



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

PADP 7580-S: Local Government Practicum
Department of Public Administration and Policy
Maymester 2025 (May 13 – June 3)

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Office Hours: www.calendly.com/zeemering
Meeting Time: 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM (Tuesday/Thursday);
workshop hours with team member (11.5 hours during semester)
plus field experience with City of Columbus on Friday, May 16
Class Meeting Location: Baldwin Hall, 102

Course Description

The local government practicum engages MPA students in a service-learning opportunity with a local government partner, identified through collaboration with the Georgia Municipal Association. Over the next three weeks, we will engage in the development of an employee exit survey for the Columbus Consolidated Government. The city requests that the survey “*provide insight into our workforce, culture, brand, and causes of employee turnover.*” The course will reinforce understanding of human resource management in local government, while also developing survey research skills in an applied setting.

To accompany and aid our thinking about this work, we will explore the public administration literature on local government employment, turnover, and human resources. Students will be responsible for individual reading and research, and collaboration with a peer for survey question development. To align with the course expectations of the Maymester, we have class meetings in Athens, self-directed workshop hours with your class partner, and a field experience in Columbus, Georgia.

This class provides students a framework for thinking about the applied research task, equips students with additional analytical skills, and then provides space for collaboration and self-directed work to produce a policy brief for our community partner.

Student Learning Outcomes & MPA Program Competencies

This course is ideal for students in the local government management concentration, but develops basic research skills that may be deployed by public servants contributing to the public policy process in a variety of contexts. This course is an elective, but we have an opportunity to hone core MPA program competencies, as italicized below. The project for this semester supports student advancement of competency #3 (evidence informed decisions) and competency #5 (diverse and changing workforce).

- Students will identify and describe general trends in local government employment in the United States and the State of Georgia
- Students will evaluate the research literature on employee turnover in government, and synthesize implications for studying turnover in local government
- Students will learn foundations of survey question development, and will practice survey question development through the preparation of questions for the exit survey for the Columbus Consolidated Government
- Students will reflect upon their experience supporting the Columbus Consolidated Government and discuss their role as a public administration and policy professional

Recommended Reading

To assist with your work in this course, a general book on survey questions and questionnaire design may be helpful. During our class, I will draw on examples from the following texts, in addition to other standard books on survey question design.

Converse, Jean M. and Stanley Presser. 1986. Survey questions: Handcrafting the standardized questionnaire. Sage. ISBN: 0803927436

Bradburn, N. M., Sudman, S., Wansink, B. 2015. Asking Questions: The Definitive Guide to Questionnaire Design -- For Market Research, Political Polls, and Social and Health Questionnaires. Germany: Wiley. ISBN: 9781119214762

Required Book and Course Reading

Several journal articles are listed in the syllabus and links are provided in the class ELC page (elc.uga.edu). All journal articles are available for free online or through the UGA Library.

Library Resources

Graduate students should be familiar with the use of library resources. The public administration and policy subject guide from the UGA library is available through the following link: <https://guides.libs.uga.edu/public-administration-policy-guide>.

Grading and Evaluation

This class is an applied service-learning experience, and our success is interdependent. The final grade in the course is determined by three required assignments or activities, one based upon your work with colleagues in class and two the product of your own work and reflection. For each assignment, instructions and evaluation rubrics are available in ELC.

Columbus Employment Reflection Essay: Students will submit a reflection essay following our field experience in Columbus, Georgia. The reflection essay addresses three questions related to human resources, employee turnover, and data and evidence in public administration. The essay constitutes 30% of the final grade.

Survey Question Development and Presentation: Students will be assigned teams for the development of a subset of questions for the employee exit survey project. Students will prepare questions, prepare a summary memo explaining the logic of question design, and prepare a slide for the class final presentation to explain their question development choices. The question development memo and presentation contribute 40% of the final grade.

Employment Turnover Policy Briefing: To conclude our class, students will synthesize their learning about employee turnover in a five page briefing paper, appropriate to share with local government professionals. This short writing assignment must summarize at least three insights from the academic literature on employee turnover and our field experience in Columbus, Georgia. This policy briefing constitutes 30% of your final grade.

Field Experience in Columbus

On Friday, May 16, we will attend a meeting with government official in Columbus, Georgia to learn more about human resources and employee turnover. Reather Hollowell, Human Resources Director for the Columbus Consolidated Government, will lead our discussion with city department heads to learn more about human resources and employee turnover. Lunch will be provided on site. Students may arrange their own transportation to Columbus or sign up for a spot in a van departing Athens at 6:15 AM. Students should plan to be present on-site in Columbus from 10:00 AM to 2:30 PM at 1111 First Avenue, Bradley Building, Human Resources Department, TLC/Azalea Room, 2nd Floor. Students should be prepared to take detailed notes for a related class assignment.

University Policies and Instructor Expectations for Students

All of the University's expectations for your conduct as a student apply in this class.

Academic Honesty: As a University of Georgia student, you have agreed to abide by the University's academic honesty policy, "A Culture of Honesty," and the Student Honor Code. All academic work must meet the standards described in "A Culture of Honesty" found at: <https://honesty.uga.edu/Academic-Honesty-Policy/>. Lack of knowledge of the academic honesty policy is not a reasonable explanation for a violation. Questions related to course assignments and the academic honesty policy should be directed to the instructor.

Plagiarism: Our capacity to learn and synthesize knowledge within the public administration profession depends upon our ability to build on the foundation of existing knowledge and research. Recognizing and documenting the work of others is critical for all students, but especially for graduate students. When writing, students must take great care in how they reference ideas and information sources. Never use someone else's words or ideas in your writing without proper attribution. Serious penalties exist for academic misconduct and plagiarism. Students should read and be familiar with the following resources:

- UGA Academic Honesty Policy: Plagiarism
https://honesty.uga.edu/Academic-Honesty-Policy/Prohibited_Conduct/
- UGA Libraries Research Guide: Writing and Citing
<http://www.libs.uga.edu/researchguide/writing/index.html>

Class Participation: You are expected to maintain consistent engagement with class during the three week Maymester. You will be assigned a partner to work with during our class. Keep contact information for this individual handy, and engage with them in discussion about your

progress in class. Use our time together to discuss and reflect on the course material, and to share information and insights about what you learn in the field.

Late Assignments: Because of the interdependent structure of our work, all work must be submitted on time. Failure to meet a deadline may result in penalties ranging from a 20 percent point deduction for a late submission to zero credit for work submitted beyond the final class meeting. If you have concern about a deadline due to your health or unexpected circumstances, communicate with the instructor about possible accommodations.

Communication with the Instructor: I welcome individual discussions about class content, challenges you encounter in your research, or your broader goals and interests in public service. You are welcome to schedule a meeting on my calendar for any reason. Please specify if you prefer a phone call or Zoom meeting when you schedule. I will endeavor to return all email within 24 hours.

Disabilities and Accommodations: If you plan to request accommodations for a disability, 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 visiting <http://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 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.

FERPA Notice: The Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) grants students certain information privacy rights. FERPA allows disclosure of directory information (name, address, telephone, email, date of birth, place of birth, major, activities, degrees, awards, prior schools), unless a https://reg.uga.edu/_resources/documents/imported/FERPARestRequestForRestriction.pdf is submitted to the Registrar's Office.

Resources for Student-Parents: If you or someone you know is in a phase of life that involves parenting (or the expectation of parenting), there are resources available to assist you. Student Care and Outreach within the Office of the Dean of Students is available to provide you with important information and resources; you can contact them at 706-542-7774.

Syllabus and Schedule Changes: The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary. The instructor will communicate changes in writing through your UGA email account.

PADP 7580 Schedule (May 2025)

Date and Time	Activity
Tuesday May 13, 2025	<p>Our first class meeting introduces the topics of employee turnover and survey design. We will reflect upon what we know about <i>quitting</i>.</p> <p><i>Reading:</i></p> <p>Suzuki, Kohei and Hyunkang Hur. 2023. Politicization, bureaucratic closedness in personnel policy, and turnover intention. <i>Governance</i> 37: 993-1014.</p>
Thursday, May 14, 2025	<p>We continue to explore employee turnover intentions and staffing in local government.</p> <p><i>Reading:</i></p> <p>Choudhury, Enamul H. 2007. Workforce planning in small local governments. <i>Review of Public Personnel Administration</i> 27 (3): 264-280.</p> <p>Nelson, Kimberly and Brad A.M. Johnson. 2025. Intersecting crises in local government employment in the United States: COVID-19, the Gray Tsunami, and Workforce Evolution. In <i>The Routledge Handbook on Crisis, Polycrisis, and Public Administration</i>, edited by K. Moloney, G.J. Billingsley, B.G. Jeong, P. Sanabria-Pulido, T.E. Thornton, and E. Zeemering. Routledge. Pg. 147-159.</p>
Friday, May 16, 2025 Field Experience 10:00 AM to 2:30 PM Columbus, Georgia	<p>Today, we meet with city officials in Columbus, Georgia to learn more about human resources, turnover, and the goals for the revised employee exit survey.</p>
Tuesday May 20, 2025	<p>We begin discussion of exit survey development, reflecting upon our experience in Columbus, and thinking about the task of survey design.</p> <p><i>Reading:</i></p> <p>Konig, Cornelius J., Manuela Richter, and Isabela Isak. 2022. Exit interviews as a tool to reduce parting employees' complaints about their former employer and to endure residual commitment. <i>Management Research Review</i> 45 (3): 381-397.</p>

Thursday May 22, 2025	<p>Guidance from survey and questionnaire design prepare us for the development of questions for the exit survey for Columbus.</p> <p><i>Reading:</i></p> <p>Bradburn, Norman, Seymour Sudman, and Brian Wansink. 2004. <i>Asking Questions: The Definitive Guide to Questionnaire Design ~ For Market Research, Political Polls, and Social and Health Questionnaires</i>. Wiley. Pg. 3 to 34.</p>
Tuesday May 27, 2025	<p>We continue our exploration of survey development, with new resources from psychology and survey experts. We also consider the limitations associated with studies of employee turnover.</p> <p><i>Reading:</i></p> <p>Moynihan, Donald P. and Noel Landuyt. 2008. Explaining turnover intention in state government: Examining the roles of gender, life cycle, and loyalty. <i>Review of Public Personnel Administration</i> 28 (2): 120-143.</p>
Thursday May 29, 2025	<p>During our class meeting, we finalize exit survey design and pivot toward the preparation of a professional presentation for Columbus.</p> <p><i>Reading:</i></p> <p>Sudman, Seymour, Norman M. Bradburn, and Norbert Schwarz. 1996. <i>Thinking about answers: The application of cognitive processes to survey methodology</i>. Jossey-Bass. Pg. 130 – 162.</p>
Tuesday June 3, 2025	<p>Our final class meeting features a video presentation for Columbus city officials.</p>