Trachtenberg School
of Public Policy
& Public Administration
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

PPPA 6198: Capstone
Spring 2024

Course Information

Instructor: Dr. Rachel Emas (pronounced Ray-Chul E-Miss) (she/her) rachelemas@gwu.edu
Class meetings: Tuesday, 6:10-8:00pm, Tompkins Hall Room 107
Student hours: by appointment

- This time is made available for me to talk with students outside of class. Please feel free to make an appointment to discuss any questions, concerns, or challenges you have in the course or degree program, talk at length about challenges with a topic or issue in your area of interest, or seek advice generally. These meetings are driven by the student's needs, so please bring specific questions or concerns to the discussion.

Course Description

You are about to complete the Master of Public Policy, Master of Public Administration, or Master of Arts in Environmental Resource Policy program. During this program, you developed a range of competencies. In this course, your team will analyze a policy or administration problem or opportunity a client is facing and develop evidence to inform recommendations and the client's decision-making. In the process, you'll examine your team and role, and ask the questions:

- What influences team effectiveness?
- How can you use what you learned at TSPPPA to help your client?
- What evidence should inform decision-making?
- How can your project best serve your client and fulfill learning objectives?

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, you will be able to demonstrate that you can effectively:

- Conceptualize a policy or administration issue as a research question to study.
- Manage a well-designed, ethical research project that informs a client's decision-making.
- Leverage strengths and perspectives of team members in project planning and execution.
- Communicate results of research to a non-technical audience, orally and in writing.
- Be culturally responsive and understand diverse backgrounds, needs, and perspectives.
- Articulate and advance a public service perspective in making recommendations
- Value the use of evidence in understanding and responding to policy and administration issues.
- Develop your abilities and self-understanding to be an effective team member.

Resources and Technological Requirements

If you need special resources for your project that have a financial cost, consult with Gregory Nelson to see if the School can cover the expense. You may be asked to submit a short proposal with your request for special resources. TSPPPA will take care of poster printing cost and logistics.

To participate in this class, you will need a reliable, high-speed internet connection and computer or laptop sufficient to operate a Microsoft Word or a similar word processing program and presentation software such as Powerpoint (Microsoft Suite is free to students), and quantitative

and/or qualitative analytical software. If you have questions or problems with technology for this course, please consult GW Division of Information Technology (202-994-4948).

Course Workload: University Credit-Hour Policy

You should expect to spend an average of 1.6 hour/week either in class sessions or meeting with the course instructors, in addition to an average of 9-10 hours of additional individual or teamwork each week. You may need to commit more time to this course at different project phases.

Course Assignments

Students will complete the following assignments; some completed individually and some as the whole team. Even for team assignments, students are expected to upload each assignment to Blackboard. Students are encouraged to look at the grading rubrics, examples, and assignment details provided on Blackboard. All written assignments should be double-spaced.

A. 2 points Institutional Review Board Training (CITI) Certification (Individual student)
B. 5 points Team Charter (Group)
C. 4 points Draft and Final Signed Client Agreement (Group)
D. 20 points Intro, Literature Review, and Research Design (Group)
E. 10 points Draft Final Report (Group)
F. 30 points Final Report (Group)
G. 15 points Poster Presentation at Expo (Group)
H. 10 points Post-assessment of self and team (Individual student)
I. 0 points Must present and provide report to client if part of contract. If not done though contracted, 2 points will be deducted from grade total. Presentation material should be pre-approved by instructor before going to client. (Group)
J. 4 points End-of-semester survey (Individual student)

TOTAL: 100 points
Grade Scale: A 100-93 points, A- 92-90, B + 89-87, B 86-82, B- 81-78

Throughout the course, students will receive feedback on their performance to see how they are doing, identify places they need to apply more effort or new strategies, seek help if they are struggling, and improve throughout the semester. Our hope is that all students will develop the knowledge they need to do well in this course and that all students—even those who perform well early in the term—will improve and develop greater knowledge and skills.

Course Standards

Respect in the Classroom: Higher education works best as a vigorous and lively marketplace of ideas in which all points of view are heard. Free expression in the classroom is an integral part of this process. At the same time, all of us should approach the enterprise with empathy and respect for others, irrespective of their ideology, political views, or identity. We value civility because that is the kind of community we want, and we care for it because respect permits intellectual exploration and growth.

Respect for Diversity: It's our intent that students from all backgrounds and perspectives are well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. We strive to create an

inclusive classroom and present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity including gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, culture, and political affiliation. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. TSPPPA recognizes, values, and actively promotes the vital importance of developing public service professionals who can successfully operate and create results in a diverse and inclusive twenty-first century environment. Governance within the United States and abroad requires intentional engagement with issues of individual, social, economic, geographic, and historical differences. The Trachtenberg School is dedicated to developing public policy leaders and public administrators who understand and influence domestic and international affairs by actively promoting diversity and inclusion within the academic environment, the workplace and public policy decision-making.

Academic Integrity: We support and use GW's Code of Academic Integrity. All deliverables in this class must be your own work, either individually or as a team. Your deliverables must conform to GW's Code as well as other GW Policies that are listed on the last page of this syllabus. You must designate material quoted from other sources as a quotation and reference appropriately or we will consider it to be plagiarized. You must provide sources for facts.

Schedule (bolded items are assignments due) (week starting = Monday)

Week 1 starting January 15 Intro to Capstone	• Introduction and review of the basic operations of the Capstone. • Successful Capstone project examples on Blackboard. • Reports on Clients and Capstone projects. • Explanation of the CITI/IRB training assignment**.**
Week 2 starting January 22 Ethics and Team Reflection	• Watch before class: prerecorded lecture on ethics (posted on Blackboard). • In class: Be prepared to discuss the CITI training and the readings. Also be prepared to discuss how the principles relate to your project. • **CITI Certification due by Week 2 class.** • Submit team charter, a mutually agreed-upon set of standards that will govern how you will work together and how your team will assess itself. You should create a rubric for the team assessment that will be used in week 17. **Team Charter due by Week 2 class.**
Week 3 starting January 29 Teams Research Questions and Literature Review	• Read before class: "Teamwork in Business," including "Show What You Know," https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/businessfuncdn/chapter/teamwork/. • Read and watch before class: Identifying Key/Guiding Literature, Prof. Rigby's mini-lecture on guiding literature and read the handout on annotating bibliographies. You are not required to use an annotated bibliography for your client report but should incorporate a literature review and reference list in the report. Familiarity with formulating questions and conducting literature reviews will help you grasp the techniques when we meet. • In class: Identifying how previous literature has addressed the policy and administration questions at hand will be key to a successful project. This week we will continue to build upon students' recollection of their previous courses. • Turn in a **draft contract agreement for instructor comment and approval before presenting a copy for client to sign by Week 3**.
Week 4 starting February 5 Data Collection	• How to identify data collection method that meets the project's need. • Tips on conducting and summarizing interviews, performing successful surveys, collecting secondary data, and identifying publicly available information.
Week 5 starting February 12	• Work with team to prepare and obtain signed client agreement. • **Signed client agreement due by Week 5.**
Weeks 6 - 7 starting February 19 to February 26	• No class- Team meetings will be used to advance team projects. • Complete the mid-semester survey.
Week 8 starting March 4	• No class- Team meetings will be used to advance team projects. • **Draft Intro, Literature Review, and Research Design due by Week 8.**
Week 9 starting March 11	• Spring Break—enjoy!
Weeks 10-15 starting March 18 to April 8	• No class- Team meetings will be used to advance team projects. • Schedule meeting with me for updates.
Week 16 starting April 15	• No class • **Draft slide deck for Client presentation due to Instructor for review/approval.**
Week 17 starting April 22	• No class • **Give Capstone presentations to Clients (with Instructor present).**

	● **Final Capstone Expo Poster due to Gregory Nelson by April 26 (TSPPPA will print poster).**
Week 18 starting April 29	● No class ● **Post-project self and team assessment due.** ● **Draft report due to Instructor (may be modified slightly after poster session).** ● **Capstone Poster Expo (required attendance) followed by party on May 3 at 5pm.**
Week 19 starting at May 6	● **Submit proof that you completed the end-of-semester survey.** ● **Final written paper due, reflecting client presentation and Expo feedback due by May 7.**

Capstone Feedback on Final Report Matrix

Research Paper	***Excellent*: A**	***Very good: A-***	***Good*: B+**	***Adequate*: B**	***Borderline*: B-**	***Deficient*: C**	***Unacceptable: F***
	Thorough, well-reasoned, creative, sophisticated, well-written (with no errors), exceptional scholarly or practical quality.	Signs of creativity and a strong understanding of material, analytical approaches, etc. Thorough and well-reasoned and meets professional standards.	Sound work; well-reasoned and thorough, without *serious* analytical shortcomings. Report fully Accomplishes basic objectives for the assignment for this course.	Competent work with some weaknesses. Demonstrates competency but understanding or application of some important concepts (or the like) is less than complete.	Weak but meets minimal expectations. Understanding, analysis or application is incomplete.	Inadequate work; Does not meet minimal expectations. Work is poorly developed and flawed by errors and misunderstanding of important issues.	Work fails to meet minimal expectations for credit. Weaknesses and limitations are pervasive.
Overall organization of paper							
Clarity of writing							
Responsiveness to client needs/request							
Project Rationale - Statement of the problem - Objectives of the research - Research questions							
Background - Summary of the topic, policy, or program - Key information for project							
Methodology - Prior research informing research plan/design - Detailed explanation of how study was conducted, justification for choices							

Analysis and Results of Findings - Description of data - Findings (key relationships, case studies, etc.)							
Recommendations and Conclusion - Interpretation of the findings/key implications - Recommendations to client and how the findings inform them - Research limitations - Next steps							

Relevant Trachtenberg School Policies

In this course, as well as the degree programs, TSPPPA, and GWU, we work to assess and address social challenges that may include sensitive topics. In doing so, each student must be respectful of others' identities. If any student cannot remain respectful during the course, they will be required to talk with us, and points will be deducted from their grade.

It is our goal that students from all backgrounds and identities be well-served by and welcomed in this course, that students' learning needs be addressed in an equitable manner, and that the diversity that we all bring to this class be viewed as a significant source of strength. In this course, we seek to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity of gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, race, nationality, socioeconomic background, disability status, religion, and age.

Syllabus: This syllabus is your guide to the course. If any questions arise, please check the syllabus before contacting me. Sound educational practice requires flexibility, and I may revise content during the semester. Please be generous in sharing notes with each other.

Late or Missed Class: Attendance is required. If you are late or absent from class, you must obtain all announcements, assignments, and handouts from Blackboard or classmates. Please contact me to inform me of any absences as needed.

Submission of Written Work: It is your responsibility to make sure that you are able to access Blackboard to make your submissions on time. All work should be submitted by the assigned due date in order to receive full credit. If you are unable to complete an assignment or engage with coursework for any reason, please let us know that you need more time on that work and you will be granted an extension—no questions asked or explanations needed. There is an automatic 24-hour grace period for all assignments this semester. If your work will be submitted more than 1 day late, please send us an email to let us know. If you continue to struggle to keep up with the course schedule, we can schedule time to talk and figure out what solutions may be available.

Academic Honesty: All examinations and other graded work products are to be completed in conformance with the George Washington University Code of Academic Integrity. It states, in part: "Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information." Note especially the definition of plagiarism: "intentionally representing the words, ideas, or sequence of ideas of another as one's own in any academic exercise; failure to attribute any of the following: quotations, paraphrases, or borrowed information." For the remainder of the code, and for more information about standards for conduct as well as your rights as a student, see https://studentconduct.gwu.edu/). If you include content (e.g., ideas, text, code, images) that was generated, in whole or in part, by Generative Artificial Intelligence tools (including, but not limited to, ChatGPT and other large language models) in work submitted for evaluation in this course, you must document and credit your source. For example, text generated using ChatGPT-4 should include a citation such as: "ChatGPT-4. (YYYY, Month DD of query). 'Text of your query.' Generated using OpenAI. https://chat.openai.com/." Material generated using other tools should be cited accordingly. Failure to do so in this course constitutes failure to attribute under the George Washington University Code of Academic Integrity.

Incompletes: You must request an incomplete no later than the last day of classes in the semester. You will fill out the CCAS contract for incompletes for both of us to sign and you will submit a copy to the School Director. Go to http://bulletin.gwu.edu/ university-regulations/university-regulations.pdf for the full policy on incompletes.

Changing Grades after Completion of Course: No changes can be made in grades after the conclusion of the semester, other than in cases of clerical error.

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities: If you need extra time on exams or assignments due to a disability, let me know in the first week of class. We are aware that things may change throughout the term, so please reach out if you have accommodations that I can provide at any point in time. We will do our best to meet your needs. These accommodations are about ensuring all students have equitable access to this course. Accommodations cannot be provided retroactively, so please inform us as early as possible. Any student who

may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should also contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Rome Hall, Suite 102, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: https://disabilitysupport.gwu.edu/.

University Counseling Center: The University Counseling Center (UCC), 202-994-5300, offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include: crisis and emergency mental health consultations; confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals. https://healthcenter.gwu.edu/counseling-and-psychological-services.

Security: In the case of an emergency, if at all possible, the class should shelter in place. If the building that the class is in is affected, follow the evacuation procedures for the building. After evacuation, seek shelter at a predetermined rendezvous location.

University Policy on Religious Holidays: Respect for diversity is one of GW's core values, extending to all aspects of our community. In keeping with this value, the university has adopted guidelines, recommended by the Faculty Senate, that ensure students and faculty may observe religious holidays without academic penalty:

- That students notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance;
- That faculty continue to extend to these students the courtesy of absence without penalty on such occasions, including permission to make up examinations;
- That faculty who intend to observe a religious holiday arrange at the beginning of the semester to reschedule missed classes or to make other provisions for their course-related activities;
- That, prior to each semester, the administration circulate to faculty a schedule of religious holidays most frequently observed by GW students;
- That student members of other religious groups are also entitled to the same courtesies and accommodations; and
- That the administration conveys this policy to students by including it in the schedule of classes and other places deemed appropriate.