



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

Course Syllabus
PADP 6920: Public Personnel Administration, CRN 46690
Spring 2025
104 Baldwin Hall, UGA main campus
Wednesdays 7:10 – 9:55pm

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 valuable assets to their organizations and to society at large. Public employees are instruments of the state and can wield enormous power and influence. They are, nonetheless, also constrained by many rules and regulations that limit their discretion and shape their behavior. Public employees perform many important functions in society: they ensure public safety, deliver social services, regulate the economy, provide national security, and promote the public interest in countless other ways. Many other people also perform public service by working in nonprofit organizations with social service missions and in private sector firms fulfilling government contracts. These individuals often have public-facing roles and work in the public square. While they do not work for government directly, they are surrogates of the state and contributors to the common good. Yet their jobs are more vulnerable to political manipulation and managerial bias.

This course surveys the field of Public Personnel Administration and emphasizes the historical events and reform movements that have shaped it, both in the United States and worldwide. The unique political environment that public and nonprofit organizations operate in, and their strengths and weaknesses compared to private sector business firms, are also emphasized. The course will cover the major functions of Public Personnel Administration including position classification, pay and benefits administration, motivating and training employees, resolving

¹ 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. Always send emails from your standard UGA email account – not through the eLC course website.

grievances, and conducting performance appraisals. The course also covers major issues that affect human resources management including employee rights and responsibilities, labor-management relations, equal employment opportunity, affirmative action, anti-discrimination laws, and promoting diversity in the workplace. Several other emerging trends will also be discussed, such as increased violence against public employees, growing use of information technology and social media, and deployment of artificial intelligence and robotics.

Finally, the course turns to the future of government civil service systems, which are the core of public employment. In the face of longstanding concerns about a “quiet crisis” in which many veteran public employees might leave their jobs while younger people are less inclined to perform public service, the future is an open question. What can be done to ensure that a highly qualified, motivated and trained workforce will be available to serve the public in the future?

Student Learning Outcomes

This course will help students understand human resources management concepts and issues encountered in this course, other graduate classes, and ultimately in their careers. The course will also enable students to better understand the role of public administrators working alongside politicians to implement public policy and lead and manage people in public organizations. Students will learn about the principles and practices of public personnel administration, consider strategies to enhance equity, diversity, and representativeness in the public workforce, and develop a strong public service ethic. The impact of effective personnel management on individual and organizational performance is emphasized. The course requires students to think rigorously about many issues facing contemporary public administrators. They will have ample opportunities to demonstrate their newly acquired knowledge and skills in the course.

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

Competency 1: To lead and manage in the public interest

Competency 2: To participate in, and contribute to, the public policy process

Competency 3: To analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make evidence-informed decisions in a complex and dynamic environment

Competency 4: To articulate, apply, and advance a public service perspective

Competency 5: To communicate and interact productively and in culturally responsive ways with a diverse and changing workforce and society at large

Seminar Sessions

The course is taught in a traditional face-to-face format with weekly class meetings. The eLC course website at <https://uga.view.usg.edu/d21/login> will be utilized to share materials with the class and coordinate course activities. Most seminar sessions will include lectures and open discussions. During these sessions, the instructor will present material, pose questions for discussion, help students 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. Students are encouraged to ask questions and raise important issues for discussion. All course deliverables should be submitted through standard university email – not through the eLC course website or with non-university email accounts.

Assignments and Grades

Grades will be based on student performance on four key 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 individual 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: Any PhD students enrolled in the course will have additional readings and substantially different deliverables as determined by the instructor.

Group Work and Group Presentations

The class will be divided into small work groups early in the semester. These groups will lead class discussions of course readings on a rotating basis and complete other assignments. The two main group deliverables are preparing abstracts and leading in-class discussions of assigned readings. First, each group should prepare a written abstract of one page or less for each supplemental reading or case assigned to the group. The abstract should begin with a proper bibliographic reference, followed by a brief summary of the reading or case. Any additional thoughts, questions, or discussion points may be included. *These abstracts should be emailed to the instructor by noon on the day before the reading or case will be discussed in class. They will be posted on the eLC course website once they are approved.* Second, groups should prepare a brief set of PowerPoint slides to help structure their in-class discussions and focus attention on major points or key questions. Each reading or case should be discussed for approximately 10 minutes. *Important note: all group members are collectively responsible for submitting high quality abstracts on time, preparing PowerPoint slides, and leading effective in-class discussions.* Always work together on these assignments.

The instructor will assess the quality of each group's work at semester's end and assign grades accordingly. These grades will count 20 percent of the final course grade. Students should rely on their group peers for support when needed. For example, if a student misses a class, they should reach out to their group mates for a briefing on what they missed and copies of any lecture notes or handouts.

Midterm and Final Examinations

Students will take comprehensive, open-book midterm and final examinations worth approximately 20 and 30 percent of the final course grade, respectively. Each examination will consist of several essay type questions that focus on major issues covered in the course. Students are expected to craft thoughtful, well-informed responses to these questions; and to write coherent answers that are stylistically and grammatically correct. Light referencing is required. Students should cite the sources of direct quotations and expert knowledge discussed in the paper. 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 or cloud files). Email this document to the instructor by the respective due date. For grading purposes, the main emphasis is on the essay's content, but quality of composition and evidence of course learning are also considered. The due dates for these "take-home examinations" are shown on the tentative course schedule (see below).² Late penalties will apply.³

Research Paper

Students will prepare 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. The goal is for students to develop a topic and write a paper that furthers their personal and professional interests in the field through rigorous scholarship. Some ways to fulfill this requirement include:

- write an in-depth case study on the human resource management system of a real-life public or nonprofit organization;
- conduct a series of structured interviews with a sample of public personnel officers and write a research report on the topics covered;
- identify an important book on public personnel administration and write an in-depth book review that includes a critical analysis of the book culminating in suggestions for improvement;
- identify a relevant topic that receives little coverage in the course, conduct a literature review of scholarly sources, and write an in-depth research report;
- select a controversial topic in public human resource management, research both sides of the issue, and write a position paper defending and advancing the side you most disagree with.

There are many other ways to satisfy the research paper requirement, but importantly, *each student's topic and research plan must be approved in advance by the instructor*. A short paragraph-length research proposal is due at midterm and the final paper is due at semester's end. A brief in-class presentation may also be scheduled if time permits.

Generally speaking, students should strive for papers that are high quality, well-organized, easy to read, and stylistically and grammatically correct. There is no strict page limit, but the suggested length is 15 pages plus a reference list. Format the paper according to the American Political Science Association style manual which is stored on the eLC course website. The paper should be type-written in a conventional 10- to 12-point font and double-spaced with one-inch margins on all sides. Include a title, abstract, main body with section headers separating key themes, and reference list. All pages should be numbered and collated into a single Microsoft Word document (no PDFs or cloud files). Submit this document to the instructor by email. The

² 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.

³ The late penalty for each partial or whole day late is one grade-notch on the standard grading scale of A, A- B+, B, B-, etc.

paper will be graded based on content, quality of presentation, and evidence of learning. 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 towards the final grade. Students are expected to attend all class meetings and to arrive on time. Those who miss excessive class 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 it is a prerequisite for class participation; then I consider how frequent, valuable, and constructive the student's contributions have been to the class, including how responsive they have been to course assignments and my specific requests during the semester. Finally, I differentiate between required and spontaneous contributions. Succinct spontaneous participation receives the most credit of all.

Note: As a professional courtesy, please send me an email in advance if you will miss a class, arrive late or leave early, or submit a late course deliverable.

Reasonable Accommodations

Students with disabilities that could affect their ability to 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>.

UGA Well-being Resources

UGA Well-being Resources promote student success by cultivating a culture that supports a more active, healthy, and engaged student community.

Anyone needing assistance is encouraged to contact Student Care & Outreach (SCO) in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-8479 or visit sco.uga.edu. Student Care & Outreach helps students navigate difficult circumstances by connecting them with the most appropriate resources or services. They also administer the Embark@UGA program which supports students experiencing, or who have experienced, homelessness, foster care, or housing insecurity.

UGA provides both clinical and non-clinical options to support student well-being and mental health, any time, any place. Whether on campus, or studying from home or abroad, UGA Well-being Resources are here to help.

- Well-being Resources: well-being.uga.edu
- Student Care and Outreach: sco.uga.edu
- University Health Center: healthcenter.uga.edu
- Counseling and Psychiatric Services: caps.uga.edu or CAPS 24/7 crisis support at 706-542-2273
- Health Promotion/ Fontaine Center: healthpromotion.uga.edu

- Disability Resource Center and Testing Services: drc.uga.edu

Additional information, including free digital well-being resources, can be accessed through the UGA app or by visiting <https://well-being.uga.edu>.

Academic Honesty

The ethical bar is set very high for aspiring public administrators and a strong work ethic is expected in this course. 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*. 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." The University's policy and procedures for handling cases of suspected dishonesty can be found at <https://ovpi.uga.edu>. Students should review these standards before submitting any written work.

UGA policy is that artificial intelligence (AI) may not be used for coursework unless explicitly authorized by the instructor beforehand. In this course, AI tools such as ChatGPT may not be used for writing course deliverables. All written composition should reflect the student's own work. In addition, *all written assignments should be completed individually – not collaboratively – unless otherwise stated.*

Prohibition on Recording Lectures

Students are not allowed to make visual or audio recordings of any aspect of this course unless they have written authorization from the UGA Disability Resource Center, which includes specific terms and conditions. Violation of this policy may result in discipline under the Student Code of Conduct and liability under copyright laws.

FERPA Notice

The Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) grants students certain information privacy rights (see <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 withholding is requested by writing a letter to the registrar.

Course Readings

Textbooks:

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