

PADP 7200: Town-Gown Relations for Public Managers

Alton M. Standifer

*School of Public and International Affairs
Department of Public Administration and Policy*

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Class Schedule: Monday, 4:10 PM to 6:55 PM
Class Location: Baldwin Hall
Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description

This course will explore the challenges and opportunities that exist in college towns when leading or collaborating with higher education institutions and local communities. Throughout the semester we will hear from leaders and managers in local government, higher education administration, academia, community organizers, non-profit leaders, and elected officials. The course will begin by developing an understanding of the study of the relationship between higher education entities and their local communities. We will explore the common areas of challenge and success in these relationships and discuss ways to improve or maintain positive relations. Throughout the semester we will hear from guest speakers that have experience with the topics that we are discussing. These include housing, economic development, education, social issues, funding, power structures, and collegiate athletics.

Student Learning Objectives

- ✓ Prepare students to be leaders and managers in college towns.
- ✓ Explore the role of public managers in local government and higher education as it relates to the relationship between both entities in a college town.
- ✓ Expand understanding of the nuances that exist in college towns as public leaders and managers prepare to work effectively in these unique environments.
- ✓ Connect students to practitioners and thought leaders in this niche area.
- ✓ Develop professional writing and oral presentation skills.

Integration with MPA Competencies

This elective contributes to student development within the following MPA program competencies.

- *Competency 1: To Lead and Manage in Public Governance*
- *Competency 3: To analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make decisions*
- *Competency 5: Communicating with a Diverse Workforce and Citizenry*

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Required Books

Gavazzi, S. M. (2015). *The Optimal Town-Gown Marriage: Taking Campus-Community Outreach and Engagement to the Next Level.*

E-Learning Commons and Online Resources

In addition to the textbook, additional reading is linked in the “Readings” section of the course schedule below and posted in a folder in the E-Learning Commons.

Grading

Assignments will be evaluated using a point system, with 100 points possible for the class. The following scale will be used to assign letter grades in this class:

100 – 94 points	A	86.9 – 83 points	B	75.9 – 70 points	C
93.9 – 90 points	A-	82.9 – 80 points	B-	69.9 – 60 points	D
89.9 – 87 points	B+	79.9 – 76 points	C+	59.9 – 0 points	F

Assignments

1. *Class Participation:* We will have guest speakers throughout the term. Your participation in engaging the speakers in conversation is essential to a robust discussion of the topics we explore each week. Students should be prepared, ask relevant questions of our speakers, and contribute effectively to other classroom discussions. **This is worth five total points.**
2. *What’s Happening In Your College Town?:* Students should follow the news in the community that they are researching this semester. As relevant situations arise that affect the university and the community, class members will share them with the rest of the class when called upon. Students will be called upon randomly throughout the semester so each week you should be prepared to share something that took place in your community or at your university. **This is worth five total points.**
3. *ITGA webinar reflection:* Students should watch the webinar [“College Towns, Declining Enrollments: Challenges and Opportunities”](#) on the International Town-Gown Association's resources page. After watching the webinar, post one takeaway from each of the speakers on the panel – mayor, reporter, CEO, and President. Each of these individuals presents a different perspective on how this issue impacts their entity. You should comment on the post of at least one of your classmates. **This assignment is worth 15 points.**
4. *Campus-Community Impact Essay:* Students should attend or watch a local council or commission meeting and reflect on the issues discussed that affect the town-gown relationship. Consider the role that active participants play in the issue and the impact on those who are not present or active participants. Provide links or some form of citation to the meeting that you write about. This should be from a meeting of the Athens-Clarke County

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Unified Government or from the city/university that you are researching throughout the semester. If you are unable to get access to a meeting of the government in your town, you are welcome to write about a significant conflict that the institution and local community have/are dealing with in your town. Students should describe the issue from both sides, offer their perspective, and provide recommendations for how to move forward. Each reflection should be two to three pages in length and utilize appendices and citations as needed. **This assignment is worth 15 points.**

5. *One-Minute Pop-Paper (2)*: These short papers will allow students the opportunity to share their takeaways from select readings or discussions throughout the semester. In a pop-quiz-style format, students will be asked to spend one minute writing on an assigned reading, in-class discussion, or other topics they were asked to review. Two of these will be administered throughout the semester, **each worth five points.**
6. *Leader Briefing (2)*: Leadership is an essential part of the relationship between campuses and communities. For this assignment, you should choose a leader from the campus and the community and develop a detailed briefing that provides an overview of the leader and general information on who they are, their priorities, key facts about their experiences, education, preparation, tenure in their role, and a photo. This should also include what their career trajectory has been – including their prior roles, education, family background, highlights of their town/gown involvement, and the status of the relationship between the entity that they represent and their town/gown partner. Students are free to communicate these things in the format of their choosing, as long as the information is sufficiently covered and professionally presented. For each of these, I would encourage you to assume that you are the other leader and that you have an upcoming meeting with the other individual. What would be good to know about them? **This assignment is worth 10 points, five for each briefing.**
7. *College Town Review Presentation*: At the beginning of the semester, students will select a college town and its associated university to follow throughout the course. To confirm your selection, you provide some demographic information on the city and the university chosen. At the end of the semester, students will present a thorough review of their school and community. This should highlight demographic data, economic opportunities, unique attributes, challenges and opportunities, leadership structures, and the players involved. As we explore key concepts throughout the term, students should research these issues in relation to their own community. A full collection of this information will be presented in an abbreviated version to the class. **This project is worth 20 points in total.**
8. ***Final Exam: 20 points***

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Use of AI on Assignments in this Course

In this course, thoughtful and creative engagement with AI is encouraged. Therefore, you will not be penalized for using Generative AI tools (GAI) in this course. However, remember that AI tools are best used to augment, not replace, our skills. It is important to be aware of the limitations of GAI tools. For example, GAI may exhibit bias and inaccuracies. You are responsible for assessing the validity and applicability of any GAI output incorporated into your work.

Note also that any work not created by yourself should include a proper source citation. For Generative AI, that may include prompts, specific AI used, and date. For full details on how to properly cite AI-generated work, please see the APA Style article, [How to Cite ChatGPT](#).

Keep in mind that this AI-permissive policy applies only to this course. Using AI tools in courses without permission is a violation of UGA's Academic Honesty policies and is considered unauthorized assistance. Be sure to consult the specific guidelines for each course.

To gain a deeper understanding of GAI tools and enhance your interaction with GAI output, you can explore the following resources:

[Introduction to Generative AI](#)
[UGA LibGuide on Generative AI](#)

Expectations and Guidelines

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>

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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.

Electronic Devices: Don't be extra.

Attendance and Accommodations: Active engagement in the classroom is critical for the success of graduate students. Attendance is expected during each in-class session for the duration of our time together. During weeks that we do not meet in person, students are expected to use that time to complete the readings and assignments that are communicated and outlined in the syllabus.

Class Discussion: Complete the reading assigned for each class meeting and be prepared for discussion. Your thoughtful contribution is expected and adds to the robust discussion that makes our discussions fruitful.

Late Assignments: Timely submission of work is important for the student's success and for the instructor's ability to provide feedback. For assignments with deadlines, late assignments will be accepted up to 14 days after the deadline for a twenty percent penalty. No late final presentations may be submitted, and no work will be accepted after the final exam deadline. Students encountering unexpected problems during the semester may talk with the instructor about an alternate submission deadline if events outside of class temporarily limit their ability to complete course work.

Communication with the Instructor: If you have questions or if there are topics you would like to discuss in greater detail, schedule an appointment with me via email.

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>

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.

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Schedule – Spring 2026

Week 1 (January 12, 2026) Welcome and Overview

Readings:

- Course Syllabus

Assignment:

- Students should submit their selected city and university that they will research throughout the semester. This submission is due by 3 pm on January 26.

(January 19, 2026): MLK Holiday No in-person class

Week 2: Research and Scholarship (January 26, 2026)

Readings:

- Optimal Town Gown Marriage Chapter 4 and 5
- Gavazzi, S. M., & Fox, M. (2015). A Tale of Three Cities: Piloting a Measure of Effort and Comfort Levels within Town-Gown Relationships. *Innovative Higher Education*, 40(3), 189–199.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-014-9309-0>

Week 3: History and Settings (February 2, 2026)

Readings:

- Optimal Town-Gown Chapter 3
- Blake Gumprecht (2003) The American College Town, *Geographical Review*, 93:1, 51-80, DOI: [10.1111/j.1931-0846.2003.tb00020.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1931-0846.2003.tb00020.x)

Assignment:

- Students should submit their selected city and university that they will research throughout the semester. This submission is due by 3pm on January 23.

Week 4: Local Citizens (February 9, 2026)

Readings

- Optimal Town-Gown Marriage Chapter 2
- Bruning, S. D., McGrew, S., & Cooper, M. (2006). Town-gown relationships: Exploring university-community engagement from the perspective of community members. *Public Relations Review*, 32(2), 125–130. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2006.02.005>

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Week 5: Mission and Responsibility for University vs City (February 16, 2026)

Readings:

- Dunn, D. D., & Whorton, J. W. (1987). *University Public Service to State and Local Government: A Program in Search of a Paradigm*. *Government Review, Autumn* (Vol. 19, pp. 114–118). Retrieved from <https://about.jstor.org/terms>

Assignments:

- Students should watch the ITGA webinar on College Towns, Declining Enrollments: Challenges and Opportunities. Initial posts by all students should be made to the discussion board by 7 pm on Feb 16. Responses to at least two other posts made by your classmates should be done by 4pm on February 23.

Week 6: University Leadership (February 23, 2026)

Readings:

- Optimal Town-Gown Chapter 7 (111-135)
- Weill, L. V. (2009). The President's Role in Cultivating Positive Town-Gown Relations. *Planning for Higher Education*, 37(4), 37–42. Retrieved from <http://ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/212629708?accountid=13158>

Assignments:

- Students should watch the ITGA webinar on College Towns, Declining Enrollments: Challenges and Opportunities. Initial posts by all students should be made to the discussion board by 7pm on Feb 13. Responses to at least two other posts made by your classmates should be done by 4pm on February 20.

Week 7: Local Government Leadership (March 2, 2026)

Readings:

- Optimal Town-Gown Chapter 7 (136-162)

Spring Break (March 9-13, 2026) No in-person class

Week 8: Impacting the Town-Gown Relationship (March 16, 2026)

Readings:

- Optimal Town-Gown Chapter 6
- Review International Town Gown Association Website

Assignments:

- Leader Briefings due by 7pm March 5. (You are welcome to turn this in early!)

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Week 9: Town-Gown Issues and Opportunities – Housing (March 23, 2026)

Readings:

- Smith, D. P., & Fox, M. (2019). Studentification Guide for North America, 1–38. Retrieved from [http://158.125.160.56/media/wwwlboroacuk/external/content/schoolsanddepartments/geography/downloads/Studentification Guide for North America.pdf](http://158.125.160.56/media/wwwlboroacuk/external/content/schoolsanddepartments/geography/downloads/Studentification%20Guide%20for%20North%20America.pdf)

Week 10: Town-Gown Issues and Opportunities –Local Government Management (March 30, 2026)

Readings:

- O'Toole, L. J. (1997). Treating Networks Seriously: Practical and Research-Based Agendas in Public Administration. *Public Administration Review*, 57(1), 45. <https://doi.org/10.2307/976691>

Week 11: Economic and Workforce Development (April 6, 2026)

Assignments:

- Local Government Impact Essay due by 7 pm, March 30.

Week 12

Town-Gown Issues and Opportunities – K-12 Education

- Maranto, R., & Dean, J. (2015). Not Separate and Not Equal? Achievement and Attainment Equity in College Towns. *Social Science Quarterly*, 96(4), 985–995. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.12174>

Week 13: Town-Gown Issues and Opportunities – Collegiate Athletics (April 13, 2026)

Week 14: Presentations (April 20, 2026)

Week 15: Presentations (April 27, 2026)

Week 16: Exam