Course Syllabus

PAD 6908 Action Report
Spring Semester 2012, Tuesdays, 5:30-8:15 p.m., Bellamy 243
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Office Hours for Students: Mondays 3:00-5:15 pm; Tuesdays 1:30-3:00 pm

Texts

Required:


Course Organization and Purpose

This course is for Master of Public Administration degree candidates and serves as a final semester culmination of learning in the program. As such, it fulfills the requirements of the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA). Each person is to prepare a paper relating to a significant administrative practice or problem. This is considered an essential component in the development of professional knowledge and ability in applying the study of public administration to important issues. The Action Report, therefore, should be regarded as a major applied research project akin to a Master's thesis; students should arrange their schedules accordingly. Departmental faculty may lend assistance, as appropriate, in topic identification, on procedures and methods, and for general reaction to findings. Seminar meetings will explore issues and methods related to writing the Report. Students are expected to attend scheduled sessions, participate in discussions, make presentations, and offer critiques of oral and written reports.

Schedule

Jan. 10: Introduction – Attend Class

Jan. 17: If not yet approved, submit your Problem Statement during the week so that I can review it.
Individual consultations as necessary.

Jan. 24: Individual consultations, as necessary.
Turn in Diploma request (see Velda Williams).
Jan. 31: Individual consultations, as necessary.

Feb. 7: Individual consultations, as necessary.

Feb. 14: Attend class to submit 1st draft of report.

Feb. 21: Individual consultations, as necessary. Reviews of 1st drafts will be placed in student folders

Feb. 28: Individual consultations, as necessary

Mar. 6: Spring Break – No Classes

Mar. 13: Attend class to submit 2nd draft of report.

Mar. 20: Action Report presentations to class.

Mar. 27: Remaining Action Report presentations to class.

Apr. 3: Last day to submit final report

Apr. 10: Individual consultations, as necessary

Apr. 17: Individual consultations, as necessary

Submission Requirements

All papers should be stapled in the upper left hand corner and submitted in a "two pocket" folder. In the left section, place the most recent instructor-corrected copy (earlier drafts should not be included); in the right section, the newest draft with appropriate checklist. Be sure to put your telephone number(s) and e-mail address on the front of the folder.

This class is structured to ensure progress toward course completion and relies on individual consultations and student presentations. Not meeting deadlines demonstrates inadequate planning. Please do not ask for special favors; brief extensions will be granted only on the basis of extreme, documented emergencies.

Do not expect the instructor to copyedit and proof your work. Names of proof readers and editors can be obtained from the English Department (644-4230).

The final Action Report that is submitted should be bound and include an electronic copy of the manuscript. Kinkos, Target, and similar outlets can provide binding. The electronic copy should be on CD or floppy disc.
**Action Report Standards**

The MPA Program is to "produce professionals capable of intelligent and creative analysis, communication, and action in the public sector context." The Action Report, as noted earlier, is the capstone of this educational experience. Accordingly, it provides the opportunity for students to demonstrate ability to define and diagnose decision situations, collect relevant data, perform logical analysis, develop alternatives, implement a course of action, and evaluate results; organize and communicate clearly to a variety of audiences through formats including verbal presentations, technical reports, and statistical charts, graphs, and tables (NASPAA Standards).

**Action Report Layout**

The Report should be: from 25 to 35 manuscript pages (plus appendices), professionally typed and of a quality comparable to a monograph published by university service bureaus, government agencies, legislative committees, or professional organizations.

Following the title page, letter of transmittal, table of contents, and a brief executive summary (describing the problem, the methods used in the study, alternatives considered, and the recommended action), the Report should be presented as described below.

I. **Problem Statement** (two pages in a 30-page report (not including front matter, references, and appendices))

- Concise statement of the problem or question being investigated;
- Brief discussion of issues surrounding the problem and/or proposed actions
- Explanation of why the problem or question is significant in public administration.

II. **Background and Literature Review** (about six pages)

- **Background**
  - The nature of the problem should be elaborated. How did the problem evolve? How has it changed over time?
  - What is the current status of the problem?
  - Specify the context in which the problem occurs and its timeliness for public administration.

- **Literature Review**
  - Summarize the literature. Include academic research and major reports of government agencies.
  - Describe how the present study relates to existing literature. What guidance does the literature provide? What issues remain that are pertinent to the problem under analysis?
III. Research Methodology and Evaluative Criteria (about two pages)

- Research Methodology
  - State the procedures, methods, and basic assumptions to be followed (regardless of the quantitative/qualitative character of the study); define terms, in a footnote, that are subject to multiple meaning.
  - Describe methods of collecting, analyzing and treating data, that is, the research design.

- Evaluative Criteria
  - Indicate clearly the criteria (and appropriate indicators and data sources for each) to be used in evaluating the management policy options.
  - Discuss any methodological weaknesses that might affect the reliability and validity of the findings.

IV. Policy Options (about 10-15 pages)

Present the policy options that are to be evaluated. Ensure that the options are presented in a logical, clear, and well-written manner. They should directly address the problem posed in the title of the paper. Utilize the literature referenced in Part II. Systematically employ the evaluation criteria identified in Part III.

V. Conclusion/Recommendation for Action (about two pages)

Public officials must often make decisions based upon limited information; therefore, you must develop a carefully fashioned conclusion, even though the findings may be somewhat inconclusive. Choose one of the options (or combination of options) examined in Part IV, summarize the reasons for reaching that decision (including why the other options are not adequate), and defend your selection by relating it directly to the original problem.

Optional Format

A similar, alternative format for the Report--consisting of an Introduction, Methodology, Findings, Discussion, and Options/Recommendations section--is permissible. Consult with the instructor regarding the School's file of past Action Reports.

The FSU Honor Code

Students are expected to uphold the Academic Honor Code published in the Florida State University Bulletin and the Student Handbook. The Academic Honor Code of The Florida State University requires students to (1) uphold the highest standards of academic integrity in their own work, (2) refuse to tolerate violations of academic integrity in the university community, and (3) foster a high sense of integrity and social responsibility.
Violations of the Academic Honor Code are delineated in Chapter 8 of the Faculty Handbook, as follows (8.22.1 (b)):

1. During examinations, violations of the Academic Honor Code shall include referring to information not specifically condoned by the instructor. It shall further include receiving information from a fellow student or another unauthorized source.
2. Regarding academic assignments, violations of the Academic Honor Code shall include representing another's work or any part thereof, be it published or unpublished, as one's own. It shall also include presenting or submitting any academic work in a manner that impairs the instructor's ability to assess the student's academic performance. For example, plagiarism includes failure to use quotation marks or other conventional markings around material quoted from any source.
3. Violations of the Academic Honor Code shall include obtaining, distributing, or referring to a copy of an examination which the instructor/department has not authorized to be made available for such purpose.
4. Violations of the Academic Honor Code shall include any act which impedes the ability of other students to have fair access to materials assigned or suggested by the instructor. For example, removal or destruction of library or other source materials violates the Academic Honor Code.
5. Academic dishonesty shall include tampering with another student's work or impairing in any way the instructor's ability to assess the academic performance of another student.
6. Violations of the Academic Honor Code shall include alteration of grades or any other records related to the academic performance of students. This shall also include submitting any false records in order to gain admission to the University.
7. Violations of the Academic Honor Code shall include assisting, attempting to assist, or conspiring to assist another student in committing the offenses as outlined above.
8. Violations of the Academic Honor Code shall include attempting to commit any offense as outlined above.

Students should pay special attention to paragraph 2, above. Plagiarism on any draft of the Action Report may result in a failing grade for the course.

**ADA Policy**

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should (1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; and (2) bring a letter to the professors indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the

**Grades**
Grades for the course will be based on a multidimensional evaluation of the Action Report. The criteria and the weight assigned to them are as follows:

**Conceptualization and Writing (30%)**
- Clarity, cogency of problem conceptualization
- Relevance and range of evaluative criteria
- Clarity and grammatical correctness of writing

**Research (30%)**
- Scope and organization of background and literature review
- Quality of analysis and interpretation

**Recommendations (20%)**
- Consistency in application of evaluative criteria.
- Appropriateness of conclusions and recommendations.

**Presentation (20%)**
- Organization and conciseness of presentation
- Quality of speaking

Grade equivalencies are: 100-93=A, 92-90=A-, 89-87=B+, 86-83=B, 82-80=B-, 79-77=C+, 76-73=C, 72-70=C-, 69-67=D+, 66-63=D, 62-60=D-, 59-0=F. In the computation of final grades, all decimals from .5 and above are rounded up, and all below this are rounded down.