csus.edu/college/social-sciences-interdisciplinary-studies/public-policy-administration/thesis-project-overview.html - Brainstorm your research question; check out the previous students' projects at the culminating bank and 1) identify their research questions and 2) how they structure their papers: https://www.csus.edu/college/social-sciences-interdisciplinary-studies/public-policy-administration/thesis-project-bank.html - Prepare a five-to-ten-minute PPT presentation addressing the following components: - Research Question: State your proposed research question in one or two sentences. If considering multiple options, evaluate the ultimate purpose of your research and target audience, and present your top two choices. - Project Type: career portfolio, report, or academic paper. - Theoretical & Analytical Approach: Specify the theoretical framework or methodology you will use to answer your research question (drawn from coursework or independent literature review). If this is difficult to define, outline your general paper structure. Note: If preparing a policy report, explain your approach for formulating policy recommendations. If you plan to conduct data analysis, identify key variables and their data sources, respectively. Please note that data should be pre-collected if you are conducting empirical research. - Artifacts: Identify any artifacts you plan to utilize and briefly explain how each will be integrated into your project. - Next Step: Identify what specific components will be completed (based on your writing pace/style/personal or work schedule) by the first draft deadline. (e.g., complete the first draft of the introduction and start the literature review by the first deadline) - Questions & Roadblocks: Highlight any questions or potential roadblocks. - This is a kickoff presentation designed to establish direction, so it does not need to be perfect. Please submit your slides to Canvas before our check-in meeting.
9/13-20	Tentative Outline Submit your tentative outline (MS Word) to Canvas with milestones on it.

9/30-10/3	First Draft Submit your first draft (MS Word) to Canvas. Before submitting, feel free to use AI to double-check any typos or errors.
Zoom 10/18, 5pm	Second Group Check-In Prepare a five-min presentation that shows your progress (e.g., share your outline, your completed intro section, and any progress on literature, etc.)
10/21-24	Second Draft Submit your ongoing draft (MS Word) to Canvas by the end of Oct 18. Based on your topic and/or project type, I will email one of your peers' drafts ASAP. <i>**Those who do not make any progress by this deadline will retake 500 next year.</i>
11/1	Peer Feedback Write a half-page feedback or leave comments to your colleague's draft, focusing on suggestions for improvements, and return it to your colleague via email and cc me.
11/18-21	Final Draft - Submit your complete version of the body of text (MS Word) to Canvas. Make sure to include your executive summary (1 page or less) - Before submitting, feel free to use AI to double-check any typo/errors.
Dec 2	Completion Due Submit two separate PDF files to Canvas: 1) your final culminating paper including title page, executive summary, body of text, and reference sections, and 2) a title page and executive summary only.

PPA500 Writing & Showcase

- You can choose to write a policy/admin report, an academic paper, or a career portfolio. If you choose to write the academic paper, consult your advisor beforehand. As stated, the data sources of each variable are clearly identified, and their collection should already be done.
- Your paper includes 1) a cover page containing your title, name, and graduation year/month and 2) an executive summary. Use one-inch margins, 12-point font, and APA citations (<https://csus.libguides.com/APAstyle/home>).
- Your paper should be between 20-50 double-spaced pages, including an appendix, tables, and references. Check our culminating project bank at:
<https://www.csus.edu/college/social-sciences-interdisciplinary-studies/public-policy-administration/thesis-project-bank.html>
- At the end of the semester, prepare a ten-minute slide presentation in Project Showcase. You can see previous showcases at:
<https://www.youtube.com/@GASPPA>.

Grading

You can earn three grades in this class: Credit (CR), Reasonable Progress (RP), or No Credit (NC). CR means that you finish all elements of this class by attending group sessions and meeting the deadlines, and earn your advisor's approval at the end. RP means you made substantial progress on your culminating project but did not complete it. If you receive an RP, you have not successfully completed the course, but you are permitted to take a semester of Continuous Enrollment (PPA 599) rather than retaking PPA 500. If you do not make substantial progress on your project or do not attend group meetings, you have to retake this course.

AI Use

The department policy on AI use allows each faculty member to decide what constitutes appropriate use. It is up to the student to know and follow the policy set forth by each faculty member and for each class. In this course, students are welcome to use AI to assist with their writing, such as brainstorming ideas, proofreading, and/or checking grammar/typos, but all initial writing must be original and produced by the student. Therefore, any of the following is considered inappropriate:

- Writing a draft that includes fake or hallucinated citations/information
- Conducting a literature review without reading the articles, but relying only on AI's summaries

Remember that your culminating project is saved as a record in the University's digital repository. Since these projects represent both your professional reputation and the department's standards, the accuracy and originality of your work are important.

Student Services Information and Links

[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."

[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."

[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

[Drop and Withdrawal Policy](#)

[Information Resources and Technology](#)

[Support Centers and Programs](#)

[Reading & Writing Center](#)