

PA 600 ASSESSMENT

Fall 2008: Monday 6-9pm

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Office Hours: by appt.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

As the final course in the Master of Public Administration (MPA) program PUBADM 600 is designed to provide the student with an opportunity to further develop the skills, concepts and knowledge acquired in the MPA program. Special emphasis is given to the integration and application of these skills, concepts and knowledge to the student's own work experience. This course serves as the final assessment of each student's progress in the MPA program. In essence, the course functions as the MPA Comprehensive Examination for all students in the class. The course is taught partly as a seminar and partly as a tutorial. Students will be required to write papers and make oral presentations (based on their papers). Students will also be required to actively participate in class discussions.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Using concepts and ideas gained from their MPA curriculum experience, the literature available in the PA field and journals and the materials covered in this course, students should

- (1) enhance their understanding of the major concepts that underlie the discipline of Public Administration;
- (2) apply theoretical concepts of Public Administration to a practical application in the workplace;
- (3) showcase analytical and communication skills regarding their knowledge of Public Administration.

ASSESSMENT OF THE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- (1) Write 2 papers of 4-6 pages analyzing the literature on a topic as directed
- (2) Write 3 papers of 6-8 pages each applying the literature to an agency, one on your own, 2 as part of a group
- (3) Make oral presentations (based on the papers);
- (4) Participate in class discussions and in-class exercises

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Barrett, Katherine and Richard Greene. 2001. *Powering Up How Public Managers Can Take Control of Information Technology*. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press.
- Cooper, Phillip J. 2003. *Governing by Contract Challenges and Opportunities for Public Managers*. Washington, DC: CQ Press.
- Walters, Jonathan. 2007. *Measuring Up 2.0 Governing's New, Improved Guide to Performance Measurement for Geniuses (and other Public Managers)*. Washington, DC: Governing Books.
- Julnes, Patria de Lancer and Marc Holzer. 2008. *Performance Measurement Building Theory, Improving Practice*. Washington, DC: American Society for Public Administration.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS AND PRESENTATIONS

Each student will prepare 5 separate written assignments. The due dates for these assignments appear below in the schedule. Each assignment is different in form and content. They are described below:

Assignment #1: Analyze your agency's situation relative to one of the major topics covered in *Powering Up* (for example, procurement or the role of the CIO). Drawing upon *Powering Up*, what recommendations would you make for your agency? We will spend this class discussing/presenting your papers on IT in your agency. Length of the paper should be 6-8pp. The point of this assignment is for you to demonstrate that you have 1) mastered the concepts and ideas presented in Barrett and Greene's book; 2) can apply those concepts to an actual agency and 3) can demonstrate independent thinking and informed opinions in your recommendations.

Assignment #2: Prepare a 4-6pp. review of the literature on the topic of contracting in government. This is a broad topic area and you should narrow your review a bit to make the searching easier. Cooper's book may suggest some ways in which you can focus your review. Your review should include a minimum of 5 sources outside of class readings (this class and other classes). Literature reviews are often used as portions of larger research papers. In this case, this assignment contains only the review of the literature though conducting the review should help you frame your questions for Assignment #3 (see below). I have found the following definition of an effective literature review useful: "A literature review must do these things: a) be organized around and related directly to the thesis or research question you are developing b) synthesize results into a summary of what is known and is not known c) identify areas of controversy in the literature d) formulate questions that need further research" ("The Literature Review: A Few Tips on Conducting It" accessed at <http://www.utoronto.ca/writing/litrev.html>). The point of this assignment is to show that you can 1.) Successfully locate and describe current literature in the public administration field and 2.) Critically appraise that literature.

Assignment #3: Working with one-two other students in the class and utilizing the information from Cooper's book, your MPA program and the PA literature, prepare a 6-8

page briefing memo in which you analyze a contracting situation or opportunity in an agency or organization and make recommendations to that agency about the use of contracting.

The assignment is designed to assess your ability to integrate new information with the things you have learned in your MPA program and to make recommendations regarding real world applications. Your team should attach a one page summary (not included in the page limit) of what each team member contributed to the project. Each team will make a presentation of each of their written assignments to the instructor and a team of practitioners chosen by the instructor. The assignment and presentation will be judged by the following criteria:

1. Effective use of PA literature and theory to the problem at hand (40%).
2. Clarity and soundness of argument and recommendations (30%)
3. Professionalism of writing and oral presentation (30%)

Assignment #4: Prepare a 4-6pp. review of the literature on the topic of performance evaluation (at the agency/organization level) in government. This is a broad topic area and you should narrow your review a bit to make the searching easier. Niven and Radin's books may suggest some ways in which you can focus your review. Your review should include a minimum of 5 sources outside of class readings (this class and other classes). I have found the following definition of an effective literature review useful: "A literature review must do these things: a) be organized around and related directly to the thesis or research question you are developing b) synthesize results into a summary of what is known and is not known c) identify areas of controversy in the literature d) formulate questions that need further research" ("The Literature Review: A Few Tips on Conducting It" accessed at <http://www.utoronto.ca/writing/litrev.html>). The point of this assignment is to show that you can 1.) Successfully locate and describe current literature in the public administration field and 2.) Critically appraise that literature.

Assignment #5: Working with one-two other students from the class, prepare a 6-8 page briefing memo for an agency or organization that 1) assesses the organization's current utilization of performance measures and 2) makes recommendations for the improvement, development or avoidance of performance measures. The memo should include a 1 page executive summary. Your memo should be based upon the readings on performance measurement supplied by this course, your larger MPA coursework and other research you conduct to reach your conclusions. Your team should attach a one page summary (not included in the page limit) of what each team member contributed to the project. The assignment is designed to assess your ability to integrate new information with the things you have learned in your MPA program and to make recommendations regarding real world applications. Each team will make a presentation of each of their written assignments to the instructor and a team of practitioners chosen by the instructor. The assignment and presentation will be judged by the following criteria:

4. Effective use of PA literature and theory to the problem at hand (40%).
5. Clarity and soundness of argument and recommendations (30%)
6. Professionalism of writing and oral presentation (30%)

CLASS ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

The course is organized around several in-person sessions where students will make their presentations. Attendance and meaningful participation in these sessions is essential. In addition, during the final segment of the course I will arrange for some in-class visitors to expand our discussion of performance measurement. We will meet as a group on those dates (see schedule below). On the weeks when we are not scheduled for a formal class I will be available for consultation/coaching. I believe that talking with me and with each other will greatly assist your work on these projects and I encourage you to utilize these time slots. The various course meetings are listed below by type. A chronological schedule appears under the section “COURSE SCHEDULE” further below.

Class meetings for visitors, information, Student Presentation nights: Aug. 28, Sept. 25, Oct. 16, Oct 30, Nov 20, Dec 4, Dec 11.

Holidays/No class nights: Sept. 18, Nov. 27

Consultation nights: Sept. 4, Sept. 11, Oct. 2, Oct. 9, Oct. 23, Nov. 6, Nov. 13

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Plagiarism and cheating in any form are unacceptable. All work submitted by a student must represent the student’s own ideas, concepts and current understanding. Additional information about academic honesty is detailed in the graduate catalog and several university publications including A Student’s Guide to Writing at BSU, BSU Administrative Handbook, and BSU Student Handbook and is available on the web page www.boisestate.edu. Incidents involving academic dishonesty will be addressed on an individual basis and forwarded with documentation to the appropriate administrative office per university policy.

GRADING

Papers:	500 points
Oral Presentations:	90 points
General Participation:	10 points

TOTAL: 600 POINTS

MPA GRADING POLICY

A=distinguished work: Writes at the graduate level (error free with proper punctuation, spelling, grammar, sentence structure; logical organization; proper documentation; provides appropriate supporting evidence) consistently applies concepts, does original analysis, integrates literature in course work, initiates and effectively responds to questions.

B=average work: substantial work, including analysis, integration, and application of learned concepts in both written and oral activities (writing is more a review or summary of materials than a critical analysis); regular attendance and participation in class.
C=below average work: satisfies minimum requirements (limited integration, application, and analysis)
D=unsatisfactory work: satisfies some of the minimum requirements
F=failure: does not meet minimum requirements

COURSE SCHEDULE

AUG. 24 INTRODUCTION TO COURSE AND SYLLABUS

AUG 31- SEPT. 28. ROLE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN PA

Reading: *Powering Up*.

Written assignment #1 due on Sept. 28: Analyze your agency's situation relative to one of the major topics covered in *Powering Up* (for example, procurement or the role of the CIO). Drawing upon *Powering Up*, what recommendations would you make for your agency? We will spend this class discussing/presenting your papers on IT in your agency. Length of the paper should be 6-8pp. The point of this assignment is for you to demonstrate that you have 1) mastered the concepts and ideas presented in Barrett and Greene's book; 2) can apply those concepts to an actual agency and 3) can demonstrate independent thinking and informed opinions in your recommendations.

OCT. 5-NOV. 2. GOVERNING BY CONTRACT

Reading: *Governing by Contract*.

Written assignment #2 due on Oct. 19. Prepare a 4-6pp. review of the literature on the topic of contracting in government. This is a broad topic area and you should narrow your review a bit to make the searching easier. Cooper's book may suggest some ways in which you can focus your review. Your review should include a minimum of 5 sources outside of class readings (this class and other classes). I have found the following definition of an effective literature review useful: "A literature review must do these things: a) be organized around and related directly to the thesis or research question you are developing b) synthesize results into a summary of what is known and is not known c) identify areas of controversy in the literature d) formulate questions that need further research" ("The Literature Review: A Few Tips on Conducting It" accessed at <http://www.utoronto.ca/writing/litrev.html>)

Written assignment #3 due Nov. 2.: Working with one-two other students in the class and utilizing the information from Cooper's book, your MPA program and the PA literature, prepare a 6-8 page briefing memo in which you analyze a contracting situation or opportunity in an agency or organization and make recommendations to that agency about the use of contracting. Your team should attach a one page summary (not included in the page limit) of what each team member contributed to the project.

The assignment is designed to assess your ability to integrate new information with the things you have learned in your MPA program and to make recommendations regarding

real world applications. Each team will make a presentation of each of their written assignments to the instructor and a team of practitioners chosen by the instructor. The assignment and presentation will be judged by the following criteria:

7. Effective use of PA literature and theory to the problem at hand (40%).
8. Clarity and soundness of argument and recommendations (30%)
9. Professionalism of writing and oral presentation (30%)

NOV. 9-DEC. 14. THE PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT MOVEMENT IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Reading: *Balanced Scorecard*

Challenging the Performance Movement

Written assignment #4 due on Nov. 23. : Prepare a 4-6pp. review of the literature on the topic of performance evaluation (at the agency/organization level) in government. This is a broad topic area and you should narrow your review a bit to make the searching easier. Niven and Radin's books may suggest some ways in which you can focus your review. Your review should include a minimum of 5 sources outside of class readings (this class and other classes). I have found the following definition of an effective literature review useful: "A literature review must do these things: a) be organized around and related directly to the thesis or research question you are developing b) synthesize results into a summary of what is known and is not known c) identify areas of controversy in the literature d) formulate questions that need further research" ("The Literature Review: A Few Tips on Conducting It" accessed at <http://www.utoronto.ca/writing/litrev.html>)

Written assignment #5 due on Dec. 14.: Working with one-two other students from the class, prepare a 6-8 page briefing memo for an agency or organization that 1) assesses the organization's current utilization of performance measures and 2) makes recommendations for the improvement, development or avoidance of performance measures. The memo should include a 1 page executive summary. Your memo should be based upon the readings on performance measurement supplied by this course, your larger MPA coursework and other research you conduct to reach your conclusions. The assignment is designed to assess your ability to integrate new information with the things you have learned in your MPA program and to make recommendations regarding real world applications. Your team should attach a one page summary (not included in the page limit) of what each team member contributed to the project. Each team will make a presentation of each of their written assignments to the instructor and a team of practitioners chosen by the instructor. The assignment and presentation will be judged by the following criteria:

10. Effective use of PA literature and theory to the problem at hand (40%).
11. Clarity and soundness of argument and recommendations (30%)
12. Professionalism of writing and oral presentation (30%)

DEC. 7. EXIT INTERVIEW WITH DR. FREDERICKSEN