

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 have developed competency in economics, statistics, and policy analysis, in addition to the specialized knowledge and skills of your chosen field of concentration. In this course, you will use these capabilities to analyze a policy or administration problem that an actual client is facing, and then develop evidence that informs the client's decision-making. In the process, you will gain a better understanding of your own role as an emerging member of the public service. Along the way, we will explore the following questions:

- How are you going to use what you learned in your degree program in your profession as a member of the public service?
- Why use evidence in policy and administration decision-making?
- How are you going to make the world a better place?

Eligibility

The Fall Capstone course is for MPA, MPP, and ENRP students who are on track to graduate in December 2020. If you are uncertain of your eligibility, contact Prof. Augustine right away.

INSTRUCTORS:

Nancy Y. Augustine, PhD
nya@gwu.edu

Michael A. Rodriguez
marod@gwmail.gwu.edu

OFFICE HOURS:

Available by appointment on most days of the week

ONLINE CLASS MEETINGS:

Tuesday, 6:10 – 8:00pm
August 31 – December 12, 2020

TEXTBOOK:

Why Research Methods Matter: Essential Skills for Decision Making, Gooden / Berry-James (2018)

I will post additional study materials and all assignments on Blackboard.

Student Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, you will know or be able to:

- Conceptualize a policy or administration problem as a research question that you can study.
- Conduct a well-designed, ethical research project that informs a client's decision-making.
- Incorporate the strengths and perspectives of team members into the project planning and execution processes.
- Communicate the results of research to a non-technical audience, orally and in writing.
- Apply competencies that you have developed during your public policy or public administration degree program.
- Value the use of evidence in understanding and developing responses to policy and administration problems.
- Develop your sense of self as a member of the public service.

Technological Requirements

To participate in this class, you will need a reliable, high-speed internet connection and computer or laptop sufficient to operate the following:

- Microsoft Word or a similar word processing program
- Camera and microphone for use during online class sessions and team meetings; earbuds with a microphone work well
- 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).

If you have any problems with the software in this course, please reference the Technology Help link in the left navigation menu in our course on Blackboard.

Course Workload: University Credit-Hour Policy

The university has adopted a policy on contact time and independent work time required for each credit-hour earned. The policy requires us to advise you how the time will be allocated for this course. This is an intensive course that requires student teams to work efficiently and effectively to complete an ambitious policy analysis project in a semester's time. **You should expect to spend an average of one 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 team work each week.** You may need to commit more time to this class at different phases of your project.

Classroom Standards



Civility in the Classroom: Higher education works best when it becomes 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, higher education works best when all of us 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 civility permits intellectual exploration and growth.



Respect for Diversity: It is our intent that students from all backgrounds and perspectives be 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.



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 used in the report.

Capstone Project

Research project (multiple parts): Working with a team, you will execute the project proposal that you developed. You will find that research in the real world is much messier and less definitive than you may have encountered in the classroom. Along the way, you will apply project management techniques and create strategies for working in a team setting.

Final oral presentation: The research is only as good as you can make it intelligible to the people who plan to use it. The processes of developing and then presenting the final oral presentation for faculty and students will give you perspective on how your work comes across to others.

CITI / IRB Ethics Training and Certification

Federal regulations require researchers to undergo ethics training and certification for research projects they undertake. Because the research projects for this course are considered “professional training” and are not ordinarily published, IRB ethics certification is not legally required for these projects. (If publication is pursued later, IRB approval will be required.)





High ethical standards are always an integral part of the Trachtenberg curriculum and these federal requirements certainly will be pertinent to careers as policy analysts. Understanding the principles and basics of these regulations is important.

To ensure familiarity with these regulations, the online CITI Training Program must be completed with a score of 75% or higher. To get started, please follow these steps:

- Register as a new user at www.citiprogram.org
- Institution: George Washington University (ignore others)
- Be sure to remember your user name and password.
- Then answer questions 2 through 4.
- For step 5, Q1, check “no”; Q2, “no” is fine.
- Next page only requires: GW email; Department=Trachtenberg School; and Role=Student researcher–graduate level
- Next page, check only “Human Subjects Research Training”
- Next page, click “no” to go to “CITI Basic Course”
- Next page, check only “Social and Behavioral Sciences”
- Next “no” for HIPS; “no” for GCP, click Finalize Registration
- Click “Social & Behavioral Research” under “George Washington University Courses” to start the nine modules.

Once you complete the CITI program, you will be provided a certification document. Create a pdf. **Upload to Blackboard; due Saturday, September 5 at 11:59pm.**

Course Work

Week 1 – Introduction and Program Review	
	<p>Read before class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Gooden and Berry-James (2018), chapter 1, “Introduction: The Art of Research Methods” ◆ “Teamwork in Business,” including “Show What You Know,” https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/businessfuncdn/chapter/team-work/. <i>Note that this reading has an embedded interactive team contract tool that creates a document at the end. I haven’t tried it, but it looks like it would work. Make sure that you have a copy of any information that you enter online in case the site breaks down or you lose your connection.</i>
	<p>In class (9/1): We will discuss the main themes and skills that you have learned from your core courses, what the skills offer in answering policy and administration questions. You will have the opportunity to introduce specialized knowledge that you have learned in your electives.</p>
 Individual	<p>Write a 800-1000 word reflection on your policy skill gaps as a policy or public administration professional. Upload to Blackboard; <u>due Saturday, September 5 at 11:59pm</u>. Scholars and policy professionals should be aware of their knowledge and skills gaps. This gives us an opportunity to continue to expand our skills, match our skills to specific projects, and create a role on teams.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Briefly discuss 3 of your topical or methodological strengths. Name the strength and describe your knowledge, skills or abilities related to that strength. ◆ Briefly discuss 3 topical or methodological areas that are not your strengths but that you would like to expand on before you graduate. <i>If you need inspiration, find a description for your dream job. Or ask your manager about what it takes to succeed at the next higher position in the organization. Or go back to the essay that you included in your application to the program.</i> ◆ Describe how you might use the capstone project as an opportunity to close the gaps that you just described. <p>Submit CITI / IRB training; see instructions on Blackboard. Upload to Blackboard; <u>due Saturday, September 5 at 11:59pm</u></p>
 Team	<p>Submit team charter. <i>See detailed instructions on Blackboard.</i> Upload to Blackboard; <u>due Saturday, September 5 at 11:59pm</u></p> <p>Submit team progress report. <i>See detailed instructions on Blackboard.</i> Upload to Blackboard; <u>due Monday, September 7 at 11:59pm</u>; team</p>

Week 2 – Ethics



Read before class:

- ◆ Gooden and Berry-James (2018), chapter 3, “Research Ethics: Important Considerations for Practitioners”
- ◆ Reed (2018), “Unpacking the White Savior Complex: How Identity and Socialization Impact Youth Development Work”
- ◆ Burnette, Sanders, Butcher, Rand (2014), “A Toolkit for Ethical and Culturally Sensitive Research: An Application with Indigenous Communities”

Watch before class: prerecorded lecture on ethics (posted on Blackboard)



In class (9/8): Be prepared to discuss the CITI training and all three readings. Make sure you have a good enough understanding of your capstone project to be able (and prepared) to discuss how the principles relate.



Individual

Write an 800-1000 word reflection on the white savior complex and culturally sensitive research. Due Saturday, September 12 at 11:59pm.

- ◆ Do you find resonance in the concept of white people coming to the rescue? Explain.
- ◆ Have you (or your community) been on the giving or receiving end of such efforts? If not, have you ever felt inclined to “come to the rescue?” Describe.
- ◆ What about educated people using their influence and expertise to help marginalized communities? Same thing or not?
- ◆ What are the implications of the Reed and Burnette, et al., readings for your project?



Team



Submit draft client agreement. *See detailed instructions on Blackboard.* Note graded but required before you finalize the agreement with the client. **Upload to Blackboard; due Saturday, September 12 at 11:59pm.**

Week 3 – Project Introduction and Background Research






Read before class:




- ◆ National Congress of American Indians (2020), “Tribal Nations and the United States,” http://www.ncai.org/tribalnations/introduction/Indian_Country_101_Updated_February_2019.pdf
- ◆ *Additional resources on broadband fundamentals to come.*

	<p>In class (9/15): We will get into the topic of the capstone project, the client’s problem, and how you might go about turning this problem into one or more research questions that you can study.</p> <p>Identifying how previous literature has addressed the policy and administration questions at hand will be key to a successful project. This week will continue to build upon students’ recollection of their core and elective MPP/MPA courses and offer an opportunity to conduct direct scholarly research. The interim chapters and final report of this Capstone class will include a formalized literature review, and this week is an opportunity to begin that process.</p>
 Team	<p>Create an annotated bibliography, synthesis matrix, and summary: Conduct preliminary research on the client’s policy problem and/or methodological approaches to a type of problem. The papers you review can be pertinent by either being topical or being methodologically appropriate. <i>See detailed instructions on Blackboard.</i> Upload to Blackboard; <u>due Saturday, September 19 at 11:59pm.</u></p> <p>Submit SIGNED client agreement. <i>See detailed instructions on Blackboard.</i> Upload to Blackboard; <u>due Saturday, September 19 at 11:59pm.</u></p>



Week 4 – Research Design Proposal

	<p>Read before class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Gooden and Berry-James (2018), chapter 4, “Practical Considerations in Research Designs” ◆ Gooden and Berry-James (2018), chapter 5, “Variable Definition: Are We Really Talking about the Same Thing?” <p><i>Note: you are not doing either experimental or quasi-experimental design. You may skim these paragraphs.</i></p>
	<p>In class (9/22): We will continue to talk about defining the client’s problem and turning this problem into one or more research questions that you can study. Be prepared to present your team’s progress towards developing a research design.</p>
 Team	<p>Develop a 1500-2000 word memo that describes your research design proposal. Base the memo on your review of the literature, your understanding of the questions and decision context of your client, and your delineation of the scope of work. Your memo should clearly articulate the overarching research question(s) that your project will tackle, explain why these are the right research questions for the projects, and transparently lay out <i>how</i> you will answer them. <i>See detailed instructions on Blackboard.</i> Upload to Blackboard; <u>due Saturday, September 26 at 11:59pm.</u></p>

Week 5 – Data and Information Collection

	<p>Read before class: Gooden and Berry-James (2018), chapter 7, “Data Collection Strategies”</p>
	<p>In class (9/29): Before beginning ANY data or information collection, it is essential that you think carefully about how you will be collecting data, data dictionary, structuring focus groups, interview protocols, survey instruments, etc. Your instructor will work with your team to identify the research instruments that need to be developed and to help you structure them to be most effective.</p>
 Team	<p>Create a data collection plan: <i>See detailed instructions on Blackboard.</i> Upload to Blackboard; <u>due Saturday, October 3 at 11:59pm.</u></p>

Week 6+

	<p>Check in <u>every week with your advisor.</u> I reserve the right to call a class meeting as circumstances warrant.</p> <p>As soon as you get approval from your client on your project proposal, you may begin creating the structure of your final report. In your submission, use the numbering below to identify each section.</p>
 Team	<p>Submit report sections. <i>See detailed instructions on Blackboard.</i> Upload to Blackboard;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Section 1 – project rationale, background, literature review, methodology: <u>due Saturday, October 24 at 11:59pm.</u> ◆ Section 2 – analysis of findings: <u>due Saturday, November 14 at 11:59pm.</u> ◆ Section 3 – conclusions and recommendations: <u>due Tuesday, December 1 at 11:59pm</u> ◆ Final report – front matter, body, supplemental material: <u>due Saturday, December 12 at 11:59pm</u> ◆ Final presentations – <u>Tuesday, December 15 at 6:00pm</u>

This course uses a points-based grading schema, as shown below.

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Due</u>	<u>Point Value Per Assignment</u>
Week 1 reflection	Sept 5	25
CITI / IRB training certificate	Sept 5	10
Team charter	Sept 5	20
Team progress report	Sept 7	10
Week 2 reflection	Sept 12	25
Draft client agreement	Sept 12	0
Annotated bibliography, synthesis matrix, summary	Sept 19	50
Signed client agreement	Sept 19	10
Research design proposal	Sept 26	100
Data collection plan	Oct 3	50
Report section 1	Oct 24	100
Report section 2	Nov 14	200
Report section 3	Dec 1	100
Final report	Dec 12	200
Final presentations	Dec 15	100

The grading scale below, based on percent, determines your final letter grade.

Grading Scale (Based on percentage)		
92.5+	A	Excellent and exceptional work for a graduate student. Work at this level is unusually thorough, well-reasoned, creative, methodologically sophisticated, and well written. Work is of exceptional professional quality.
90.0 – 92.4	A-	Very Good: Very strong work for a graduate student. Shows signs of creativity and a strong understanding of appropriate analytical approaches, is thorough and well-reasoned, and meets professional standards.
87.0 - 89.9	B+	Good: Sound work for a graduate student; well-reasoned and thorough, without serious analytical shortcomings. This grade indicates the student has fully accomplished the basic objectives of this graduate course.
82.5 – 86.9	B	Adequate: Competent work for a graduate student with some evident weaknesses. Demonstrates competency in the key course objectives but the understanding or application of some important issues is less than complete.
80.0 – 82.4	B-	Borderline: Weak work for a graduate student but meets minimal expectations in the course. Understanding of key issues is incomplete. (A B- average in all courses is not sufficient to sustain graduate status in good standing.)
77.0 - 79.9	C+	Deficient: Inadequate work for a graduate student; rarely meets minimal expectations for the course. Work is poorly developed or flawed by numerous errors and misunderstandings of important issues.
72.5 – 76.9	C	
70.0 – 72.4	C-	
Less than 70.0	F	Unacceptable: Work fails to meet minimal expectations or course credit for a graduate student. Performance has consistently failed to meet minimum course requirements. Weaknesses and limitations are pervasive.

MPA and MPP Capstone Fall 2020 Seminar

Feedback on Final Report and Report Sections – Grading Matrix

Research Paper	<i>Excellent: A</i>	<i>Very good: A-</i>	<i>Good: B+</i>	<i>Adequate: B</i>	<i>Borderline: B-</i>	<i>Deficient: C</i>	<i>Unacceptable: F</i>
	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 <i>serious</i> 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/program - Key information for project							
Methodology - Prior research informing research plan/design							

Research Paper	<i>Excellent: A</i>	<i>Very good: A-</i>	<i>Good: B+</i>	<i>Adequate: B</i>	<i>Borderline: B-</i>	<i>Deficient: C</i>	<i>Unacceptable: F</i>
- Detailed explanation of how study was conducted, justification for choices - Results of analysis							
Analysis 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 (alignment) - Research limitations - Next steps							

Relevant Trachtenberg School Policies

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. Any unexcused absence will result in a deduction from your grade. If you are late or absent from class, you must obtain all announcements, assignments, and handouts from Blackboard or classmates.

Submission of Written Work Products: It is your responsibility to make sure that you are able to access Blackboard to make your submissions on time. All work must be submitted by the assigned due date in order to receive full credit. Only extreme circumstances warrant exceptions. Unexcused late submissions will be marked down for each day that they are late.

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/>.

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. 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.