



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

**Course Syllabus
PADP 6920: Public Personnel Administration, CRN 46690
Fall 2025
264 Baldwin Hall, UGA main campus
Wednesdays 4:10 – 6:55pm**

The University of Georgia
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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 factors 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. Some people also perform public service by working in nonprofit organizations with social service missions and in private sector firms fulfilling government contracts. These individuals may work in the public square and have public-facing roles very similar to public employees. While they do not work for government directly, they are still surrogates of the state and contributors to the common good. Yet their jobs are generally less regulated and secure than those of public employees.

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 grievances, and conducting performance appraisals. The course also covers major issues that affect human resources management including employee rights and responsibilities, labor-

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.

management relations, equal employment opportunity, affirmative action, anti-discrimination laws, and diversity in the workplace. Several other emerging trends will also be discussed, such as increased violence against public employees, growing use of social media, and deployment of artificial intelligence and robotics to replace public employees.

Finally, the course turns to the future of government civil service systems. These systems are eroding in the face of populist attacks and longstanding concerns about their accountability and performance. There are also rumors of an impending “quiet crisis” in which many veteran public employees might leave their jobs voluntarily or be forced out, while their replacements (young people) might be less inclined to seek careers in government. Hence, the future is an open question. What can be done to ensure that a highly qualified, properly motivated, and well-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 they will encounter 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 diversity, equity, and representativeness in the public workforce, and develop a strong public service ethic steeped in professional norms and guiding principles that include political accountability, service to the public, and pursuit of the public interest. 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. Students 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, and submit them as file attachments in Microsoft Word document format – not as PDFs, non-Word documents, or cloud links.

Assignments and Grades

Grades will be based on student performance on four key elements of the course: group work and group presentations (10 percent), a midterm and final examination (30 percent each), 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 complete special assignments and lead class discussions of course readings on a rotating basis throughout the semester. The two main, recurring group responsibilities are (1) preparing and submitting abstracts of assigned readings on time, and (2) leading in-class discussions of those readings. These responsibilities are described in more detail below.

First, each group should prepare a written abstract of one page or less for each reading assigned to the group. The abstract should begin with a proper citation, followed by a brief summary of the reading or case. Any additional thoughts, questions, or discussion points may be included. Each abstract should be formatted like the sample abstracts shown on the eLC course website and the citations should adhere to the APSA style manual, which is also stored on the website. The group should email these abstracts to the instructor by noon on the day before the reading will be discussed in class. Once approved, the instructor will upload these abstracts to the eLC course website. Second, the group should prepare a brief set of PowerPoint slides to help structure their in-class discussion and focus attention on major points or key questions. These PPT slides should be used in the discussion but they need not be turned in. The group should spend approximately 10 minutes on each reading assigned. The rule of thumb is – spend equal time presenting and discussing your reading. Avoid lengthy presentations by hosting open, lively discussions with the class.

The instructor will assess the quality of each group's work at semester's end and assign grades accordingly. These grades will count 10 percent of the final course grade. Students are encouraged to rely on their group peers for support when needed. For example, if you miss a class, reach out to your group peers for a briefing on what was missed, including any lecture notes or handouts. Keep in mind that all group members are collectively responsible for all group assignments – this responsibility cannot be parceled out to individual group members. Always work together and copy each other on all group-related emails.

Midterm and Final Examinations

Students will take comprehensive, open-book midterm and final examinations, each worth approximately 30 percent of the final course grade. Each examination will consist of several essay type questions that focus on important content and 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. Referencing is required. Students should cite sources for 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, non-Word documents, or cloud links). 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 specific public or nonprofit organization;
- Identify an important book on public personnel administration and write an in-depth book review that includes a critical analysis of the book and suggestions for improvement; and
- Name a relevant topic that is not adequately covered in the course. Conduct a literature review of scholarly sources on the topic, and write an in-depth research report.

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*. Students should submit a research proposal by email by midterm. The following information should be included: a clear description of the project, why the student is interested in the topic, and several scholarly references supporting the proposal. 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 APSA style manual. 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, and reference list. All pages should be numbered and collated into a single Microsoft Word document (no PDFs, non-Word, or cloud documents). Submit this document to the instructor by email. The paper will be graded based on content, quality of presentation, and evidence of learning. The paper is due at semester's end. Late penalties will apply.

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.

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

The required readings for the course are as follows:

- Lloyd G. Nigro and J. Edward Kellough, 2014. *The New Public Personnel Administration*, 7th ed. Boston, Massachusetts: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning. ISBN-13: 978-1133734284
- Richard C. Kearney and Jerrell D. Cogburn, 2016. *Public Human Resource Management: Problems and Prospects*, 6th ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press, Sage Publications. ISBN-13: 978-1483393452. (Note: this book is available online through the UGA library website.)
- T. Zane Reeves, 2005. *Cases in Public Human Resource Management*, 2nd ed. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing, Cengage Learning. ISBN-13: 978-0534602406
- Other readings as assigned.

Books are available at the UGA main campus bookstore and other retail outlets in the area. They can also be ordered online in different formats for different prices. Contact the bookstore, publishers, and online retailers for details. A few copies of these books may be available for temporary use from the main library, departmental library, or directly from the instructor. Any additional readings will be stored on the eLC course website for easy access.

Tentative Course Schedule

Weekly assignments are shown on the tentative course schedule which, along with the group roster, will be distributed once the semester is underway. Students should complete all readings and written assignments before the applicable class period. This schedule will serve as a guide but not a rigid constraint throughout the semester. Some topics may take less than the allotted time, while others may require more attention. Any significant changes to the syllabus or course schedule will be announced in advance. Students should check their UGA email inbox daily for updates and other important information.