



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

Course Syllabus

PADP 6960: Public Management, CRN 49352

Spring 2026

301 Baldwin Hall, UGA main campus

Wednesdays 7:00 – 9:50pm

The University of Georgia
School of Public and International Affairs
Department of Public Administration & Policy
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Course description and objectives

Public Management is a graduate-level course designed to familiarize students with the major themes and issues in the field of public management, which refers to management in government and nonprofit organizations. The course will help students understand the political context of public management and cultivate management skills for working in that environment. Students will learn to recognize individual and organizational level phenomena that affect organizational performance and effectiveness, and they will consider what it means to be a public-minded manager who is responsible to multiple stakeholder groups that often have divergent interests.

Organization theory provides the principal intellectual foundation for the study of public management. Drawing on interdisciplinary insights from the social and behavioral sciences, organization theory helps explain how individuals and organizations behave as they pursue their goals—or, in the case of public and nonprofit organizations, as they implement public policies and advance philanthropic missions. This course examines the evolution of organization theory over time and its relevance for understanding management in government and nonprofit settings. Emphasis is placed on both the theoretical development of the field and its practical applications, including how public and nonprofit organizations differ from private firms and how management practices vary across sectors.

Early organizational theorists sought universal principles for structuring and managing organizations, but contemporary perspectives emphasize contingency, recognizing that effective management depends on organizational characteristics such as size, mission, and environment. Accordingly, the course explores key organizational elements that shape performance and effectiveness, including the relationship between organizations and their environments,

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.

organizational structure and design, leadership and management, strategy and decision-making, and related topics.

People are the most important resource in any organization. Organizations that have highly motivated staff, competent leaders, a compelling mission, and adequate resources to fulfill their mission usually perform well. The behavioral sciences have become an integral part of the study of management and the primary source of knowledge about the behavior of individuals within organizations. This course will cover many aspects of organization behavior including motivation, performance, satisfaction, commitment, leadership, and other related topics.

The definition of effective public management has expanded over time, with some scholars contending that it has replaced public administration. Regardless of these territorial claims, contemporary public managers need to be versatile and competent. They must learn to diagnose problems, initiate timely action, manage the external environment, and lead their organizations effectively. These managers must also navigate the turbulent political environment, act accountably, and orchestrate collective action under suboptimal conditions. The level of cultural diversity and dynamism in today's workplace can pose significant challenges for public managers, and their yardstick for success includes not only managing their own organizations effectively, but also managing across organizations, networks, and global partnerships to achieve broader purposes.

Students are encouraged to apply the subject matter of the course to their own individual fields of specialty or interest, and to share their personal insights with the class as the semester progresses. Doing so will enliven seminar sessions and enrich the learning experience for all.

Student learning outcomes

This course will help prepare students to lead and manage in public organizations and to participate effectively in governance. Students will complete some assignments individually but will also work in small groups to learn collaboration skills and collective responsibility.

The course has several closely related aims. Students will:

- 1 Grasp the important themes, perspectives, and theories of public management
- 2 Explore the relationship between organization theory and behavior, on one hand, and public management theory and prosocial behavior on the other
- 3 Learn about the literature and major issues involved in the subject (including conceptual, theoretical, methodological, and practical issues)
- 4 Survey and analyze the theoretical frameworks commonly used for the study of public management and reflect on the current state of the field
- 5 Write a term-length paper on a topic related to organizational performance and effectiveness;
- 6 Develop a keen understanding of what it means to organize, lead, and manage well in the public and nonprofit sectors
- 7 Learn important management concepts such as unity of command, span of control, delegation of authority, total quality management, etc.
- 8 Learn to write effectively as a graduate student and public manager
- 9 Lead discussions and complete exercises applying knowledge gained from the course
- 10 Explore ways to bridge the gap between theory and practice and between scholars and practitioners

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 will be taught in weekly sessions. Various instructional media will be utilized to enhance learning in the course. Small work groups will be formed early in the semester to lead discussions on course readings and case studies, and to complete other assignments throughout the semester. The eLC course website will be utilized to share materials and coordinate activities. The website is accessible at: <https://uga.view.usg.edu/d21/login>. All course deliverables will be submitted by email and late penalties will apply.

Most seminar sessions will include lectures, student-led presentations, and class discussions on headline topics. During these sessions, the instructor will present material, pose questions for discussion, focus on points of dispute, and help guide the search for answers. Students are encouraged to ask questions and raise important issues. Students should complete all readings on time and be prepared to discuss the literature and any key issues on the agenda. For individual students, attendance and the frequency and quality of their contributions to the class will influence grades, as explained below.

All course deliverables should be submitted through official university email accounts and channels – not through the eLC course website or from private email accounts, and they should be submitted as file attachments in Microsoft Word document format – not as PDFs, non-Word documents, or links to cloud files.

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 course research paper (20 percent), and individual attendance and participation (10 percent). These components are explained below, and they will be discussed in more detail during the initial class session.

Note: Any PhD students enrolled in the course will have additional readings and substantially different deliverables based on their individual needs 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. The citation should adhere to the APSA style manual, which is stored on the eLC course website along with numerous examples of correct citations. The group should email these abstracts to the instructor by noon on the day before the reading will be discussed in class. Once reviewed and 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 a midterm and final examination, each worth approximately 30 percent of the final grade. These examinations will consist of several short essay questions and may include some objectively scored items. The final examination will be similar but comprehensive in nature. For grading purposes, the main emphasis is on the content of answers, 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

Course project paper

Students will write an original research paper on one of the following topics: (1) a great organizational success story, or (2) a colossal organizational failure. The purpose of this assignment is for students to immerse themselves into a public organization and utilize knowledge gained from the course to conduct an in-depth analysis focusing on how well the organization is managed and its overall level of performance – to determine whether it is a success or failure as originally suspected. Students should submit a paragraph-length research proposal by email no later than midterm. The proposal should include the name of 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.

organization, whether it is seen as a success or failure, the student's reasons for choosing that particular organization, and several scholarly references supporting the proposal. The proposal is due by midterm and the final paper is due at semester's end. Importantly, *each student's topic and research plan must be approved in advance by the instructor.*

Students should strive for papers that are high quality, well written, 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, non-word documents, or links to cloud files). Submit the examination to the instructor by email by the due date. In-text citations and references are required. They should be formatted according to the Style Manual for Political Science, which is stored on the eLC course website. Grading will be based on content, quality of presentation, and evidence that the arguments were informed by course readings and classroom discussions. There is no strict page limit, but the suggested length is 15-18 pages plus a reference list. The research paper will count approximately 20 percent of the final grade. Late penalties will apply.

Attendance and Participation

Attendance and participation will count approximately 10 percent of the final grade. Students are expected to attend all class meetings. Avoid late arrivals and early departures because they are disruptive to the class and will count as partial absences. I will circulate an attendance roll at the beginning of each class meeting for each student to initial. This roll will serve as the official record of attendance for the course. Anyone who arrives late should notify me promptly to avoid incurring a full absence. Students who miss excessive time (more than two classes), or who frequently arrive late or leave early, 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 record since being present is a prerequisite for class participation; then I consider how frequent, valuable, and constructive the student's contributions have been to class, and how responsive the student has been to course assignments and my specific requests during the semester. Finally, I differentiate between required and voluntary participation. The latter is especially valuable and earns more credit.

Note: As a professional courtesy, please send me an email in advance if you anticipate arriving late or leaving early, missing a class, or submitting a late 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.

According to UGA policy, artificial intelligence (AI) may not be used for coursework unless explicitly authorized by the instructor beforehand. In this course, AI tools such as ChatGPT and Microsoft Copilot may not be used to write or revise course deliverables. All written composition should reflect the student’s own work. However, generative AI can be used for brainstorming and in the early stages of research to identify gaps in knowledge and identify potential sources of information. In addition, *all written assignments in this course should be completed individually – not collaboratively – unless otherwise stated by the instructor.*

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 will include 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:

- Richard L. Daft, 2021. *Organization Theory and Design*, 13th ed. Boston, MA: South-Western College Publishing. ISBN-13: 978-0357445143
- Hal G. Rainey, 2014. *Understanding and Managing Public Organizations*, 5th ed. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. ISBN-13: 978-1118583715 (Note: this book is available online through the UGA library website.)
- John Clayton Thomas, 2020. *Leading as a Public-Minded Manager: People, Politics, Purpose*. Irvine, CA: Melvin & Leigh Publishers. ISBN-13: 978-1733934428
- Other readings as assigned.

These books can be ordered online or through the UGA main campus bookstore and off-campus bookstores in the area. Limited copies may also be available for temporary use from the main library, departmental library, or directly from the instructor. These books are available in a variety of formats and at different prices. Students should contact the UGA main campus bookstore, online retailers, or the publisher's website for details. Any additional readings will be stored on the ELC course website for student 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 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 when possible. Students should check their UGA email inbox daily for updates and other information pertinent to the course.