

PADP 7550 – Intergovernmental Relations & Network Governance
Department of Public Administration and Policy
School of Public & International Affairs
University of Georgia
Spring 2026

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Class Time: Tuesdays, 7:00-9:50

Location: Baldwin 102

Office Hours: By Appointment – Scheduled remote or ad hoc prior to class

Course Description

In an idealized form, the American system of federalism provides clear delineation of powers between the national and sub-national levels of government. In this ideal system, citizens and groups know precisely which elected officials are responsible for specific public functions. In such a system, taxpayers have clear understanding of how revenue is collected and distributed. When conflict exists in this hypothetical system of government, aggrieved parties feel confident in their ability to appeal to the correct Federal, State, Local, or Tribal officials who will weigh their claims against counterparties with a firm knowledge of what will maximize public good, while simultaneously adhering to well-established Constitutional principles. However noble and pleasant this system may sound; this is not the system of government that operates in the United States of America in the 21st century.

Intergovernmental relations (IGR) focuses on the developments and deviations that have emerged since the beginning of the federal system, showcasing that citizens, interest groups, and government officials often have asymmetric knowledge and differing abilities to influence various levels of government. The study of IGR attempts to make sense of the complex network of democratic systems, delegated authority, interest group politics, and individual preferences that guide public policy from idea to implementation. A stronger understanding of IGR enhances the ability of public administrators to better understand the strengths and limitations of their own roles, while better preparing them to maximize the opportunities to successfully improve public welfare.

This course is structured to provide a collaborative and conversational setting that will draw on the academic, professional, and individual experiences of students. The readings and discussions are designed to build on knowledge gained in other graduate level courses and to provide an applied analytical framework for future courses. This course will blend historical and modern readings that illustrate core concepts in the field of IGR. Students will spend significant time learning about applied policy verticals that will illustrate how the core academic concepts are reflected in modern public policy delivery. Finally, students will use their knowledge and experience to participate in role-playing exercises which will require them to author policy memos and participate in class simulations to propose hypothetical solutions to real-world policy problems. For students with significant public sector work experience, this class will be an opportunity to reflect on past challenges and experiences

using both modern and historical texts as a guide. For those students who may not have significant public sector work experience, this class will provide an opportunity to learn from the experience of your classmates and will enhance your understanding of networked systems of governance early in your career.

Note from the instructor: I will be teaching this course as a part-time instructor and I maintain full-time employment outside of UGA. As such, I will rarely be immediately available to respond to messages from students during business hours, especially on the day-of class as I am traveling from Atlanta. I have included my mobile phone number in the above contact info, but the best way to communicate with me is via email. I will monitor email regularly and will commit to respond to student questions within 24 hours of a message being received. If for some reason, 24 hours lapses, please consider a courtesy follow-up and know that there is likely a professional or family obligation that has my attention.

As we all live in the same world with unexpected developments in our daily lives, I will approach management of this course with the same core values of my other professional affiliation: integrity, excellence, and respect. If you need a special accommodation for a planned or unforeseen reason, I will do my best to work with you to maximize flexibility while maintaining the rigor of the course. Any deviations or accommodations will be at the sole discretion of the instructor. I will approach any extraordinary requests as sincere and expect that students will show the same level of respect to me as well as their fellow classmates.

Objectives

1. Academic – This course will provide a foundational academic understanding of the key concepts within the field of intergovernmental relations. These concepts and lessons will be valuable additions to your knowledge of the public administration literature, whether this is your first graduate level course or your final graduate level course.
2. Practical – This course will lean heavily on case studies, policy memos, and other applications of the literature to improve your professional ability to understand intergovernmental relations. At the end of this course, students will be well-equipped to discuss elements of intergovernmental relations as they relate to the modern public policy process.
3. Collaborative – This course provides the opportunity to learn from your fellow classmates through multiple communication channels, collaborate with them on projects (if you choose the group option), and strengthen a foundational skill that is a valuable asset in almost any public- sector career.

Learning Outcomes

1. Students will be able to articulate how the federal system evolved from a hierarchy of delegated powers into a system of intergovernmental relations where power is derived and allocated through both formal and informal networks.
2. Through collaborative engagement, students will use creative problem-solving skills to identify how governance, management, and politics impact the delivery of public services.
3. Students will develop competency in producing professional policy memos.
4. Students will enhance their confidence in public speaking through formally presenting their policy memo recommendations in front of the class.

Assigned Readings & Discussions

There is not a traditional textbook for this course. Instead, each class will contain three distinct categories of readings that each student will complete prior to class.

- 1) Foundational readings from the academic IGR canon will be used for the core lectures. These will be posted on eLc at the start of the semester, and they are broken up in a way to build on the content naturally.
- 2) News articles, podcasts, case studies, and other forms of media will be used as a tool to translate the academic concepts into historical, recent, and current-day applications of intergovernmental relations.
- 3) We will read “The Power Broker – Robert Moses and the Fall of New York” by Robert Caro. This is a massive biography of one of the most consequential individuals in public administration during the 20th century. The story of Robert Moses is at its core one of intergovernmental relations, demonstrating the power and responsibility that comes when one person controls the levers of power at the local, state, and federal levels simultaneously. It is widely available in both traditional and audiobook format and you should purchase it prior to the first class. We will discuss a section of the book in each class during the se

It is critical that students respectfully engage with the instructor and other students in class. In this class, asking clarifying questions, probing for inconsistencies in logic, and attempting to apply the readings to the lived experiences of students are all considered among the highest form of engagement. As such, this class does contain a participation component in the grading structure to reflect the fact that students need to both attend class and participate in a meaningful way. It is recognized that students may come from diverse academic and cultural backgrounds, where questioning the instructor is seen as a sign of disrespect or lack of knowledge. All assurances are given that the opposite is true for discussions in this course. The instructor will note who is attending and participating and base this portion of the final grade on a holistic summary of the semester. Students aren’t going to be docked points for missing a single class or having a bad day, but the totality of the class discussion will inform this portion of the final grade. Many of the topics to be discussed are complicated or may draw from areas of study where students don’t have previous exposure. This is by design and the course material will often prompt clarifications, questions, and discussion to fully understand their implications. Put more bluntly, it is not possible to receive an A in this course if you do not participate meaningfully in class.

Grades and Assignments

100 – 94 points A
93.9 – 90 points A-
89.9 – 87 points B+
86.9 – 83 points B
82.9 – 80 points B-
79.9 – 76 points C+
75.9 – 70 points C

69.9 – 60 points D

59.9 – 0 points F

Individual Case Study 1: 2 Page Memo – 20 points

Students will be assigned a case study and each student will respond using a professional policy memo format that responds to the policy situation outlined in the case study. The instructor will provide direction on appropriate policy memo format for any students who do not have experience writing these types of memos.

Individual or Group Case Study 2: 2 Page Memo – 20 points

Students will be assigned a case study and will choose whether to participate individually or as a part of a group. For this memo, students will have the opportunity to collaborate with their classmates in groups of up to three total students to respond to a case study using a professional policy memo format. Some students may prefer to work individually on this memo for a variety of reasons and that is completely acceptable. There is no change in the grading format or expectations based on whether students choose to work individually or as a group. The group option is offered as an opportunity to collaborate with your classmates and to strengthen your own ideas, recommendations, and understanding of the course materials. Individuals and groups will present their memos to the class where we will discuss the recommendations and analysis as a class.

Final Exam – 40 points

Class Engagement – 20 Points

Students will receive a grade based on their attendance and participation in class. If an absence is unavoidable, the student should reach out to the instructor ahead of class or as soon as possible after it occurs to discuss arrangements. As previously discussed above, engagement in class requires students to ask questions, provide perspective, and apply the readings to lived experiences.

Academic Honesty

It is expected students in this course arrive with an extremely high standard of ethics as current and aspiring professionals in the public administration field. At a minimum, you are expected to abide by the UGA Student Honor Code: "I will be academically honest in all of my academic work and will not tolerate academic dishonesty of others." Unauthorized use of artificial intelligence software or word mixing software to write your paper or disguise plagiarized work is considered unauthorized assistance in this course. A Culture of Honesty, the University's policy and procedures for handling cases of suspected dishonesty, can be found at www.uga.edu/ovpi.

Accommodations for Disabilities

If you plan to request accommodations for a disability, please register with the Disability Resource Center (DRC). The DRC can be reached by visiting Clark Howell Hall, by calling 706-542-8719 (voice) or 706-542-8778 (TTY), or by visiting <https://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

Preferred Names and Pronouns

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I am eager to address you by your preferred name and/or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

Prohibition on Recording Lectures

In the absence of written authorization from the UGA Disability Resource Center, students may not make a visual or audio recording of any aspect of this course. Students who have a recording accommodation agree in writing that they:

1. Will use the records only for personal academic use during the specific course.
2. Understand that faculty members have copyright interest in their class lectures and that they agree not to infringe on this right in any way.
3. Understand that the faculty member and students in the class have privacy rights and agree not to violate those rights by using recordings for any reason other than their own personal study.
4. Will not release, digitally upload, broadcast, transcribe, or otherwise share all or any part of the recordings. They also agree that they will not profit financially and will not allow others to benefit personally or financially from lecture recordings or other course materials.
5. Will erase/delete all recordings at the end of the semester.
6. Understand that violation of these terms may subject them to discipline under the Student Code of Conduct or subject them to liability under copyright laws.

Disclaimer: The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.