

## **PUBP 8520 and PMAP 9151 Syllabus**

PUBP 8520 and PMAP 9151, Section GK, 3 Credits

Fall 2026

### **Instructor Information**

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**Instructor: Gordon Kingsley**

**Email: [gkingsley@gatech.edu](mailto:gkingsley@gatech.edu)**

### **General Course Information**

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#### **Description**

This course provides an overview of theories that guide and influence the development of public policy as a field of research and inquiry. Students will explore the trajectory of public policy studies and key evolutions in core theories of policy analysis and policy process. Public policy studies have explicitly embraced being highly multi-disciplinary in the development of core theories. As such students will examine the intellectual bases of public policy studies and how this has shaped evolutions in relevant theories.

#### **Course Learning Outcomes**

This course is designed as a survey of public policy research and theory for doctoral students. As such, we will be pursuing the following learning objectives:

- First, we will be examining the public policy research literature, exploring both the intellectual foundations and current developments.
- Second, we will be examining the craft of conducting policy research. You will be learning how to search, find, read and use the literature as a resource for your research efforts.
- Third, we will explore how you can, and should, participate in the policy-related scholarly community. In doing so, we will assist you in identifying your own interests and voice as a policy scholar. Your goals should be to improve your understanding and capabilities in all three areas.

## Required Course Materials

The readings for this course will be found on the class Canvas site. There are three required texts for the class:

Weible, C.M. 2023. *Theories of the Policy Process*, 5th edition. Boulder: Westview Press.

Weible, C.M. and Workman, S. 2022. *Methods of the Policy Process*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition. Boulder: Westview Press.

Smith, K.B. and Larimer, C.W. 2017. *The Public Policy Theory Primer*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Boulder: Westview Press.

Available at the Georgia Tech Barnes and Noble Bookstore. Please confirm that you can access the library's digital version by the second week of class.

## Grading Policy:

Students are responsible for performing several activities during this course. Each activity carries the following weight in determining the final grade:

In-Class Participation	30%
Research Paper Assignments	50%
Peer Review Memos	10%
Final Examination	10%

## Description of Graded Components

**Class Participation.** Since this class is a doctoral seminar, students are expected to come to class each week having completed the assigned readings and prepared to discuss the relevant topics. You should take time in advance of class to think about the arguments being made and whether you agree or disagree with the author's point of view—and why. You should also develop the ability to be critical of each other's thinking.

My current plan is to not provide many lectures during the term. Consequently, it is unacceptable for you to have come to class having not read the material. I will be assessing class participation in the following ways.

- **Participation in Class Discussions.** You will all have an opportunity to participate each week. Your comments will be assessed on the quality of your insights regarding the reading and critical assessments that you make regarding the theories and frameworks

that we will review. Your participation grade for the week will be based on your contributions to the class.

- **Weekly Participation Grades.** Each week I will compile a participation grade (worth 10 points) based on your level of engagement. You will earn points primarily during our class discussion. But you can also pick up points in commentary and service provided in developing the article annotations database. At the end of the term, I will add up the 10 highest weekly participation scores.

**Research Paper.** You will prepare a literature review over the course of the semester. This exercise is designed for you to have a paper ready for submission to a peer-review journal by the end of the term. To complete this assignment you will need to satisfy the following component assignments:

1. Research Sketch Memo: You must first prepare a memo that contains the following:
  - The research question motivating your paper.
  - A thesis statement. You must frame your question in such a way that it is amenable to hypothesis testing in support of a theory. That means there must be either a relationship between an independent and dependent variable OR a description of conceptual development.
  - Identification of a target journal including a brief description of the journal, the relationship of the journal with selected research and professional societies, and a discussion of why you think this is a good outlet for your work (make sure that there is evidence of the journal taking literature review and theory pieces within the last three years).
  - A narrative describing the relevant literatures.
  - A list of keywords that you will use to search for relevant articles. You should include in your references the most highly cited articles for important keywords.
  - A list of 20 relevant references.
  - The memo should be between 4 and 5 pages in length (excluding the reference list).
  - You may be asked to do several drafts of your memo. You will also be asked to provide a summary of your research at any time throughout the course of the semester.
2. Draft Literature Submission: Your final draft must meet all of the instructions from your selected journal. The paper must also be relevant to the research questions addressed by this community of scholars. It must also be submitted on time so that you can get feedback on your submission. Your paper should be submitted to the associated assignments page on the class Canvas site. There will be a grade deduction for every day that your paper is late.
3. Final Presentation: You will present your paper through a poster session where you will discuss the primary arguments of your paper, the criticisms that you received and your revision plans. Presentations will be done conference style.

**Peer Review Memos.** You will be asked to provide feedback to your classmates regarding the final draft of their paper and their presentation. You will be responsible for reviewing research sketches and final papers and providing written feedback and criticism. This will be delivered to the author anonymously as is the convention with most journals (the exception being criticism and feedback from your instructor).

**Final Examination.** There will be a final examination. You are responsible for answering a single essay question for each exam. You will choose the question that you answer from a set of questions. This exam is intended in part as a preview of the type of questions that you will receive on the comprehensive examination.

## Course Policies

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### Attendance and/or Participation

In person attendance is required for this course. Class discussions will help you better understand course content, allow you to ask clarifying questions, and to explain concepts and ideas in your own words. In order to make those discussions most effective, we will follow some guidelines:

- You are expected to **ask questions** during our discussions. Come to class prepared to raise questions for discussion and to ask for clarification or for more examples.
- You are expected to **listen actively**. I will often ask you to paraphrase, summarize, or respond to what others have said. Active listening involves taking notes, asking questions, making eye contact, and listening to others without interrupting them.
- Doctoral students are expected to develop the ability to offer criticism of ideas, concepts, research designs, and the quality of the findings produced through research. One of the great gifts that you can offer your classmates is to provide thoughtful criticism. This can foster a powerful learning community that will help you throughout your preparations to join a research community.
- In case of any disagreements, you are expected to **disagree respectfully**. If you disagree with your peers, keep your discussion focused on the facts and the bigger question rather than on personal feelings.

Georgia Tech has a web page that describes the expectations, rights, and responsibilities of students, instructors, the Office of Student Life, and health care providers. The information is intended to give students better directions as to how they should proceed to notify instructors when they are ill and need to miss class, and what kind of documentation they should provide and to whom. Students should refer to Georgia Tech policies at the "Student Absence from Class Due to Illness or Personal Emergencies" web page at:

<http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/policies/student-absence-regulations/>

## **Academic Integrity**

The Academic Honor Code is a student initiative that became an official Institute policy in 1996. The objective of the Academic Honor Code is to increase academic integrity and strengthen trust in the Georgia Tech community. Students enrolled at Georgia Tech signed an agreement acknowledging their awareness of the Academic Honor Code. Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. Review [Georgia Tech's Honor Code](#) and the student [Code of Conduct](#).

Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarism on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, who will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations. Plagiarism is avoidable and unacceptable. Take some time to review the following website produced by Indiana University on how to recognize plagiarism: <https://plagiarism.iu.edu/overview/index.html>. While breaches of academic honesty are not expected in this course, they will be dealt with in accordance with Georgia Tech policy, should they occur.

## **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

Your experience in this class is important to me. Georgia Tech complies with the regulations of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and offers accommodations to students with disabilities. If you have already established accommodation with the Offices of Disability Services, please communicate your approved accommodations to me at your earliest convenience so we can discuss your needs in this course. If you have not yet established services through Disability Services, but have a temporary health condition or permanent disability that requires accommodations (conditions include but are not limited to mental health, attention-related, learning, vision, hearing, physical, or health impacts), you are welcome to contact Disability Services at 404-894-2563 or [dsinfo@gatech.edu](mailto:dsinfo@gatech.edu) or [disabilityservices@gatech.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@gatech.edu). Disability services offer resources and coordinate (with students and their instructors) reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities and/or temporary health conditions.

## **Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement**

All assignments will be submitted electronically via Canvas. I expect that you will do your best to submit assignments on time. However, situations may arise where you may need more time to complete and submit assignments due to health-related or other issues. Email me in those situations for accommodations appropriate to your circumstance.

## **Course Modality and Digital Etiquette**

The course will be conducted through in-person meetings with assignments completed asynchronously. If there is a need to hold classes online at any point in the semester, we will pivot to online learning. In an online learning environment, I would appreciate you turning on your

camera at the beginning of class to acknowledge and greet one another, as well as during Q&A and discussion sessions.

### **Wellness, Mental Health, and Stress**

Graduate education can be stressful. When channeled properly stress can lead to new understanding, skill development, or discoveries. However, I want to know if you are experiencing negative forms of stress that are leading you to consider inappropriate approaches to your studies or harm to yourself or others. Georgia Tech has a variety of resources available related to student mental health including 24/7 crisis support as well as access to virtual mental (see <https://mentalhealth.gatech.edu/resources/students/student-mental-health-resources>; <https://mentalhealth.gatech.edu/clinical-services/get-help-now>) health providers.

**Diversity and Teaching:** Tech is committed to equal opportunity in education and employment. The Institute does not discriminate against individuals based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or veteran status in the administration of admissions policies, educational policies, employment policies, or any other institute-governed programs and activities.

**Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct:** To maintain a safe learning environment that fosters the dignity, respect, and success of students, faculty, and staff, Tech prohibits discriminatory harassment, which is unwelcome verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct directed at any person or group based upon race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or veteran status that has the purpose or effect of creating an objectively hostile working or academic environment.

**Faculty Responsibilities for Reporting:** "Responsible Employees," which includes faculty, instructors, TAs, administrators, and other persons in positions of authority, must report sexual misconduct. As a Responsible Employee, if you are aware of or told about alleged sexual harassment, sexual violence, or other discrimination, including sexual, regarding a student or another employee, you MUST report these claims to the Title IX Coordinator or one of the designated Deputy Title IX Coordinators. Similarly, I must report all concerns about students who may engage in harm to themselves or others.

**Institute Values:** We aim to uphold the Institute's values in this course, which will support the cultivation of a high-quality learning (<https://strategicplan.gatech.edu/values>) environment. All of this will occur with everyone's commitment to upholding these values. Be sure to give me feedback on what works as we move forward and let's aim collectively to cultivate a high-quality, supportive, and fun learning environment. Patience, kindness, respect, and other similar considerations go a long way in creating a high-quality learning environment.

**Health Etiquette:** I would like everyone to be generally mindful of everyone else and, as much as possible, to engage in safe and healthy practices – such as using a mask when necessary.

**Generative Artificial Intelligence (School of Computer Science, Georgia Institute of Technology):** I treat AI-based assistance, such as ChatGPT and Copilot, the same way we treat collaboration with other people: you are welcome to talk about your ideas and work with other people, both in and outside of class, as well as with AI-based assistants. However, all work you submit must be your own. You should never include in your assignment anything that was not written directly by you without proper citation (including quotation marks and in-line citation for direct quotes). Including anything you did not write in your assignment without proper citation will be treated as an academic misconduct case.