

PLSC 695 – Capstone Seminar in Public Administration

Political Science Department
College of Arts & Sciences
Eastern Michigan University
Winter 2016

Gregory K. Plagens
601M Pray-Harrold
(734) 487-2239
gregory.plagens@emich.edu

Class Time: 6:00 to 8:40 PM, T
419 Pray-Harrold
Office Hours: 3:30 to 5 PM, T (P-H, 601M)
1 to 3:30 PM, W (P-H, 601M)
5 to 6 PM, R (P-H, 601M)
and by appointment

Course Description

The capstone seminar in the MPA Program requires students to transition in their classroom role from that of learner to that of learner and instructor. In courses throughout the MPA Program, primary emphasis has been on students learning from faculty. In this course, you must begin applying what you have learned throughout the program to analyze and solve problems, and to bring those analyses and solutions to class to facilitate the learning of others. Effective administrators solve problems, and they usually do so with the cooperation of others. In this course, you will encounter real administrative problems, and you must demonstrate that you can engage effective problem-solving behavior.

The course focuses on five case studies of varying degrees of complexity. The simplest case will be introduced first so that students can become familiar with analyzing cases and preparing reports, as well as learning to interact with classmates as alternative analyses and possible solutions are explored. The difficulty of the cases, and the expectations of students, will progress with each case. Students will work independently in the first four cases. The fifth case will require students to work in teams to produce one analysis and one solution to the problem. The final case will require a formal presentation by the team.

In this learning experience, emphasis is placed on stimulating new ideas, encouraging creativity and independence of thought, encouraging the development of leadership skills, encouraging willingness to take risks, encouraging teamwork, and assuming personal responsibility for achieving results. These are important to effective public and nonprofit leadership and management, and program faculty are eager to see how well you do in this simulated role.

Course Objectives

Students will demonstrate ability to do the following:

- analyze problems relevant to the public and nonprofit sectors;
- separate important from less important details;
- synthesize information pertaining to specific problems, drawing on various professional sources;
- provide solutions that are appropriate for specific problems;
- write clear, concise reports that are well organized and well written;
- cite sources appropriately;
- organize and deliver information in a small group presentation;
- and, work with a team.

Course Resources

Required

- Students are required to purchase a course pack from Harvard Business Publishing that contains two files.
 - One is a case coach presentation, designed to give you some things to think about when analyzing cases and preparing to talk and write about them.
 - The other is a short case we will use in class.
- Additional cases and readings will be provided in Adobe Acrobat (PDF) format on the course shell in Canvas, the university's learning management system (LMS). Access to Canvas is available at <http://canvas.emich.edu> using your EMU NetID and password.

Course Activities to Meet Objectives

The objectives for this may not be altogether different from objectives set out for you in other courses in the program. However, the means by which you will demonstrate that you have met the objectives are likely to be different. In this course you will largely work independently to arrive at solutions and then bring your solutions to class to work through them with classmates. My role in the course is more as a facilitator of learning than as an instructor. As such, there are few required readings and time has been set aside for you to work outside of class finding your own readings to support your learning.

You will not be left entirely alone, however. We will meet 10 times this semester. Some of those meetings will be to support you as you explore the cases that have been assigned. Other meetings will be for you to learn about a new case or to participate in a discussion about how you resolved an assigned case. Participation is not set aside as a percentage of your overall grade, but participation in final reporting and discussion is an important part of your grade for the assignment.

I need to assess your progress toward the stated objectives of the course, and to do this I will use writing assignments, participation in class discussions, and participation in a formal presentation. Your final grade will reflect your ability to demonstrate that you are meeting the objectives of the course.

Weights and Assigned/Due Dates

1. Case Study One (10 percent)
 - Assigned: Jan. 12; Due: Jan. 19
2. Case Study Two (15 percent)
 - Assigned: Jan. 19; Due: Feb. 2
3. Case Study Three (20 percent)
 - Assigned: Feb. 2; Due: Mar. 1
4. Case Study Four (25 percent)
 - Assigned: Mar. 1; Due: Mar. 22
5. Case Study Five (30 percent)
 - Assigned: Mar. 22; Due: Apr. 19

Course Grades

Grading is on a letter scale from "A" to "F" for writing assignments and for the final presentation.

Course Assessments

- A Exceptionally High Order 97/100
- A- 92/100
- B+ 88/100
- B Distinctly Above Average 85/100
- B- 82/100
- C+ 78/100
- C Average 75/100
- C- 72/100
- D+ 68/100
- D Below Average 65/100
- D- 62/100
- F Unsatisfactory (denoting failure) 55/100

Overall Course Grades

- A Exceptionally High Order 93+
- A- 90-92
- B+ 88-89
- B Distinctly Above Average 83-87
- B- 80-82
- C+ 78-79
- C Average 73-77
- C- 70-72
- D+ 68-69
- D Below Average 63-67
- D- 60-62
- F Unsatisfactory (denoting failure) Below 60

Students who track their performance throughout the semester and wish to compute various possible final outcomes will find the following formula for Microsoft Excel helpful:

- Final Grade = (One * 0.10) + (Two * 0.15) + (Three * 0.20) + (Four * 0.25) + (Five * 0.30)

Course Policies

Classroom Conduct

Any successful learning experience requires mutual respect. Neither instructor nor student should be subject to behavior that is rude, disruptive, intimidating, or demeaning. Views may differ on what counts as rudeness or courtesy. If you are not sure what constitutes good conduct in this classroom, ask me. The instructor has primary responsibility for and control over classroom behavior and maintenance of academic integrity.

Class Attendance

Class attendance and active participation are important elements in the learning process. Students are at the university primarily for the sake of their intellectual growth and development. Each student is personally responsible for the satisfactory completion of the coursework required. This means specifically that you are expected to attend classes, and that you are responsible for the work assigned in class, the

material covered in class and for participation in class activities (including discussion and listening) designed as part of the learning experience. Students who miss class may have their final grade lowered by one or two full letter grades as a penalty for not being part of the learning experience in the classroom.

University practice, as per the Ombuds Office, is as follows:

1. Students are responsible for notifying and communicating directly with their instructor(s) if they miss class(es) for any reason, even in a crisis.
2. Students must work directly with their instructor(s) if they miss class for any reason and need to discuss implications of their absence(s).
3. Students are advised to email instructor(s) immediately in cases of long-term medical illness/hospitalization or the death of a loved one. Email communication will suffice until the student and their instructor(s) can meet to discuss a plan forward.
4. Excused absences, exceptions and/or academic accommodations related to absences rests at the discretion of the instructor.
5. In urgent absentee circumstances, faculty may request and/or receive University verification of a death or long-term medical illness/hospitalization. In such cases, where faculty are seeking University verification from a student, they must refer students to the Office of Student Well-Being (SWB).
6. If a student's personal circumstances and/or nonattendance issues present so significant a problem that instructors are unable to address them within the context of the course, students should be referred to the Office of the Ombuds for options related to appropriate policies and resources that can assist the student.

Class Participation and the Expression of Ideas

Class participation is expected, as this course is designed to simulate decision making that goes on at the highest levels of organizations. Please feel free to ask questions or express ideas in class that are related to course content. I ask that you be respectful of your classmates or me when disagreeing with their or my views. I also ask that you be respectful of the learning objectives for the course when raising topics not obviously related. Please do not be offended if I feel the need to draw our attention back to the course material as outlined for the semester.

Late (or Missed) Assignments and Make-Up Examinations

An important part of the university experience is professional socialization. In the professional world, employees who fail to show up are often penalized financially or in other substantive ways. You should expect the same treatment here. Therefore, assignments are due on the dates announced in the syllabus. Any exception to these dates is to be agreed upon by me *in advance*. The opportunity to turn in a late paper will depend on the circumstances, and students should be prepared to provide documentation, if asked, that substantiates the reason for the absence or late paper. I reserve the right not to accept late assignments or to lower the grade of a student whose assignment is accepted late.

Penalties for Academic Dishonesty

Plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately passes off another's words or ideas without acknowledging the source. For example, turning in another's work as your own is plagiarism. If you plagiarize in this class, you will receive a zero on the assignment on which you are working and your case may be referred to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards (SCCS) for additional disciplinary action. Please be aware that plagiarism can result in suspension or permanent dismissal from the university.

Plagiarism is different from misuse of sources, occasions when a writer does not properly cite a source, misuses quotations, includes too much of an original source in a paraphrase or summary, or commits

similar unintentional violations of academic protocol. If you misuse sources, we will work together on appropriately incorporating and/or citing the sources. The misuse of sources may result in work being repeated, and a penalty for late work may be imposed.

University Services to Assist You in Learning

Disability Resource Center

It is my goal that this class be an accessible and welcoming experience for all students, including those with disabilities that may impact learning in this class. Students who believe they may have trouble participating or effectively demonstrating learning in this course should meet with me (with or without a Disability Resource Center (DRC) accommodation letter) to discuss reasonable options or adjustments. During our discussion I may suggest you contact the DRC (240K Student Center; 734-487-2470; drc@emich.edu) to talk about academic accommodations and the need for an accommodation letter. You are welcome to talk to me anytime during the semester about such issues, but it is always best if we can talk at least one week prior to the need for any modifications so that I can plan accordingly.

Writing Support

Depending on your needs, there are several options to help you develop your writing skills. Some are available online, and some offer in-person consultation based on sample writing that you take with you.

If you have minor problems with punctuation or organizing paragraphs, or if you just want to write cleaner, more concise text, my favorite book to help with this is now offered free online at <http://www.bartleby.com/141/>. Alternatively, you can find a copy at your local library or for sale in the usual places for books. The citation is as follows: Strunk Jr., William and E.B. White. 1918. *The Elements of Style*. Ithaca, N.Y.: W.P. Humphrey. Newer editions are available than the 1918 edition. Any will work nicely for you. The book is short and cheap.

If you require more serious help, or just want to work with a human being, please consider turning to The University Writing Center, The Academic Projects Center or The Holman Success Center.

- The University Writing Center (115 Halle Library; 487-0694) accepts appointments or you may drop in during regular hours, which can be found at <http://www.emich.edu/uwc/>. The UWC also has several satellite locations across campus (in Owen, Marshall, Pray-Harrold, and Mark Jefferson).
 - The UWC can help you with the writing process, but it does not proof papers for grammar and usage errors.
- The Academic Projects Center (116 Halle Library) also offers one-to-one writing consulting for students, in addition to consulting on research and technology-related issues. Students can make appointments or drop in during regular hours, which can be found at <http://www.emich.edu/apc/>.
- The Holman Success Center offers a variety of programs to help you develop academically. Their offerings and hours can be found at <http://www.emich.edu/hsc/>.
 - The HSC will help you with proofing papers for grammar and usage errors.

Course Outline

PART I: LEARNING THE CASE METHOD

Week One – Jan. 12

Course Overview

MPA Program Assessment

Introduction to the Case Study Method

Sample Case

Case Study One

- Discussion and assignment

Week Two – Jan. 19

Case Study One

- Report and discussion of findings

Case Study Two

- Discussion and assignment

PART II: APPLYING THE CASE METHOD WITH RESEARCH

Week Three – Jan. 26

Case Study Two

- Out-of-class work session

Week Four – Feb. 2

Case Study Two

- Report of findings and discussion

Case Study Three

- Introduction and assignment

Week Five – Feb. 9

Case Study Three

- Out-of-class work session

Week Six – Feb. 16

Case Study Three

- In-class work session and preliminary discussion of findings

Week Seven – Feb. 23

Winter Break

- No class

Week Eight – Mar. 1

Case Study Three

- Final report of findings

Case Study Four

- Introduction and assignment

PART III: ADVANCED CASE STUDY WITH RESEARCH AND PRESENTATION**Week Nine – Mar. 8**

Case Study Four

- In-class work session and preliminary report of findings

Week Ten – Mar. 15

Case Study Four

- Out-of-class work session

Week Eleven – Mar. 22

Case Study Four

- Final report of findings

Case Study Five

- Introduction and assignment

Week Twelve– Mar. 29

Case Study Five

- Out-of-class work session

Week Thirteen – April 5

Case Study Five

- In-class work session and discussion

Week Fourteen – April 12

Case Study Five

- Preliminary report of findings

Week Fifteen – April 19

Case Study Five

- Group presentations

Exam Week

There will be no final exam.