



**School of Public &  
International Affairs**  
**UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA**

**Course Syllabus**  
**PADP 6920: Public Personnel Administration**  
**Spring Semester 2021**

**Online Wednesdays 7:15 – 10:00 p.m.**

The University of Georgia  
School of Public and International Affairs  
Department of Public Administration & Policy  
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**Course Description and Objectives**

Public Personnel Administration is a dynamic, rapidly evolving field that is central to the study and practice of Public Administration. The people who work for government agencies and nonprofit organizations are among their most valuable assets. Public employees are instruments of the state and wield enormous power and influence. They perform many important functions for society and help to ensure the public safety, deliver public services, and promote the public interest. Many other individuals are employed by nonprofit organizations and private sector contractors. These individuals also work in the public square and perform public-serving functions, broadly defined. When serving in these roles, they are surrogates of the state, make vital contributions to civil society, and work for the betterment of humanity. The recruitment, selection, development, and retention of these employees are key elements in governmental and organizational effectiveness.

This course provides a survey of the field with an emphasis on the historical events and reform movements that have shaped it. The unique political environment that public and nonprofit organizations operate in, as well as their strengths and weaknesses when compared with private sector business firms, are also emphasized. Attention is focused on some of the major activities in Public Personnel Administration such as position classification, pay and benefits, employee motivation, performance appraisal, and pay for performance. The course also focuses on major issues that affect the conduct of Public Personnel Administration. These issues include employee rights and responsibilities, equal employment opportunity, affirmative action, anti-discrimination laws, grievance procedures, and labor-management relations. Finally, the course turns to the future of Public Personnel Administration. In the face of

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<sup>1</sup> Office hours are by appointment, but please feel free to drop by whenever I am in the office. Also feel free to contact me by email or telephone whenever necessary. Email usually works best.

widespread concerns about a “quiet crisis” in the civil service in which many veteran employees may simultaneously leave their jobs, and considering the radical transformation of the public sector in recent years, the future seems an open question. What can be done to ensure that a highly qualified, motivated and well-trained cadre of public servants will be available to serve the public well into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

This course will provide a foundation for students to understand personnel concepts in other classes and ultimately in their careers, both as public and nonprofit employees and as managers who are responsible for leading organizations and overseeing the work of others. The course format and content require students to think rigorously about a number of practical issues facing contemporary public administrators. Students will have ample opportunity to demonstrate their newly acquired knowledge and skills in the course.

Completion of the course will thus enable students to better understand the role of public administrators in implementing public policy and leading and managing people in public organizations. Students will gain knowledge of the principles and practices of public personnel administration, cultivate a public service ethic, and learn about strategies to enhance equity, diversity and representativeness of the public workforce. The relationship between effective public personnel administration and enhanced individual and organizational performance is emphasized.

For MPA students, the following core competencies will be imparted in the course:

Competency 1: To lead and manage in public governance

Competency 2: To participate in the public policy process

Competency 3: To analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make decisions

Competency 4: To articulate and apply a public service perspective

Competency 5: Communicating with a diverse workforce and citizenry

### **Seminar Sessions**

The course will be taught online with live class meetings on Zoom. These meetings will be recorded and archived on the UGA eLearning Commons (eLC) course website. Small work groups will be formed early in the semester and they will lead discussions of course readings and perform other assignments throughout the semester. Students will need a desktop computer or portable electronic device such as a laptop or smart tablet and a reliable internet connection to join the Zoom sessions and participate in course activities. Students should join class sessions from a quiet location without pets, guests, or other distractions. The eLC course website and Zoom platform are accessible at: <https://uga.view.usg.edu/d2l/login>.

Most seminar sessions will include lectures and class discussions on headline topics. Students are encouraged to ask questions and raise important issues. During class sessions, the instructor will present material, pose questions for discussion, help guide the search for answers, and aid in the process of critical inquiry. Students will lead discussions on specific issues and readings, complete homework-type assignments, and participate in small group

exercises. Various forms of media will be utilized to enhance learning. All course deliverables will be submitted online.

### **Assignments and Grades**

Grades will be based on students' performance on four elements of the course: group work and group presentations (20 percent), a midterm and final examination (20 and 30 percent, respectively), a research paper (20 percent), and attendance and participation in the course (10 percent). These components are explained below, and they will be discussed in more detail during the introductory class session.

Note: PhD students will have additional readings and substantially different deliverables based upon individual need and as determined by the instructor.

### **Group Work and Group Presentations**

Students will be assigned to permanent work groups early in the semester. These groups will lead discussions and give presentations on supplemental readings and cases assigned to them. The instructor will assess the quality of group work based on their in-class deliverables and assign grades accordingly. These grades will count 20 percent of the final course grade. Students are encouraged to rely on their group for support when needed. For example, if you miss a class, ask your group mates to brief you on the class and share copies of any lecture notes and handouts.

The two main group deliverables are preparing abstracts of readings and leading in-class discussions. Each group should prepare a one-page written abstract for each supplemental reading and each case they are assigned. The abstract should begin with a proper bibliographic reference, followed by a summary of the reading or case, plus any additional thoughts, insights, takeaways, or discussion questions that will be posed to the class. The abstracts should be emailed to me by noon on the day before the scheduled in-class discussion.

The discussion of each reading and each case should last for 10-15 minutes. Note: all group members have collective responsibility for preparing the abstracts and leading the in-class discussions.

### **Midterm and Final Examination**

Students will take comprehensive, open-book midterm and final examinations worth approximately 20 and 30 percent of the final course grade, respectively. These examinations will consist of several essay type questions. These questions will focus on major issues covered in the course. Students are expected to craft a thoughtful, well-informed response to the questions and write coherent answers that are grammatically correct. Light referencing is required. The papers should be type-written in a conventional 10- to 12-point font and double-spaced with one-inch margins on all sides. All pages should be numbered and collated into a single Microsoft Word document (no PDFs). This document should be emailed to the instructor by the due date. For grading purposes, the main emphasis is on the essay's content but quality

of the presentation will also be considered. The due dates for these “take-home examinations” are shown on the tentative course schedule (see below).<sup>2</sup> Late penalties will apply.

### **Research Paper**

Students will complete a research paper on a topic closely related to public personnel administration. This is an open-ended assignment worth approximately 20 percent of the final course grade. Students are encouraged to design a project and write a paper that will further their own personal and professional interests in the field. Some ways to fulfill this requirement include: complete an in-depth case study of a HRM system in a public or nonprofit sector organization; interview a public personnel officer and write a report on the interview; read an important book on public personnel administration and write an in-depth book review; identify a topic that is not adequately covered in course readings, research the topic, and write a report; select a controversial topic, research both sides, and write a position paper; etc. There are many other ways that students can satisfy the research paper requirement. Importantly, each student’s paper topic and research plan must be approved in advance by the instructor. A short prospectus is due midway through the semester, a brief in-class presentation is expected, and the final paper is due at semester’s end.

Students should strive for papers that are high quality, stylistically and grammatically correct, well-organized, and easy for readers to understand. The papers should be type-written in a conventional 10- to 12-point font and double-spaced with one-inch margins on all sides. All pages should be numbered and collated into a single Microsoft Word document (no PDFs) that is submitted to the instructor by email. The papers should be formatted according to the American Political Science Association style manual (stored on the eLC course website). The papers will be graded based on content and presentation. The due date is shown on the tentative course schedule (see below). Late penalties will apply.

### **Attendance and Participation**

Attendance and participation are required in this course and will count approximately 10 percent toward the final grade. Students are expected to attend all class meetings and be on time. Students who miss excessive time should expect to receive a lowered grade in the course, regardless of their performance on graded assignments. With respect to participation, I first consider the student’s attendance because this is a prerequisite for participation; then I consider how frequent, valuable, and constructive the student’s contributions have been to the class, and how responsive they have been to course assignments and my specific requests during the semester. Finally, I differentiate between required and spontaneous participation: only the latter is counted here.

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<sup>2</sup> Note: university policy provides that any student with three final examinations scheduled on the same calendar day or two examinations at the same time may petition an instructor to reschedule one exam at a different time.

### **Reasonable Accommodations**

Students with disabilities that could affect their ability to participate and perform well in the course should see me early in the semester. I am receptive to these situations and will make any reasonable accommodations. If you plan to request accommodations, please register with the Disability Resource Center. They can be reached by visiting Clark Howell Hall, calling 706-542-8719 (voice) or 706-542-8778 (TTY), or by navigating to <https://drc.uga.edu>.

### **Mental Health and Wellness Resources**

If you or someone you know needs assistance, you are encouraged to contact Student Care and Outreach in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-7774 or visit <https://sco.uga.edu/>. They will help you navigate through any difficult circumstances you may be facing by connecting you with the appropriate resources or services. UGA has several resources for a student seeking mental health services (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) or crisis support (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/info/emergencies>). If you need help managing stress, anxiety, relationships, etc., please visit BeWellUGA (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) for a list of FREE workshops, classes, mentoring, and health coaching led by licensed clinicians and health educators in the University Health Center. Additional resources can be accessed through the UGA App.

### **Academic Honesty**

The ethical bar is set very high and a strong work ethic is expected. Students should familiarize themselves with the University Honor Code and Academic Honesty Policy, particularly as it relates to plagiarism and related concerns. All academic work must meet the standards contained in *A Culture of Honesty*. Students should learn about these standards before submitting any written work. All written assignments should be completed individually – not collaboratively – unless otherwise stated.

The UGA Student Honor Code states: “I will be academically honest in all of my academic work and will not tolerate academic dishonesty of others.” *A Culture of Honesty*, the University’s policy and procedures for handling cases of suspected dishonesty, can be found at <https://ovpi.uga.edu>.

### **Prohibition on Recording Lectures**

In the absence of written authorization from the UGA Disability Resource Center, students may not make a visual or audio recording of any aspect of this course. Students who have a recording accommodation agree in writing that they:

- Will use the records only for personal academic use during the specific course.
- Understand that faculty members have copyright interest in their class lectures and that they agree not to infringe on this right in any way.
- Understand that the faculty member and students in the class have privacy rights and agree not to violate those rights by using recordings for any reason other than their own personal study.

- Will not release, digitally upload, broadcast, transcribe, or otherwise share all or any part of the recordings. They also agree that they will not profit financially and will not allow others to benefit personally or financially from lecture recordings or other course materials.
- Will erase/delete all recordings at the end of the semester.
- Understand that violation of these terms may subject them to discipline under the Student Code of Conduct or subject them to liability under copyright laws.

### **FERPA Notice**

The Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) grants students certain information privacy rights. See the registrar's explanation at <https://reg.uga.edu/generalinformation/ferpa/>. FERPA allows disclosure of directory information (name, address, telephone, email, date of birth, place of birth, major, activities, degrees, awards, and prior schools), unless requested in a written letter to the registrar.

### **Course Readings and Other Resources**

Principal Textbook:

- Lloyd G. Nigro and J. Edward Kellough, 2014. *The New Public Personnel Administration*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston, Massachusetts: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning. ISBN-13: 978-1133734284.

Supplemental Resources:

- Richard C. Kearney and Jerrell D. Cogburn, 2016. *Public Human Resource Management: Problems and Prospects*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press, Sage Publications. ISBN-13: 978-1483393452.
- T. Zane Reeves, 2005. *Cases in Public Human Resource Management*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing, Cengage Learning. ISBN-13: 978-0534602406.
- Other readings as assigned.

Books will be available at the UGA main campus bookstore and off-campus bookstores in the area or they can be ordered online. Limited copies are also available for temporary use from the main library, departmental library, or directly from the instructor. Note: most of these books are available in different formats and at different prices. Contact the publishers, online retailers, or bookstores for details. Any supplemental readings will be provided by the instructor and stored on the eLC course website.

### **Tentative Course Schedule**

Assignments are in the course schedule (attached). Please complete all readings and assigned work before the applicable class period. This schedule will serve as a guide but not a rigid constraint throughout the semester. Some topics will likely take less than the allotted time, while others may require more attention. Some minor rescheduling may also occur. Any changes to the syllabus or course schedule will be announced in advance. Students should check their UGA email inbox regularly for updates and other information pertinent to the course.