



**THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY**

JOHN GLENN SCHOOL  
OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

**Research Paper in Public Affairs  
PUB AFRS 7900  
Spring 2015**

**Thursdays: 5:45-8:30pm** (Hagerty Hall 0050)  
Credit hours: 3

**Professor**

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**Course Description**

Public Affairs (PA) 7900 builds on the core curriculum students have completed in their first year. This is an opportunity for students to integrate the knowledge and skills gained in the MPA or In-Career MA program by applying theory to practice on a topic of each student's choice. It serves as an important bridge between the classroom and the world of professional practice.

**Prerequisites**

MPA and MA students generally will enroll in 7900 upon completion of Glenn School core courses.

**Course Objectives**

The objective of PA 7900 is to synthesize and apply the knowledge, skills, and values acquired in the core curriculum to a public policy or management problem. The active use and integration of material from core courses in public policy, public sector economics, public management, and decision support and quantitative methods in the Policy/Management Paper informs issues faced by public policy analysts and managers. The course also prepares students to critically assess policy and management analysis as well as prepares students to produce their own analysis that informs a real world policy or management issue. In preparing the paper, students will be expected to produce high-quality policy and/or management analysis while operating under a tight deadline. In the structured environment of the class, we will walk through the major steps of completing the paper over the course of 15 weeks (14 class sessions). This step-by-step approach should position students well to be able to complete a similar analysis in a job situation under even tighter deadlines and with less structure.

Students will also have an opportunity in PA 7900 to engage in activities designed to foster skills related to the effective presentation of the analytic results to various stakeholders.

### **Required Readings**

Elements of the Policy/Management Paper are adapted from

- William N. Dunn, *Public Policy Analysis: An Introduction, Fourth Edition*
- David McNabb, *Research Methods in Public Administration and Nonprofit Management: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*
- Eugene Bardach, *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving*
- Catherine F. Smith, *Writing Public Policy: A Practical Guide to Communicating in the Policy Process*
- E.S. Quade, *Analysis for Public Decisions*

Readings from these books will be used in the class and provided on Carmen at <http://www.carmen.osu.edu/>. Each student will also design his or her own reading lists tailored to specific research topics.

### **Course Format**

Class sessions will combine lectures and discussions on topics related to the building of a successful policy/management paper. These discussions will build on the reading material distributed in class and will also focus on deconstructing some example papers. In addition, class time will be devoted to small group breakout sessions in which students will provide oral feedback on one another's paper sections. Assignments are to be submitted in Carmen by the dates and times specified below.

### **Course Requirements and Evaluation**

Students are required to earn a grade of "B" or better to successfully fulfill the capstone requirement, which is necessary to graduate from both the MA and MPA programs. Students with a grade lower than "B" or an incomplete will be required to take a second capstone course. A student has only two chances to achieve a grade of "B" or better in the capstone course. Regardless of grade, students who take an Incomplete in the course are considered not to have successfully fulfilled the capstone requirement and will be required to take a second capstone class. This section describes these requirements and their relative weights for the final grade:

- A. Mid-term comprehensive examination – 30%
- B. Weekly assignments and participation – 20%
- C. Final policy/management paper – 40%
- D. Oral presentations – 10%

### **Grading and meeting the Glenn School capstone requirement**

The course is graded A-E, based on a total of 100 points, with point distribution outlined in the course requirements section. Transformation of numerical grade to letter grade will be according to the schedule below:

A	93 – 100	B-	80 – 82	D+	68 – 69
A-	90 – 92	C+	78 – 79	D	64 – 67
B+	88 – 89	C	73 – 77	E	63 and below

**A. Comprehensive Examination (30%)**

Midway through the semester (due February 27), all students will be required to complete a graded take-home examination. This exam comprises 30% of the grade for the course. The exam is intended to test a student's ability to integrate the knowledge and skills gained throughout her or his graduate program and apply it to practice. While students may be working in groups on their capstone projects, **collaboration with other students on this exam is strictly prohibited**. The exact wording of the exam will be provided to students at least two weeks prior to the due date. The questions will take the following general form:

1. Clearly define the problem addressed by your capstone project. What evidence is there that this is a significant problem worthy of our attention? Who are the relevant stakeholders and what are their roles? Also, identify any previous policy or management efforts to address the problem.
2. Critically assess previous evaluations of the same or similar topic. Components of this assessment should include design, data, statistical methods, internal and external validity, and the counterfactual.
3. Discuss how you plan to address the problem. Why are you choosing this approach, and why is this preferred over other approaches you examined? Further, discuss the rationale for the outcome measures you have chosen.
4. Discuss the policy or managerial alternatives you are examining. What are the specific criteria you will use to compare the alternatives?
5. Thinking about your recommendations (or choose one of the possible recommendations if you are not yet ready to make a recommendation), address possible spillovers and the political, organizational, legal, and economic conditions that may affect the successful implementation of your choice.

The comprehensive exam will also constitute the University's required master's examination for the Master of Arts (MA) degree (In-Career, Dual). The exam committee is assigned by the Glenn School's curriculum committee and approved by the School's director and includes two core faculty members plus the instructor of the class. While the instructor assigns the grade for the assignment as part of the grade for the course, the three-member examination committee evaluates separately whether the student achieves a successful pass ("Pass" or "Marginal Pass"). Students who fail the written comprehensive exam will be required to stand for an oral examination with the exam committee, during which they will have the opportunity to expand further on their answers to the written exam. MA students failing the oral exam will be required to take a second capstone class in a future semester and also successfully pass the comprehensive exam for that course.

An MA student has only two chances to pass the comprehensive exam. Students passing the exam but failing to achieve a "B" or higher in the course will be required to take another capstone class and exam. *Both* criteria ("B" in the course and "Pass" or "Marginal Pass" on the exam) are required to graduate.

For Master of Public Administration (MPA) students, the comprehensive examination will simply serve as a midterm examination for the course. Completion of a capstone class with a

grade of “B” or higher satisfies the School’s capstone exit requirement for the MPA degree. All other degree requirements must also be successfully met in order to graduate (See Master’s Handbook for full requirements.)

**B. Weekly Assignments and Participation (20%)**

Twenty percent of the course grade will be comprised of successful completion of weekly assignments, and regular attendance and participation in the course:

**Weekly Assignments**

- First drafts of sections of your papers must be turned in by 5:30 pm on the dates specified below (see the course outline table). Students in the same group (groups to be assigned the first day of class) are expected to provide written feedback (substantive feedback beyond grammatical issues) on the drafts to each other by the following class. Quality of the feedback will be graded by the instructor and is worth 1 point. The drafts and feedback are to be submitted on Carmen in the discussion groups (your group has a separate page for each week – make sure you submit this in the proper week).
- The second draft for each section of your paper is to be submitted to the Carmen drop box by 5:30 pm on the dates specified below (see the course outline table). The grade for the weekly assignments are based on timely submission of assigned work, the quality of the work turned in, and the quality of the written feedback given to your group mates. Each draft is worth 2 points. The instructor will provide extensive written and oral feedback for the second drafts. After turning in the second draft for each component (Introduction/ Analytic Framework/Literature Review; Methodology/Data; Results, and Conclusions) for grading, it is the student’s responsibility to address the feedback and incorporate that in the final paper. The instructor will generally not review additional drafts of that section.
- When you turn in the second draft of each section and your final paper, you must also submit a document that explains how you have addressed the comments you received on the draft sections (these are the revision statement assignments in the course outline below).
- One point per day will be deducted from your final course grade for late assignments (e.g., you can lose 3 points if your 1 point deliverable is 3 days late). Instructor feedback on late submissions is not guaranteed. Grades will be accessible on Carmen.

**Attendance and Participation**

- Active and constructive participation in class discussion is a critical part of this course. Students are expected to attend each class session and come prepared to discuss questions raised by the readings and provide constructive feedback to your peers.
- Points will be deducted from your participation grade for missing two or more classes.

**C. Policy/Management Paper (40%)**

The paper is an integral component of the policy/management analytic process, serving as a bridge between the core curriculum and the world of practice. The paper is the written analytic presentation of a policy or management issue. Dunn (2008, 1) defines this analysis as the “process of multidisciplinary inquiry designed to create, critically assess, and communicate information that is useful in understanding and improving policies.”

**Paper topic**

By the beginning of the course (see the course outline below), each student will have chosen a paper topic and her or his acquired data (quantitative or qualitative). The topic can come from the student's internship, job, and/or research started in the core courses, other courses, or from other personal or professional interests. Any students who have not identified a topic and acquired data by the beginning of the course will have a topic assigned to them by the instructor.

Selected Topics students investigated recent years:

- “Quotas for Women in Legislature: A Quantitative Analysis of the Critical Mass Theory and its Impact on Gender Inequality”
- “Making the Grade: A Quantitative Examination of the Effect of Community School Status on Student Proficiency in Ohio (2004-2010)”
- “Policing Gun Storage Practices: A Quantitative Analysis of the effects of Child Access Prevention Laws on Childhood Firearms-Related Deaths (1979-2006)”
- “A Quantitative Analysis of Ohio Cancer Patients with a Significant Emphasis on the Characteristics of Medicaid Beneficiaries and the Uninsured”
- “A Sale Method Analysis: State of Ohio General Obligation Bonds”
- “Combating climate Change with Passenger Rail: An Examination of the Potential for the Ohio Hub Rail System to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Ohio”
- “Customer Satisfaction and Process Improvements: How the Twain meet in Washington State's GMAP Program”
- “Foreign Aid, Property Rights and Foreign Direct Investment: A Quantitative Study of the Effects of USAID Democracy and Governance Assistance”
- “Prevalence of Underinsurance in Ohio: Analysis from the Ohio Family Health Survey, 1998”
- “What Happens with all those Comments? A Case Study Exploration of Different Methods for Processing Public Comments on Proposed Rules for Federal Agencies”
- “The Effect of Demographic Characteristics on Criminal Sentencing Outcomes: Evidence from the Franklin County, Ohio, Justice System”
- “A Quantitative Study of the Impacts of High School Extracurricular Activities on Academic Achievement, Self-esteem and Risky Behaviors”
- “Adding it Up: A Quantitative Study on the Relationship between School Funding and Success on Standardized Tests in Ohio (2004-2009)”
- “Government in 140 Characters or Less: How State Governments Utilize A New Communications Channel”
- “A Difference-in-Difference Evaluation of China's 1994 Rural County Poverty Alleviation Plan (Baqi Plan)”
- “Economic Effects of Non-Urban Public Transportation: An Exploratory Analysis of the Job Access and Reverse Commute Program's Effect on Unemployment Rates and Welfare Payments”

***Examples of the types of analysis that might be found in a paper:***

- IBM Center for The Business of Government:  
<http://www.businessofgovernment.org/reports>
- *Governing Magazine* Government Performance Project:  
<http://www.governing.com/gpp/index.htm>
- Tax Policy Center Discussion Papers:  
<http://www.taxpolicycenter.org/library/listpubs.cfm?Listpubs=true&TypeID=201>

### ***Final Paper Evaluation***

Forty percent of the final grade will be based on the final paper, which will involve putting together the various sections you have worked on throughout the term. Here, it is important that the components actually fit together with appropriate transitions (which will be discussed in class). Below, the point value for each component of the final paper is designated.

#### *1) Title Page and Executive Summary (5 points)*

The title page should include “The Ohio State University,” “John Glenn School of Public Affairs,” your paper title, your name, the phrase “A Policy/Management Paper submitted in partial fulfillment for the Master of Public Administration Degree,” and the semester and year of completion. The executive summary, written last, should provide the reader an overview of the various sections of the paper, including the main research questions and highlights of the conclusions. The executive summary should be no more than one single-spaced page.

#### *2) An Introduction (10 points)*

This provides an overview of the topic being studied and its importance/relevance within the proper political, organizational, or other appropriate context. The introduction should also provide a concise statement of the particular research question, hypothesis or hypotheses being investigated. Typically, the introduction should also briefly report the results or findings and their implications.

#### *3) Analytic Framework/Literature Review (15 points)*

This will provide a more detailed background on the topic. Here, you should provide a relevant review of the appropriate theoretic and practice-oriented research drawing from academic journals and professional literature. You will also want to draw on relevant material from some of your other classes. It should establish what the important or unanswered questions are regarding your topic. Thus, this review of the literature should provide a theoretical basis that sets up your analytic framework.

#### *4) Methodology, Data and Hypotheses (15 points)*

This section clearly presents your research problem or hypotheses and describes whatever methodology you will use to examine or test your hypotheses. You should be clear regarding what evidence or results would lead to support or rejection of your hypotheses. In this section, you should also describe any data you use, its source(s), and descriptive statistics. You should also discuss the steps you will take to ensure the validity of the research design or project methodology, and you should discuss any potential methodological problems you might encounter.

#### *5) Results (15 points)*

This is where you discuss your findings of the tests of your research hypotheses: Are your

hypotheses supported or rejected? If you are doing an empirical study, make sure that you present the results in easy-to-read tables and that you refer to the tabular results in the text.

6) *Conclusions* (15 points)

Clearly and concisely discuss your results and any policy or management implications. Be sure to present your findings in the context of the literature you reviewed earlier. Discuss whether there are any alternative explanations for your findings and be clear about the limitations to your analysis and note how these limitations might affect your results and conclusions. You should also discuss areas for future research. Finally, you should make recommendations *that follow from your findings*. Resist the temptation to make recommendations that are not supported by your analysis.

7) *References and appendices (if any)* (5 points)

Any non-original ideas should be referenced. All of the papers in the references should be cited in the text using a common style such as APA or Chicago (This is very easy to organize using Word 2007's references features.)

8) *Good grammar/organization/presentation* (15 points)

The quality of the prose is important in terms of being able to relay your findings.

9) *Revision Statement* (5 points)

Provide a statement describing how you addressed the feedback received throughout the term.

There will be a 5 point daily penalty for late papers, and papers turned in more than 3 days late will receive an Incomplete (which means you will have to take a second capstone course).

***D. Oral Presentation (10%)***

Communicating your results in through oral communication is a critical skill in public affairs. You will have the opportunity to present your research to the class twice during the semester. Interim presentations will allow you to practice your presentation skills and have one of your peers serve as a discussant for your paper. Then, on the final day of course each student will convey the results of the policy/management paper to the class through a short oral presentation, along with a brief question and answer period. The presentations will count as 10% of your final grade in the course. Students will be graded upon clarity of presentation, degree of organization and time management, quality of slides, and Q & A interactions.

## Academic misconduct

From: <http://oaa.osu.edu/coamfaqs.html#academicmisconductstatement>

The Ohio State University and the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM) expect that all students have read and understand the University's [Code of Student Conduct](#), and that all students will complete all academic and scholarly assignments with fairness and honesty. Failure to follow the rules and guidelines established in the University's *Code of Student Conduct* may constitute "Academic Misconduct." Sanctions for the misconduct could include a failing grade in this course and suspension or dismissal from the University.

In the Ohio State University's [Code of Student Conduct](#), Section 3335-23-04 defines academic misconduct as: "Any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the University, or subvert the educational process." Examples of academic misconduct include (but are not limited to) plagiarism, collusion (unauthorized collaboration), copying the work of another student, and possession of unauthorized materials during an examination. Ignorance of the University's [Code of Student Conduct](#) is never considered an "excuse" for academic misconduct.

Other sources of information on academic misconduct (integrity) to which you can refer include: The Committee on Academic Misconduct web page: <http://oaa.osu.edu/coam.html>  
*Ten Suggestions for Preserving Academic Integrity*: <http://oaa.osu.edu/coamtensuggestions.html>  
*Eight Cardinal Rules of Academic Integrity*: [www.northwestern.edu/uacc/8cards.html](http://www.northwestern.edu/uacc/8cards.html)

If you have any questions about the above policy or what constitutes academic misconduct in this course, please contact me.

## Disabilities

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated. Students should inform the instructors as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>.

## Course Outline

Class	Date	Topics	Assignment Due	Points
1	January 15 (professor out of town, no class)	<p>Introduction and Literature Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction and research overview (McNabb, ch 4-6)</li> <li>• Writing an introduction (Bardach, ch 1; Smith, ch 3)</li> <li>• Writing a literature review (Bardach, ch 2)</li> <li>• Structuring policy problems (Dunn, ch 3 – for review)</li> </ul> <p>ASSIGNMENT OF IN-CLASS WORKING GROUPS</p> <p><i>Groups: Discuss research question and design, data and approach to analysis, literature review and hypotheses</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrated progress towards a completed dataset and/or data collection plan (no deliverable)</li> <li>• Articulation of a clear research question that may be addressed by that data (no deliverable)</li> <li>• List of relevant scholarly articles and government reports (no deliverable)</li> <li>• Demonstrated progress towards an appropriate and implementable research design (given the research question and data) (no deliverable)</li> </ul>	
2	January 22	<p>Research Ethics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research Ethics/IRB (McNabb, ch 3)</li> <li>• OSU's IRB training through CITI</li> </ul> <p><i>Groups: Discuss potential ethical issues with each of your projects and how you are managing those issues</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CITI training – bring CITI completion report to class with you (<a href="http://orpp.osu.edu/irb/training/citi.cfm">http://orpp.osu.edu/irb/training/citi.cfm</a>)</li> <li>• A completed dataset and/or data collection plan</li> <li>• An appropriate and implementable research design (given the research question and data)</li> </ul>	1 bring to class
3	January 29	<p>Professional Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research paper (McNabb, ch 24)</li> <li>• Professional Writing (Stimson)</li> <li>• Tips on formatting a paper (McNabb, ch 25)</li> <li>• Critique paper examples of intros and lit reviews</li> <li>• Discuss example of a revision statement</li> </ul> <p><i>Groups: Discuss introduction and lit review for your</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1st draft introduction and literature review sections</li> </ul>	2 group

		<i>study/research</i>		
4	Feb 5	<p>Quantitative Research Methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you are conducting a quantitative study: McNabb, ch 10,11,28 are required;</li> <li>• Critique paper examples of methods and data sections</li> </ul> <p><i>Groups: Discuss methods and data sections for your study/research</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback on classmates' introductions and literature review</li> </ul>	1 group
5	February 12	<p>Qualitative Research Methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you are conducting a qualitative study, McNabb ch 17, 18 are required</li> <li>• Mapping your GIS data (handout)</li> </ul> <p><i>Groups: Work through GIS tutorial; Discuss how can maps help your research</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2<sup>nd</sup> draft Introductions and literature review submitted <i>with revision statements</i></li> </ul>	2 dropbox
6	February 19	<p>Policy Alternatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying stakeholders (Dunn, ch 3; Quade, ch 21)</li> <li>• Describe alternatives and identify tradeoffs (Quade, ch 8 and 12; Bardach, ch 3)</li> <li>• Relevant spillovers and externalities associated with alternatives (Bardach, ch 5-6)</li> <li>• Political, organizational, and economic conditions affecting implementation (Quade, ch 21)</li> </ul> <p><i>Groups: Discuss policy alternatives, stakeholders, and externalities</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1<sup>st</sup> draft of methods and data sections (make sure you have testable hypotheses presented in one of the following ways: 1: have an independent theory section, laying out your theoretical framework, and testable hypotheses; 2: incorporate the hypothesis development with your literature review; 3: state your hypotheses in the data section)</li> </ul>	2 group

7	February 26	<p>Policy Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy recommendations (Dunn Ch 8; Greenbaum &amp; Landers)</li> <li>• Critique paper examples of results and conclusions</li> </ul> <p><i>Groups: Discuss possible policy implications or your study/research</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback on classmates' methods and data sections</li> </ul>	1 group
8	March 5 (No class, professor out of town)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2<sup>nd</sup> draft methods and data sections <i>with revision statement</i></li> <li>• Midterm "Comprehensive" Exam Due</li> </ul>	2 dropbox  30%
9	March 12	<p>Communicating your results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicating results (Dunn, Ch 9)</li> <li>• Presenting conclusions (Dunn, Ch 5)</li> </ul> <p><i>Groups: Discuss results and conclusions for your study/research</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1<sup>st</sup> draft results and conclusions sections</li> </ul>	2 group
SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS				
10	March 26	<p>Titles and Executive Summary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Title page and executive summary (McNabb, ch 24)</li> <li>• Monitoring and evaluation plan (Dunn, ch 6)</li> <li>• Critique paper examples of executive summaries</li> </ul> <p><i>Groups: Discuss remaining challenges to finishing the paper</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback on classmates' results and conclusions sections</li> </ul>	1 group
11	April 2	<p>Interim presentations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each presenter will have a formal discussant;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2nd draft results and conclusion <i>with revision statement</i></li> </ul>	2 dropbox

		each presenter must get a full rough draft to his/her discussant by March 6		
12	April 9	Interim presentations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each presenter will have a formal discussant; each presenter must get a full rough draft to his/her discussant by March 6</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1st draft of 1-page executive summary</li> </ul>	1 group
13	April 16	Putting it all together  <i>Groups: Oralfeedback on executive summaries</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback on classmates' executive summaries</li> </ul>	1 group
14	April 23	FINAL PRESENTATIONS (Policy forum)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2nd draft executive summary section <i>with revision statement</i></li> <li>Peer evaluations of group- mates' feedback</li> <li>Final presentations</li> </ul>	2 dropbox  10%
	April 24	Final Papers due	Final paper due by 7:45 pm	40%

Note: Submit drafts and comments to your group's Carmen discussion group page for the proper week (denoted by "group" in the points column above). Submit second drafts and your final paper and your revision statement to the Carmen drop box (denoted by "drop box" in the points column above).