



POSC 521

MPA Capstone Seminar: Public Administration Theory

Fall 2026

Faculty Information

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Office hours: Mondays at 3:00–4:00 and 5:30–6:30, Thursdays at 12:00–1:00, and by [appointment](#) throughout the week. Meetings can be in-person or virtual via Zoom.

Course Communication

All course announcements and communications will be sent via *Canvas* and university email. Students are responsible for regularly checking their *Canvas* notifications and email. Students are also responsible for ensuring that their *Canvas* notifications are set to receive messages from the course. Students are expected to check *Canvas* and their email at least once daily.

Technical Problems

If you encounter any technical difficulties, contact the instructor immediately to document the problem. Then, contact: [student IT help desk](#), [email](#), phone (657) 278-8888, walk-in [student genius center](#), online chat - log into [portal](#); click “Online IT Help”; click “Live Chat.”

For issues with Canvas: Canvas Support Hotline = (657) 278-8888, [search the CSUF Canvas Guides with AI Assistant](#), or [report a problem](#).

Alternative plan for submitting work: Students are expected to submit all assignments via *Canvas*. If you cannot submit an assignment via *Canvas*, please contact the professor to discuss alternative submission procedures.

Response time: I will strive to respond to all student emails and *Canvas* messages within 24 hours, except on weekends and holidays. If you do not receive a response within 24 hours, please send a follow-up message. If you do not receive a response within 48 hours, please send another follow-up message and contact me via phone or SMS text at (657) 278-4770.

Course Information

Prefix, number, title: POSC 521, *MPA Capstone Seminar: Public Administration Theory*

Meeting times with modality, day(s), time(s), and location (if synchronous): Hybrid (in-person + asynchronous), Mondays, 7:00–9:45 p.m., Gordon Hall (GH) 204

Zoom: fullerton.zoom.us/j/3347502639

Course requisite(s): POSC 509; POSC 523; POSC 526; POSC 571; POSC 572

Catalog description: Concepts, models and ideologies of public administration within the larger political system. Course restricted to students in their final six units of graduate work.

Additional description: This is the culminating seminar of the MPA program, and it rests on a single premise: you are here to master public administration, not to survey it.

Mastery means something specific and demanding. It means you can state what Wilson actually argued and explain why Simon thought the whole edifice was incoherent. It means that when you meet a contested problem, you can select the two or three theories that genuinely bear on it, justify that selection, and defend it against a colleague who would have chosen differently. It means you know where the field's arguments remain unsettled, and you can say something useful about why they stay that way.

Coverage is not mastery. A response that names every framework and commands none of them is a weak answer at the graduate level, and it is the single most common way that otherwise strong students fail the comprehensive exam. Every element of this course—the weekly synthesis cycle, discussion facilitation, the integration seminar, the concentration paper—is built to develop the discipline of choosing what matters and going deep on it.

This is a professional degree. You are entering a field where the cost of shallow judgment is paid by the public, and usually by the part of the public with the least room to absorb it. Read accordingly.

Course Format

This course meets in person on Mondays, 7:00–9:45 p.m. Some weeks include asynchronous or independent work as noted in the schedule.

From Week 4 on, every meeting runs in the same order. I open by setting the stage: the question the week's readings are arguing about, and where it sits in the semester. We then move into the **Peer Review Studio**, twenty minutes in pairs on the draft you brought. Only then does the group discussion begin, and it runs the rest of the evening; in Weeks 5 through 11 the facilitating

pair's forty-five-minute segment sits inside it. The studio comes first on purpose. You read your partner's draft before the room has told you what to think about the readings, and you walk into the discussion having read two takes on the week instead of one. Studio pairs are assigned and rotate every week, so you will not sit with the same partner twice; the rotation is posted on Canvas.

Course Materials

Required Texts

- Denhardt, Janet V., and Robert B. Denhardt. 2015. *The New Public Service: Serving, Not Steering*. 4th ed. Routledge.
- Lipsky, Michael. 2010. *Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services*. Russell Sage Foundation.
- Balfour, Danny L., Guy B. Adams, and Ashley E. Nickels. 2020. *Unmasking Administrative Evil*. 5th ed. New York: Routledge.
- Pahlka, Jennifer. 2023. *Recoding America: Why Government Is Failing in the Digital Age and How We Can Do Better*. New York: Metropolitan Books.

Student Learning Outcomes:

1. **Master the theoretical foundations of the discipline:** Command foundational and contemporary public administration theory with sufficient depth to explain it, apply it, critique it, and defend your reading of it under examination conditions, not merely identify or summarize it.
2. **Exercise disciplinary judgment:** Select the frameworks that actually bear on a given problem, justify the selection, and defend it against the alternatives you set aside.
3. **Conduct a literature review in a concentration area:** Synthesize and critically evaluate scholarly literature to develop expertise in a specific aspect of public administration.
4. **Develop advanced writing skills:** Produce clear, concise, and effective written communication tailored to academic and professional contexts in public administration.
5. **Apply critical thinking skills:** Analyze and evaluate complex arguments, theories, and practices in public administration to address real-world challenges.
6. **Demonstrate professional readiness:** Integrate knowledge of trends, issues, and ethical considerations in public administration to prepare for a successful career in public service.

Grading Policies and Standards

a. Grading scale:

Table 1: Grade scale

Grade	Percent	Grade	Percent
A+	97.0–100.0	C+	77.0–79.9
A	94.0–96.9	C	74.0–76.9
A-	90.0–93.9	C-	70.0–73.9
B+	87.0–89.9	D+	67.0–69.9
B	84.0–86.9	D	64.0–66.9
B-	80.0–83.9	D-	61.0–63.9
		F	0.0–60.9

b. Required Course Assignments: The due dates for the course requirements are as follows:

1. Weekly Readings Assignments (Weeks 2–11; see schedule for the Week 2 and Week 3–4 arrangements):

- Annotated Bibliography (5 points each): Due Mondays by class time (Week 3's is due Friday, 9/11)
- Comparative Matrix, Version 1 (20 points): Due Friday, 9/4 by 11:59 p.m. (Week 2 only; replaces the synthesis paper)
- Rough Draft Synthesis Paper (10 points each): Due Mondays by class time (synthesis weeks only)
- Final Synthesis Paper or Book Deep-Dive (20 points each): Due Wednesdays by 11:59 p.m.
- Personal Reflection (10 points each): Due Fridays by 11:59 p.m.

2. Seminar Performance:

- Checkpoint 1 (Weeks 2–7): scored and returned Monday, 10/12
- Checkpoint 2 (Weeks 8–16, including the defense of your concentration paper): scored Monday, 12/7

3. Integration Seminar and Field Map:

- Field Map: Due Monday, 11/9 by class time
- In-person seminar: Monday, 11/9

4. MPA Comprehensive General Area Essay Exam:

- Distributed Monday, 11/9 at 9:45 p.m. (end of the integration seminar)
- Due Monday, 11/16 by 4:59 p.m.

5. Concentration Area Paper:

- Topic Selection: Due Monday, 11/30 by 11:59 p.m.
- Literature Review Draft: Due Monday, 12/7 by class time
- Workshop and paper defense: Monday, 12/7 (in person; scored under Seminar Performance)
- Final Paper: Due Monday, 12/14 by 11:59 p.m.

Table 2: Assignment weighting

Assignment	Weight
Weekly Readings Assignments	35%
Reading Discussion Facilitation	5%
Seminar Performance	8%
Integration Seminar and Field Map	5%
MPA Comprehensive General Area Essay Exam	35%
Concentration Area Paper	12%
Total	100%

c. Attendance and Participation policy: Students are expected to attend all in-person sessions. If you are unable to attend a session, please notify the professor in advance. If you miss a session, you are responsible for obtaining the information and materials covered in the session, and you will not be able to participate in that session's activities. Seminar Performance is worth eight percent and its rubric can only score what I saw. Most of you work full time and some of you will lose a Monday to a council meeting or a shift you cannot move. Tell me in advance when that happens and we will talk about it, rather than letting the absences accumulate quietly into a score neither of us can explain in December.

d. Examination dates: The comprehensive general area essay exam is distributed Monday, 11/9 at 9:45 p.m. and is due Monday, 11/16 by 4:59 p.m. Students who do not pass on the first attempt retake the exam during finals week (12/12–12/18).

e. Make-up and late submission policy: All assignments are due on the date specified in the course schedule. Late assignments will only be accepted if prior arrangements have been made with the professor. Students must submit all assignments on time and in the correct format. Failure to submit an assignment on time may result in a grade penalty.

f. Authentication of student work: Students may be required to submit their work to a plagiarism detection service. This may include submitting drafts and final versions of assignments. Students should be aware that their work may be checked for authenticity and originality. Cal State Fullerton uses Turnitin©. **Turnitin is used in this course for source matching only.** Its AI-writing indicator is not used here and plays no part in any judgment I make about your work; see *Repercussions for Misuse* under the generative AI policy for how that judgment actually gets made.

g. Extra credit: Extra credit opportunities will not be offered in this course. All students will be graded based on the same criteria and standards.

h. Retention of student work: Students are responsible for retaining copies of all assignments submitted in this course. Students should keep copies of all assignments until the end of the semester and verify that their assignments have been graded and returned before discarding them.

Detailed Course Requirements

Every assignment below carries an AI label. RED means no AI. **YELLOW** means AI is permitted at one specified point inside the assignment, under an approved prompt, with the transcript in your Feedback Appendix. Nothing in this course is Green and only two things are Yellow. Full definitions are in Table 4, and Table 5 holds every assignment at once.

1) Weekly Readings Assignment

Important Note: Beginning in Week 2, every student includes a *Feedback Appendix*—the Track A protocol you completed or the Track B transcript you saved, which is itself the appendix—with the annotated bibliography every week one is assigned, and with the final synthesis paper in every week that has one. No optional weeks and no exceptions on either. Nothing else in the course carries an appendix, because nothing else in the course permits AI at all; Table 5 lists every graded assignment and where the line falls.

You choose one of two feedback tracks and you may switch tracks at any time, for any reason, without asking:

- **Track A (Structured Self-Critique or Peer Feedback):** Work through *Track A: The Self-Critique Protocol*, a Canvas page, either on your own draft or in exchange with a classmate. No AI at any stage. Read the section titled *Why This Is Not the Lesser Path* before you choose a track; it makes an argument you are entitled to hear.
- **Track B (Approved AI Critique):** Use ChatGPT Edu, and only ChatGPT Edu, with the approved prompts reproduced verbatim below. The Canvas page *Track B: Using the Approved*

Prompts carries the same prompts in copyable form, the account setup, and what to do when the tool ignores its own instructions.

Neither track is the default and neither is worth more. Track A is not a fallback for students who cannot access the tool, and it is not a lesser option. Narrower, deeper answers are the trade the comprehensive exam actually rewards, and working entirely without AI is a reliable way to build that habit. Choose deliberately.

The capstone course is designed to integrate key theories and practices in public administration through weekly assignments culminating in a comprehensive capstone synthesis paper. Students will engage with foundational readings, participate in in-person discussions, and produce critical analyses that connect theory to practice.

Weekly Assignment Workflow (Weeks 2–11)

Each week includes the following components:

1. Annotated Bibliography — YELLOW (5 points; Due Monday Before Class)

- **Purpose:** Prepare for in-class discussion by summarizing key ideas and evaluating the relevance of assigned readings.
- **Instructions:**
 - For each assigned reading:
 - * Provide a citation in APA or Chicago author-date style.
 - * Write a 150-word annotation that includes:
 - A brief summary of the central argument and key points.
 - Relevance to the week’s topic and implications for public administration.
 - **A page number for the central argument**, pointing at the passage where the author actually makes the claim you are summarizing. One locator per annotation.
 - **Feedback Appendix (Required Every Week; Diagnostic Only):** Complete Track A or Track B; what you complete is the appendix. The appendix exists for **reflection and improvement next week**. It is not a revision aid for this week’s submission.
 - **If you are on Track B, use this prompt exactly as written.** Copy it character for character. Do not add to it, subtract from it, rephrase it, or follow it with clarifying instructions. Submitting work critiqued under a modified prompt is a violation of the course AI policy, not a stylistic choice. Whitespace, line breaks, and a trailing period are not modifications; adding, removing, or rewording a sentence is. Each prompt on the Track B page carries the date it was last revised, and a transcript running an older version in good faith is not a violation: tell me and rerun it. Run it on one entry: the one you wrote fastest. Paste that entry alone; if you paste the whole bibliography, put that entry first. The prompt:

You are reviewing one annotated bibliography entry written by a graduate student in a public administration seminar. Your entire response must consist only of questions. Do not write statements, assessments, summaries, corrections, praise, or suggested text. Every sentence you produce must end with a question mark. Return exactly five questions that would help the student find weaknesses in the accuracy of the summary, the clarity of the relevance statement, or concepts from the reading that may have been missed. Do not state what the reading says, even if you have access to it; each question must send me back to a specific place in the text to check a claim I made. Do not tell me the answers. Do not search the web, open links, or retrieve the source; work only from the text I paste here.

2. Rough Draft Synthesis Paper — RED (10 points; Due Monday Before Class)

- **Purpose:** Develop an initial critical analysis integrating insights from the readings to facilitate in-class discussion.
- **Instructions:**
 - Write a 3-page rough draft synthesis paper that:
 - * Identifies patterns, connections, and contradictions across the readings.
 - * Highlights implications for public administration theory and practice.
 - **No AI Assistance (Rough Draft):** This draft must be written entirely by you without AI tools (no drafting, rewriting, outlining, summarizing, or editing assistance). The goal is to capture your independent reading and thinking to support Monday's discussion.
 - This draft will be refined based on **class discussion**, the **in-class peer review studio**, and **your own reflection** (not AI feedback).

3. In-Person Peer Review Studio and Class Discussion — RED (Monday)

- **Purpose:** Deepen understanding of the week's readings through collaborative discussion and refine synthesis thinking.
- **Order of the evening:** I set the stage, the studio runs for twenty minutes, and the group discussion follows and runs to 9:45. See *Course Format*.
- **Peer Review Studio (20 minutes):** Assigned pairs, rotating every week so that no two of you are paired twice; the rotation is posted on Canvas. Bring your rough draft. Work through the *Peer Review Studio Checklist*, which is on the Track A Canvas page and applies to both tracks: read, reverse-outline, talk, then hand your partner two actionable

suggestions and one question, in writing, before the discussion starts. That written handoff is the artifact behind the fourth Seminar Performance criterion. With an odd number of students, one group of three works as a cycle, each of you reading one draft and being read by one other person.

- **Class Discussion:** Analyze key themes, patterns, and contradictions in the readings, and bring what the studio surfaced in your partner's draft and in your own. In Weeks 5 through 11 the facilitating pair leads a forty-five-minute segment inside this block.

4. Final Synthesis Paper — YELLOW (20 points; Due Wednesday Night)

- **Purpose:** Produce a polished critical analysis incorporating insights from class discussion.
- **Instructions:**
 - Write a final synthesis paper of **4 pages maximum** that:
 - * Refines and expands the rough draft based on **class discussion** and the **in-class peer review studio** (not AI feedback).
 - * Demonstrates sophisticated integration of readings with deeper analysis.
 - * Connects theory to practice in public administration.
 - **Depth Requirement (read this before you write):** Go deep on **no more than three** of the week's readings. In your opening paragraph, state which readings you chose to work with and why they carry the most weight for the question you are pursuing. Treat the remainder as context. A paper that gives every reading equal, summary-level treatment will not earn above a B, regardless of how well written it is.
 - **Page numbers, on every claim about a reading.** Any sentence that attributes a position to an author carries a locator. This is ordinary graduate practice and I would ask for it in any case. It is also the thing these tools do worst: a model writing from memory about a text nobody handed it will produce a page number that looks exactly right and is not, and it will do so with no signal that anything has gone wrong.
 - **Why the cap exists:** Coverage is not synthesis. The comprehensive exam gives you 1,620 words, and 1,620 words cannot survey a field. The most reliable way for a capable student to fail that exam is to touch everything and hold nothing. The page cap and the reading cap are here to make the shallow-but-broad paper structurally unable to score well, because that is the habit the exam punishes and the profession punishes harder.
 - **Feedback Appendix (Required; Diagnostic Only):** Attach the appendix: the Track A protocol or the Track B transcript you completed this week. It is for **reflection and improvement next week**, not for revising this submission.

- **If you are on Track B, use this prompt exactly as written.** Copy it character for character. Do not add to it, subtract from it, rephrase it, or follow it with clarifying instructions:

You are reviewing a synthesis paper written by a graduate student in a public administration seminar. Your entire response must consist only of questions. Do not write statements, assessments, summaries, corrections, praise, or suggested text. Every sentence you produce must end with a question mark. Return exactly eight questions: three that probe gaps in my reasoning or evidence, three that raise counterarguments I have not addressed, and two that probe connections across the readings I have not made. Do not state what the reading says, even if you have access to it; each question must send me back to a specific place in the text to check a claim I made. Do not tell me the answers. Do not search the web, open links, or retrieve the source; work only from the text I paste here. The last two questions must not propose a thesis, a conclusion, or what I should argue; they may only ask whether a connection exists.

- Include **all feedback collected** during the week (AI, peer, and/or self-critique) in the appendix, along with a brief **Next-Week Plan** (5–7 bullets) describing what you will do differently in the next synthesis.

5. Personal Reflection — RED (10 points; Due Friday Night)

- **Purpose:** Consolidate learning and reflect on how your thinking evolved across the week's work.
- **Instructions:**
 - Write a brief personal reflection (250–300 words) on your learning process and insights gained from the week's work.
 - Focus on what changed in your understanding after discussion/peer review, and what you would do differently next week.

The Week 2 Arrangement: Building the Comparative Matrix

Week 2 has no synthesis paper. It has something more useful, and you will carry it for the rest of the semester.

Denhardt and Denhardt run every chapter through the same three-way comparison—**Old Public Administration**, **New Public Management**, and **New Public Service**—and use it to set up

each concept discussion. That structure is your scaffold. Rather than write a synthesis paper about it, you will build it.

You will also build a fourth column they do not give you. **New Public Administration**—Minnowbrook, Waldo, Frederickson, and the arrival of social equity—appears in their book only as one root of the New Public Service, in a few paragraphs of Chapter 2. Part of the Week 2 session is on it, and you may cite that session as a source for the column.

- **Annotated Bibliography — YELLOW (5 points; Due Monday, 8/31 by class time):** Standard format, covering Chapters 1–6.
- **Comparative Matrix, Version 1 — RED (20 points; Due Friday, 9/4 by 11:59 p.m.)**
 - Columns: Old Public Administration, New Public Administration, New Public Management, New Public Service.
 - Rows: the concept areas Denhardt and Denhardt develop in Chapters 1–6 (the role of the citizen, the conception of the public interest, the basis of accountability, the model of rationality, and so on; derive the rows yourself from the text rather than waiting for me to list them).
 - Each cell: one or two sentences in your own words. Not a quotation, not a keyword.
 - Where Chapters 1–6 and the Week 2 session together will not support a cell, leave it empty and name in a phrase what is missing. An honest blank scores above a confident guess.
 - Below the matrix, a 300-word statement identifying the single row where the four positions are least reconcilable, and why that row is the one that matters.
 - **No AI, on either track.** You are building the instrument you will think with; buy it secondhand and it will not fit your hand.
- **Reflection — RED (10 points; Due Friday, 9/4):** Standard 250–300 words.

This document does not stop on 9/4. Denhardt's later chapters map onto the same frame: Chapter 7 in Week 5, Chapter 8 in Week 6, Chapter 9 in Week 7, Chapters 10–12 in Week 10. In each of those weeks, your **reflection must add or revise at least one row** and say in one sentence what forced the change. By Week 12 you will not be assembling a Field Map from nothing at four in the morning. You will be finishing one you have been building since Labor Day.

A warning about your own scaffold. A four-column matrix is a powerful thing to think with and a dangerous thing to think inside. Its risk is that it turns into a filing system: a student who can sort any reading into one of four boxes has learned a taxonomy, not a discipline. The frame is itself an argument Denhardt and Denhardt are making, and it is contestable. Watch for the readings that refuse the columns: Simon will not sit still in any of them, and neither will Lipsky. Balfour,

Adams, and Nickels refuse them most radically of all: their claim is that the technical-rational ethos which makes administrative evil possible runs underneath *every* column, so a framework that sorts government into four ways of being organized cannot see the thing that matters most about any of them. Treat those refusals as the most interesting thing you will find all semester rather than as gaps in your matrix. They are what Week 12 will ask you about.

The Week 3–4 Arrangement (Labor Day)

Labor Day falls on Monday, 9/7, and the campus is closed. Weeks 3 and 4 run as a single two-week unit on the classical foundations: Wilson, Weber, Gulick, Follett, and Simon. This is the heaviest reading set in the course and it has always deserved more than seven days.

- **Week 3 (9/7, no meeting):** Read the classical foundations. **Annotated Bibliography due Friday, 9/11 by 11:59 p.m.** No synthesis paper, no reflection.
- **Week 4 (9/14, in person):** **Rough Draft Synthesis Paper due Monday, 9/14 by class time.** Peer review studio, then discussion. Final synthesis due Wednesday, 9/16; reflection due Friday, 9/18.

The cycle is longer, not lighter. Use the extra week to read Simon slowly enough to see what he is actually doing to Gulick.

Book Deep-Dive Alternative (Weeks 8 and 11)

For the *Street-Level Bureaucracy* (Week 8) and *Unmasking Administrative Evil* (Week 11) weeks, students complete an alternative assignment in place of the standard synthesis paper.

- **Part A: Concept Application Analysis — RED (10 points; Due Monday Before Class)**
 - 2 pages identifying 3 core concepts from the book and applying them to a real or hypothetical public service setting.
 - Include one explicit dilemma or tradeoff a public servant faces in that setting.
- **Part B: Decision and Practice Analysis — RED (20 points; Due Wednesday Night)**
 - 2 pages proposing a response to the dilemma using course theory and evidence from the book.
 - Include one paragraph on equity implications and one paragraph on implementation constraints.
 - **No AI assistance allowed.** This analysis must be written entirely by you to capture your independent thinking about the book's concepts and their application.
 - Feedback is **not required**, but you may share your analysis with peers for feedback if desired (not AI).

- **Reflection — RED (Due Friday Night)**

- 250–300 words on how the book reshaped your view of frontline public service (Week 8) or of how ordinary professional competence can produce harm and hide it from the people producing it (Week 11).

AI Use and Academic Integrity: If you use AI in this course, it may only ask you questions. It may not answer them. That is the whole policy in one sentence, and the approved prompts are engineered to enforce it: a question cannot be pasted into your paper and passed off as your thinking. Everything else—the tool restriction, the verbatim prompt requirement, the transcript—exists to make that one sentence enforceable. Read the **Policy on the Use of Generative AI and Other Technology** section in full before Week 2, and refer to Table 3.

Table 3: Guidelines for Responsible AI Use in the Course

AI Use: Do's	AI Use: Don'ts
Use ChatGPT Edu through your CSUF login, and nothing else.	Use TitanGPT, Copilot, Gemini, Claude, a personal ChatGPT account, or any paid tier.
Use the approved prompts, copied verbatim .	Modify, extend, shorten, or follow up on an approved prompt.
Submit the complete, unedited transcript in your Feedback Appendix.	Submit excerpts, summaries, or a cleaned-up version of the exchange.
Show the tool only your own writing .	Upload, paste, or describe an assigned reading to the tool.
Read the questions it returns and answer them yourself, next week .	Use the questions to revise the same-week submission.
Use Grammarly for spelling, grammar, and punctuation only.	Use Grammarly to rewrite, paraphrase, or transform style or structure.
Choose Track A if AI is not helping you think.	Assume Track B is expected, standard, or worth more.
Remember: your voice and reasoning must remain central .	Treat AI output as authoritative without evaluating it.

2) Integration Seminar and Field Map — RED

Week 12 (Monday, 11/9): In-Person

There is no practice exam. A rehearsal essay written a month before the real one teaches less than it appears to. In its place is something more useful: a working seminar in which you assemble eleven weeks of theory into something you can actually carry into an exam room.

Field Map (Due Monday, 11/9 by class time)

- **One page.** No prose paragraphs. A map, a matrix, a diagram, a decision tree, a hand-drawn mess you photographed, whatever structure genuinely holds your thinking.

- **Start from your Comparative Matrix**, in whatever state ten weeks of revision has left it. This is the payoff for having maintained it.
- It must place the semester's theories **in relation to one another**: where they agree, where they collide, and which questions force a choice between them.
- It must mark **where the Denhardt frame breaks**: the readings that will not sit in any column, and what their refusal tells you about the frame. A map with no breaks in it is a map of the textbook, not of the field.
- It must name the **three arguments you would stake a comprehensive exam answer on**, and the strongest objection to each.
- **No AI, on either track.** Not for structure, not for review, not for "what am I missing." This is a closed-book inventory of what is actually in your head, and its whole value is that you find out now rather than at 11:00 p.m. on 11/15.

In Class (11/9)

- Each student presents their map in three minutes. Not a summary: an argument about how the field fits together.
- We collectively identify what the maps share, where they diverge, and what every one of us missed.
- Open review. Bring your hardest unresolved question about the discipline. This is the last night you get to ask it with the rest of us in the room.
- **The comprehensive exam question is distributed at the conclusion of the session (9:45 p.m.).**

Assessment Credit / no credit; 5% of the course grade. A map that is complete, defensible, and unmistakably your own earns full credit. This is not an essay and it will not be graded like one.

3) Reading Discussion Facilitation — RED

Students will facilitate class discussions in pairs for Weeks 5 through 11. With 14 students, there will be 7 pairs, each responsible for leading a 45-minute discussion segment during one of the weeks. (Pair count adjusts to final enrollment.) Weeks 2 and 4 are instructor-led so that the theoretical foundation is laid the same way for everyone. Facilitators will lead integrated discussions that build on their collaborative preparation and the rough draft synthesis papers submitted prior to class, creating a dynamic learning environment that bridges individual preparation with collaborative analysis.

Facilitator Responsibilities

Pre-Class Preparation:

- Collaborate with your partner(s) to share and discuss your annotated bibliographies, identifying complementary perspectives and areas of disagreement
- Prepare 6–8 discussion questions that connect readings to broader public administration theory and practice
- Design activities that encourage synthesis across readings and connection to current events or case studies
- Divide facilitation responsibilities and plan your collaborative approach

Class Facilitation (45 minutes): Your segment comes after the peer review studio, which I run; plan on a room that has just spent twenty minutes inside one another's drafts.

- **Opening synthesis (10 minutes):** Collaboratively present key themes and tensions across the week's readings, drawing on your joint analysis
- **Facilitated discussion (25 minutes):** Guide analysis through prepared questions, ensuring all students contribute and connecting individual insights from rough drafts
- **Practical connections (10 minutes):** Lead discussion on implications for public administration practice, current policy issues, or professional scenarios

Post-Class Reflection:

- Each facilitator submits an individual brief (250-word) reflection on Canvas within 24 hours, analyzing what worked well, partnership dynamics, and what insights emerged from the discussion

Assessment Criteria

Facilitator pairs will be evaluated on:

- **Preparation and Collaboration:** Demonstrates thorough understanding of readings and effective partnership in synthesizing different perspectives from their joint preparation
- **Discussion Leadership:** Creates inclusive environment, manages extended class time effectively, and guides productive dialogue without dominating
- **Critical Inquiry:** Poses thought-provoking questions that push beyond summary to analysis, evaluation, and application within their 45-minute segment
- **Integration:** Successfully connects readings to broader course themes, current events, and professional practice in public administration

- **Adaptability:** Responds effectively to unexpected directions in discussion and incorporates diverse student perspectives within their facilitation time
- **Professional Communication:** Maintains respectful, scholarly discourse while encouraging risk-taking in thinking and effectively shares facilitation responsibilities

Note: Facilitator assignments will be distributed at the beginning of the semester. The instructor will handle all peer review studio activities during class.

4) MPA Comprehensive General Area Essay Exam — RED

Students will complete a comprehensive general area essay exam as part of the MPA program's comprehensive exam requirement. The exam will consist of two questions from which students will choose one to answer. The questions will be based on the course readings and discussions and will require students to demonstrate their understanding of public administration's key concepts, theories, and debates. The exam will allow students to synthesize their learning in the course and demonstrate their ability to think critically and write clearly about complex issues in public administration. Students who do not pass the exam on the first attempt will have the opportunity to retake the exam once during finals week (12/12–12/18). The grade for the exam is pass/fail. Students who do not pass on the second attempt will be required to retake the course.

5) Concentration Area Writing Project — RED

Note: The specific focus of this project varies by concentration area (Public Finance, Human Resource Management, Local Government Management, or Public Policy). Detailed assignment sheets for each concentration provide tailored prompts and options; the Public Policy sheet carries a fourth option. This syllabus outlines the shared structure, requirements, and grading criteria for all students.

Assignment Overview

This capstone project puts your concentration's theory in contact with the hardest unresolved problem in contemporary public administration: the distance between what a policy promises and what government actually delivers. Using **Jennifer Pahlka's *Recoding America: Why Government Is Failing in the Digital Age and How We Can Do Better* (2023)** as the central text, you will examine how implementation choices—rules, systems, procurement, staffing, and the daily judgment of the people who administer programs—determine who a program actually serves.

Pahlka does not stand alone here. Read her against our Week 11 encounter with administrative evil ([Balfour, Adams and Nickels 2020](#)). Balfour, Adams, and Nickels argue that the gravest harms in public life are rarely the work of villains. They are produced by competent professionals acting appropriately in their organizational roles, inside a technical-rational ethos that renders the harm

invisible to the very people causing it. Under conditions of moral inversion, we do damage while believing—sincerely, and with evidence—that we are doing good work.

Now look at *Recoding America* through that lens. Nobody in Pahlka's book is a villain. Every rule was written by a reasonable person for a defensible reason. Every official followed the procedure. And the unemployment system still could not pay people during a pandemic. Is that masked administrative evil, or is it merely administrative failure? **That question is your paper's problem, and you may not dodge it.** If everything that goes wrong in government is administrative evil, the concept means nothing and Balfour, Adams, and Nickels have written a book about nothing. If nothing short of genocide qualifies, the concept cannot reach the ordinary machinery where most public harm actually gets done. Find the line. Defend where you put it.

Pahlka also connects backward to Lipsky's street-level bureaucrats (2010), whose discretion is increasingly encoded into systems that no single person is answerable for, and to our Week 9 readings on the hollow state (Milward and Provan 2000), which she effectively updates with a login page. And she must be read against the Week 10 social equity readings, because the harms that implementation produces do not fall evenly.

Objectives:

- Develop expertise in a specific public administration concentration area.
- Enhance research, analytical, and writing skills.
- Synthesize theoretical frameworks with practical cases.
- Trace how implementation decisions distribute burden, access, and benefit.
- Adjudicate a genuine tradeoff rather than restate a critique.

The Tradeoff Requirement: Pahlka diagnoses well and prescribes cautiously. She leaves real tensions open, and your paper must take a position on one of them rather than summarize her complaint. Candidate tensions include:

- **Discretion vs. consistency:** judgment produces responsiveness and also produces unequal treatment.
- **Simplification vs. targeting:** simpler eligibility raises take-up and also serves people a program was not designed for.
- **Speed vs. procedural protection:** every safeguard in the stack was a reasonable answer to a real abuse.
- **In-house capacity vs. contracted flexibility:** building costs money and time you may not have; buying costs control you may not get back.

- **Accountability through rules vs. accountability for outcomes:** the first is auditable, the second is what we actually want.

An argument names what you would give up, and for whom. “Government should be more user-centered” does not.

Assignment Stages and Requirements:

1. Topic Selection (20 points):

- Submit a one-page proposal outlining your topic, your research question, and the specific concepts from *Recoding America* you will use.
- Name the tradeoff you expect to confront and state your provisional position on it.

2. Literature Review (40 points):

- Draft a literature review synthesizing *Recoding America*, relevant course readings, and additional scholarly materials.
- Discuss how Pahlka’s claims about the policy–delivery divide, encoded discretion, and compliance-over-outcomes connect to established scholarship in your concentration.

3. Peer Review Workshop and Paper Defense (scored under Seminar Performance rather than here):

- Participate in a peer review workshop to provide and receive feedback on your literature review and paper outline.
- Come prepared to attack a classmate’s tradeoff position, and to have your own attacked.
- **Answer three questions about your own paper, put to you cold.** Why these sources, why this position on the tradeoff, and what the position costs and who pays it. You may consult your draft but not read from it. Everyone answers on the same night, rather than whoever happens to draw suspicion.

4. Final Paper (100 points):

- Submit a polished final paper that integrates feedback from earlier stages.
- **Adjudicate your tradeoff.** Take a defensible position, support it with theory and evidence, and state plainly what your position costs and who pays.
- **Include an explicit equity assessment.** Drawing on the Week 10 readings, identify who bears the burdens your case produces and who is excluded from the benefits.
- **No AI assistance of any kind.** This is your culminating written work in the program.
- Ensure the paper is 8–10 pages (excluding references), double-spaced, and formatted in APA or Chicago author-date style.

Submission Timeline:

- **Topic Selection:** Due Monday, 11/30 by 11:59 p.m.
- **Literature Review Draft:** Due Monday, 12/7 by class time
- **Peer Review Workshop:** Monday, 12/7 (in person)
- **Final Paper:** Due Monday, 12/14 by 11:59 p.m.

General Guidelines:

- **Grounding:** Papers must be firmly rooted in *Recoding America* and assigned concentration literature, demonstrating a deep understanding of both. Students may also incorporate relevant literature from the capstone or other MPA courses.
- **Length:** 8–10 pages, double-spaced (excluding references).
- **Formatting:** Use 12-point Times New Roman font with 1-inch margins. APA or Chicago author-date citation style is required.
- **Citations:** Provide in-text citations and a comprehensive references page.
- **Structure:** Organize the paper with a clear introduction, body, and conclusion. Use descriptive headings to guide the reader.
- **Writing Quality:** Papers should be polished, professional, and free of grammatical errors.

Grading Criteria:

- **Depth of Analysis (30%):** Engagement with *Recoding America* and the broader literature, and the quality of your tradeoff adjudication.
- **Use of Sources (20%):** Relevance and critical evaluation of sources.
- **Clarity and Organization (20%):** Logical structure and coherent arguments.
- **Writing Quality (15%):** Grammar, style, and proper formatting.
- **Completeness and Accuracy (15%):** Adherence to assignment requirements and deadlines.

This is the last thing you write as an MPA student, and it should read like the work of someone who has finished the degree rather than someone completing an assignment. Pahlka's book is useful here precisely because it refuses the comfortable position. Nobody in it is a villain, the rules were all written by reasonable people for defensible reasons, and the outcome is still a system that fails the people it was built to serve. That is the condition you are about to go work in. The paper asks what you intend to do about it.

6) Seminar Performance — RED

Eight percent of this course is earned in the room, out loud, without preparation time. A seminar whose graded work is all written at home and submitted at midnight measures something real about you, and it does not measure the thing you will spend your career doing. Council members interrupt. Deputy directors ask where the number came from and do not wait while you look it up. The comprehensive exam is close to the last time anyone gives you a week.

What this is not. It is not an attendance grade and it is not a talking grade. **Volume is not scored.** A rubric that counts how often you speak measures comfort with speaking, and it falls hardest on quiet students and on people working in their second or third language—the same reasoning I use to refuse AI detectors, applied to my own gradebook. Four sentences that reorganize a discussion outrank forty that keep it moving. If you ever think this is being applied as a head count, say so and I will show you the marks.

Two checkpoints, not weekly scoring.

- **Checkpoint 1 (4%), scored and returned Monday, 10/12:** your contribution across Weeks 2–7, including the peer review studio.
- **Checkpoint 2 (4%), Monday, 12/7:** your contribution from Week 8 forward, plus the cold defense of your concentration paper described in the previous section.

The midterm checkpoint exists so that the score can still change something. A participation grade delivered in December tells you what you should have done in October, and there is nothing to be done with it.

The criteria. Both checkpoints use the same rubric, and the fifth criterion applies only on 12/7.

1. **Command under question.** Asked what an author argued, you give the argument rather than the gist you formed while reading, and you keep the author's claim distinct from your reading of it. Saying plainly that you do not know scores at the top of this criterion when it is true. Reaching for a plausible-sounding version scores at the bottom, and the two are easy to tell apart from the front of the room.
2. **Selection and justification.** Handed a contested problem, you name the frameworks that genuinely bear on it, say why, and say what you are setting aside and on what grounds. This is the comprehensive exam skill, assessed while you are on your feet instead of at your desk.
3. **Response to challenge.** You take an objection on its merits and either revise or defend with reasons. Absorbing an objection with agreement and then continuing unchanged is the standard failure here, and it is scored as one.

4. **Contribution to another student's work.** The two actionable suggestions and one question you owe your partner in the peer review studio, in writing, every studio week from Week 4 through Week 11. Actionable means they could act on it Tuesday.
5. **Defense of your own work** (12/7 only). You answer the cold questions on your concentration paper out of the paper's own reasoning rather than out of a summary you memorized.

Each criterion is scored on four levels: not yet, coverage, working command, and command. The full rubric is posted on Canvas, and it is the same document I mark from.

No AI. Nothing here is submitted, so there is nothing to run through a tool. Table 5 lists it with everything else.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to adhere to the highest standards of academic integrity. Any student found to have engaged in academic dishonesty will be subject to the sanctions described in the [Academic Dishonesty Policy](#) (UPS 300.021). Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, and submitting previously graded work without prior authorization. Students are expected to be familiar with the university's policy on academic dishonesty and to adhere to this policy in all aspects of this course. Any student who has questions about the policy should ask the professor for clarification.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious violation of academic integrity and will not be tolerated in this course. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, copying and pasting text from sources without proper citation, paraphrasing text from sources without proper citation, and submitting work that is not your own. Students are expected to properly cite all sources used in their work and to submit original work. Failure to do so may result in a failing grade for the assignment and further disciplinary action.

Written Work

All written work must be submitted in a professional format, including proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Written work must also be properly cited using the appropriate citation style. Students are expected to follow the guidelines for written work provided by the professor and to seek clarification if they have questions about the requirements.

Policy on the Use of Generative AI and Other Technology

Definition of Generative AI

Short version: if a tool suggests new words and you use them, that counts as AI use under this policy. Everything below is detail.

For this course, generative AI refers to systems capable of producing or suggesting human-like text, images, data analysis, or other content, **whether you asked for it or it appeared on its own**. Examples include:

- Large Language Models (e.g., ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Copilot, TitanGPT, and any successor products)
- Text-to-image or multimodal generators (e.g., DALL-E, Midjourney)
- AI writing assistants and summarizers
- Automated coding, data, or content generators

AI built into tools you already use. This is the part people miss. The policy also covers AI features embedded in ordinary software: Google Docs Smart Compose and “Help me write,” Gmail Smart Reply, Microsoft Word Copilot, Apple Intelligence and other phone or operating-system writing assistants, Google and Bing AI search summaries, and PDF readers or reference managers that summarize sources or answer questions about them. **You do not have to feel like you “used AI” for it to count.**

The test, for tools that do both. Most tools now flag *and* offer to fix. The distinction is what the tool hands you: if it only flags a possible problem, that is basic mechanics. If it proposes new wording, a summary, or a rewritten version for you to adopt, this policy covers it. A squiggly underline is a flag; a suggested replacement sentence is generative, even inside a spellchecker or grammar tool.

What you can use freely, and where to go instead. Ordinary spelling, grammar, and punctuation checking is always fine and never needs disclosure. Microsoft Word’s built-in checker, LanguageTool, and the flagging half of Grammarly are all permitted. The line is the one just above: a tool that tells you something may be wrong is fine, and a tool that writes the replacement is not.

If what you want is help making your writing *sound better*, that is a reasonable thing to want, and in a capstone it is also the thing you are here to build. A rewrite button does not leave the skill with you. Two campus offices do the same work in a way that does.

The Graduate Success Center runs free one-on-one writing appointments for CSUF graduate students, on any assignment in your program. Sessions are an hour, held on Zoom, one per week, booked through TitanNet with your campus username and password up to two weeks out. Consultants are not editors and will not make changes to your work; the hour is a working conversation about your draft. Appointments are offered in fall and spring only and they fill, so book well ahead

of a due date rather than the night before. If TitanNet shows no open times, every slot has been claimed; check back, because people cancel. If you have not booked one before, the GSC has a step-by-step guide: [How to Make and Cancel a GSC Writing Appointment \(PDF\)](#).

The CSUF Writing Center (Pollak Library North 199, in person and online, free, appointments and drop-in) does the same job and works with graduate writers as well. So will I, if you bring me a paragraph and ask what is making it land flat. None of that requires disclosing anything and none of it costs you points.

Features you did not turn on. Some software has AI switched on by default. **What counts is what you adopt.** If Word suggests the rest of your sentence and you accept it, that is use; if it suggests and you ignore it, nothing has happened. You are responsible for what you accept, not for what a company enabled without asking you. This is the one place Copilot may appear in your workflow without your having chosen it, and the same rule applies. Turning these features off removes the temptation and the ambiguity at once, and I am happy to show you how.

On edge cases. AI is now embedded in enough ordinary software that neither of us will anticipate every case. If you are unsure whether something counts, **ask before you submit.** A good-faith question asked in advance is treated as exactly that. It is not a confession and it does not put you under suspicion. The only version of this that creates a problem is the one where you had the question and submitted anyway.

The Approved Tool: ChatGPT Edu, and Only ChatGPT Edu

If you use AI in this course, you will use **ChatGPT Edu** through the CSU workspace, authenticated with your CSUF credentials. No other tool is permitted for any graded work. This includes TitanGPT, Microsoft Copilot, Google Gemini, Claude, a personal ChatGPT account under your own email, and any paid consumer tier of any product.

- **Set this up in Week 1.** ChatGPT Edu is not automatic. You must submit an opt-in request through the CSUF IT service catalog and wait for provisioning (typically 30–60 minutes, but do not test that assumption on a Sunday night). Instructions: fullerton.edu/it/services/software/chatgpt-edu.html.
- **Why one tool.** Two reasons, and the second matters more than the first. Your data stays inside a CSU agreement with real privacy protections. And every one of you gets the same instrument. When students bring whatever they happen to subscribe to, the class quietly stratifies by who can spend two hundred dollars a month, and the assignment stops measuring what it claims to measure.
- **If you cannot get access,** tell me. Do not substitute another tool and do not stall. Track A is available to you immediately and costs you nothing in points or standing.

AI Use Policy

AI is permitted in this course in exactly one form: **as a source of questions you must answer yourself**. Everything below follows from that.

- **Approved Prompts Only, Verbatim:** The prompts in the assignment descriptions are the only permitted prompts. Copy them character for character. Do not add context, do not append a clarifying instruction, do not ask a follow-up question, and do not continue the conversation after the tool responds. One prompt, one response, done. A modified prompt is a policy violation regardless of how reasonable the modification seems to you.
- **Questions Only:** The approved prompts instruct the tool to return nothing but questions. If it disregards its instructions and returns statements, assessments, or proposed text anyway, that is not your violation, but you may not use that material, and it must still appear in your transcript exactly as it came back.
- **Never Show It the Readings:** Do not upload, paste, quote at length, or summarize an assigned reading for the tool. It may see your writing and nothing else. Metabolizing a reading is the work itself; hand that to a tool and the work has not happened. Skipping it is how a capable student ends up writing a comprehensive exam answer that touches every framework and understands none.
- **Complete Transcript Required:** Your Feedback Appendix must contain the entire exchange: your prompt as sent, the full unedited response, and the date. **Paste the text into the appendix.** A share link may accompany it, but the link is not the record. Links break, conversations get deleted, and no vendor promises to keep yours available as long as you want it. Copy the exchange at the end of the session rather than at the deadline. Excerpts, paraphrases, and tidied-up versions do not satisfy this requirement.
- **Not Allowed (the no-AI assignments):** Rough drafts, the Comparative Matrix, the weekly personal reflections, your discussion-facilitation questions and post-class reflection, the Field Map, the Book Deep-Dive analyses, the comprehensive exam, and every stage of the concentration paper are written entirely by you with **no AI assistance whatsoever**: no outlining, summarizing, drafting, rewriting, or editing. Table 5 is the complete list.
- **Not Allowed:** Using AI to draft, rewrite, restructure, or polish any portion of submitted work, ever, on any assignment, on either track.
- **Diagnostic Only:** Feedback informs **next week's** work. It may not be used to revise the submission it critiques.
- **Allowed (Basic Mechanics):** Grammarly is permitted for spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Do not use it for rewriting, paraphrasing, or style transformation.

Assignment Labels: Green, Yellow, Red

Every graded assignment in this course carries a label, printed on the assignment itself in Canvas and listed in Table 5. You should never have to infer one.

Table 4: What the labels mean in this course

Label	What it means here
GREEN	Unused in this course. No assignment here leaves general AI assistance open, so you will not see a Green label on anything, and its absence is deliberate rather than an omission.
YELLOW	AI is permitted at one specified point inside the assignment, under an approved prompt copied verbatim, with the complete transcript in your Feedback Appendix. Two assignments carry this label. Permitted is not required: on Track A you complete these same assignments with no AI at all and lose nothing for it.
RED	No AI. The assignment is built to be done without it, and doing it without it is the point.

Labels are always written out, as the words GREEN, YELLOW, and RED rather than as a color alone, so that nothing here depends on your being able to tell two colors apart.

Where AI Fits: Assignment by Assignment

Two assignments in this course admit AI, in one place inside each of them, under one approved prompt. Everything else is yours alone.

Basic mechanics are the exception that runs underneath all of it: spelling, grammar, and punctuation checking is fine everywhere, including on the assignments listed as no-AI, and it never needs disclosing.

If an assignment carries no label, it is Red. Ask me and I will fix it, and asking costs you nothing. This policy opens one narrow door, so silence is not a second one. An assignment I forgot to mark is my oversight rather than a gap for you to work in.

Rationale for AI Policy

The comprehensive exam rewards depth. The answers that succeed are narrower and deeper: two or three frameworks genuinely commanded, not every framework named. Unstructured AI use pushes writing in exactly the opposite direction, toward responses that are impressively broad and genuinely shallow, and that is the profile the exam is built to catch. Depth is what the exam measures, and depth is what the profession requires.

This is because AI makes breadth cheap. Laziness has nothing to do with it. When summarizing a fifth reading costs nothing, you summarize the fifth reading instead of sitting with the second one

Table 5: Where AI may and may not be used

Assignment	Label	Where AI may be used
Annotated bibliography (weekly)	YELLOW	Feedback Appendix only, Track B approved prompt
Final synthesis paper (weekly)	YELLOW	Feedback Appendix only, Track B approved prompt
Rough draft synthesis paper (weekly)	RED	Nowhere
Personal reflection (weekly)	RED	Nowhere
Comparative Matrix, Version 1 (Week 2)	RED	Nowhere, on either track
Book Deep-Dive, Parts A and B (Weeks 8, 11)	RED	Nowhere, on either track
Reading discussion facilitation	RED	Nowhere: questions, activities, and the post-class reflection are yours
Seminar performance (both checkpoints)	RED	Nowhere: nothing is submitted and nothing is written in advance
Field Map (Week 12)	RED	Nowhere, on either track
MPA comprehensive general area essay exam	RED	Nowhere
Concentration Area Paper (every stage, including the 12/7 defense)	RED	Nowhere

until you understand what it is really claiming. The tool quietly relocates your effort from thinking to assembling, and assembling feels productive right up until someone asks you a hard question.

Two further things, both closer to course content than to technology caution. **There is nobody in there.** A language model holds no position and has no interests or moral commitments; it returns the text that is probable given the text in front of it. When it agrees with your thesis, nothing has agreed with you, and when its questions sound insightful, no one found them insightful. A student who understands only that the output can be biased will keep arguing with the tool as though someone were on the other side of it, and will start trusting it the moment it sounds fair. Weber on rationalization and Simon on the limits of the administrative principles are both, in their different ways, about what happens when a procedure gets mistaken for a judgment. You read them in September.

The same prompt does not return the same answer. These systems are probabilistic, so an identical input run twice produces different output, sometimes different enough to change what you would conclude about the tool. One run is not a test. If you try something once and like what comes back, you have learned that the result is possible and nothing else. I found this out about my own course materials this summer, in a single afternoon, by running one prompt twice and getting two different answers—one of which I had already written up as a flaw in the prompt. I will show you both transcripts.

So the policy narrows AI to the one function that cannot substitute for your thinking: **asking you questions you have to answer yourself.** The remaining goals are unchanged:

1. Promotes critical engagement with public administration theory by treating AI as an interrogator rather than a collaborator.
2. Surfaces blind spots in your reasoning without filling them in for you.
3. Builds professional literacy with tools already common in public service organizations, including honest literacy about what they cost you.
4. Develops ethical judgment by practicing responsible use of emerging technologies.
5. Encourages sustainability awareness in balancing AI's benefits against its environmental costs.

Ethics and Responsible Use

Students are expected to engage with AI responsibly:

- **Authorship:** All submitted prose must be written by you. AI may provide critique, but may not generate or rewrite your sentences, paragraphs, or structure.
- **Attribution:** Label the transcript where it sits in the **Feedback Appendix** ("ChatGPT Edu critique, 9/16/26"). Do not treat AI text as source material to incorporate into your writing.
- **Bias:** The questions it asks are the common ones. It draws them from what is frequent in its training text, so it will ask the obvious question about a familiar case and stay silent on the one your case actually raises. The question it never asks is the one to watch for, and you are the only one positioned to notice it.
- **Verification:** Check every fact, quotation, and citation before it enters your work. Fabricated sources are the failure mode most likely to hurt you, and they are convincing.
- **Confidentiality:** Do not upload sensitive, private, or proprietary information into AI tools. Several of you work in agencies; personnel matters, client records, and unpublished agency data do not go into a chatbot, Edu tier or not. Assume anything you enter may be retained *by the company*, indefinitely and beyond your reach. That is a separate question from whether *you* will still be able to open a past conversation, which no vendor guarantees. Plan for both: it may outlive your wanting it, and it may vanish before you need it.
- **Sustainability:** These systems carry real energy and water costs. Thoughtful use is part of responsible use.
- **Opting out is legitimate:** If you would rather not use AI at all—for labor, environmental, privacy, or any other principled reason—that is a respected choice in this course. Track A is built for exactly that and carries the same points. You do not owe me a justification.

Further reading: [CSU AI Commons—Ethical and Responsible Use of AI for Students](#).

Repercussions for Misuse

- Misuse includes: submitting AI-generated or AI-edited prose as your own; using any tool other than ChatGPT Edu; modifying an approved prompt; continuing a conversation past the single approved exchange; showing an assigned reading to the tool; submitting an incomplete, edited, or reconstructed transcript; using AI on a no-AI assignment; and using diagnostic feedback to revise the submission it critiqued.
- **“Showing an assigned reading” means your act, not the tool’s.** The approved prompts end by telling the tool not to search the web, open links, or retrieve the source, and in testing it has done so anyway. Every annotation is required to carry a citation and a page locator, so a Track B exchange necessarily hands over enough to identify the reading. If a response comes back with source markers, a reference line, or a search indicator, that is the tool going out on its own and it is not misuse by you. The exchange is void rather than a violation: keep the transcript as it came back, run the prompt again, and submit both.
- Consequences may include revision requirements, grade penalties, or formal academic integrity proceedings under UPS 300.021.
- **How I judge severity.** These are not all the same thing and I will not treat them as if they were. I weigh the nature of the assignment; whether the use replaced core intellectual work or sat at the margins of it; **whether the problem was a disclosure failure or a substantive substitution**; and whether it is a first occurrence or a repeated one. Submitting a tidied-up transcript is an omission. Passing off generated analysis as your own is deception. They land in very different places.
- **On tool restrictions.** The ChatGPT Edu requirement exists for equity, so that everyone gets the same instrument rather than the class stratifying by who can afford a paid tier, and for privacy, since your data stays inside a CSU agreement. If that reasoning does not fit your situation, come tell me rather than quietly substituting.
- **A note on detection.** I am not going to pretend I can catch everything with software, and **I am not going to run your prose through an AI detector and treat the output as evidence.** Those tools are unreliable and their errors are not evenly distributed; they flag multilingual writers and plain prose at higher rates, and making an accusation on that basis would be bad reasoning of exactly the kind this degree trains you to refuse. Turnitin is used in this course for source matching, which is a different instrument answering a different question, and its AI indicator plays no part in how I evaluate your work. What I can do is read carefully, and ask you about your own argument. If you cannot explain why you chose the sources you chose, defend the claims you made, or account for the objection you did not address, the work does not meet the standard of this course, whatever produced it. That conversation is the assessment.

Assessment of AI Use

AI use will be evaluated by boundaries and learning, not polish:

- Compliance with the assignment-specific AI rules in Table 5.
- The **Feedback Appendix**, required every week. **What is scored is what you did with the critique, never the quality of the critique you received.** On Track B that distinction is a matter of fairness rather than generosity: the tool draws its questions from a distribution, and two of you can send the identical prompt and get back questions of very different use. You do not control the draw, so you are not graded on it. Submitting the complete transcript is a condition of the assignment being complete; it is not a component of its score, and it has never cost anyone points to disclose.
- The **Next-Week Plan** (5–7 bullets) showing how you will apply the critique to **next week's** work. This is the part of the appendix carrying the weight.
- Independent engagement with readings and theory in discussion and in-class writing, scored under Seminar Performance.
- Final projects that demonstrate original analysis and a consistent authorial voice.

Revisiting This Policy

This policy is a working document, not a settled one. AI is embedded in enough ordinary software that good-faith students will hit cases neither of us anticipated: a search engine that summarizes a source before you click it, a phone that offers to rewrite a sentence, a PDF reader that answers questions about a reading. Some of that is hard to even notice, let alone name in a transcript.

Week 5 carries a scheduled twenty minutes on this policy, and it is not a housekeeping slot.

Week 5 is the Friedrich–Finer week, and this policy is a Friedrich–Finer problem at small scale. The transcript requirement, the single approved tool, and the verbatim-prompt rule are external controls in Finer's sense: specified in advance, checkable by someone who was not there, and indifferent to what you intended. The standard I actually assess by—that work you cannot defend does not count as yours—is Friedrich's: an internal professional norm that no rule can verify from the outside and no amount of compliance can produce. This document runs both instruments at once and they do not sit comfortably together. Come prepared to say which one is doing the real work here, and what the fact that I wrote both tells you about how administrative rules get made.

Bring edge cases to that session and to any other. A case you are unsure about is more useful to the whole class than a rule I wrote in August.

And a standing invitation, which I mean: this is a capstone in public administration, a field that studies how rules get made, whom they burden, and whether they accomplish what they claim.

That includes this rule. If you think this policy is poorly designed, imposes burden it does not justify, or fails on its own terms, say so, in class or to me directly. I would rather hear it in week three than read it in evaluations.

Technical Competencies

Pollak Library Resources

The Pollak Library provides a wide range of resources and services to support your research and learning. These resources include books, journals, databases, and research guides. You can access the library's resources online through the [Pollak Library website](#). The library also offers research assistance through the [Research Assistance Program](#). You can also access the [library's online instruction guidelines](#) for help with online learning.

Canvas

This course will use [Canvas](#) as a learning management system. You will use *Canvas* to access course materials, submit assignments, participate in discussions, and communicate with the professor and your classmate. You are responsible for checking *Canvas* regularly for announcements, assignments, and other course materials. You are also responsible for ensuring that your *Canvas* notifications are set to receive messages from the course.

Zoom

This course may include synchronous online sessions using [Zoom](#). You are responsible for ensuring that you have the necessary equipment and internet connection to participate in these sessions.

Minimum Technical Requirements

To participate in this course, you will need the following minimum technical requirements:

- A computer or tablet with a reliable internet connection
- A webcam and microphone
- A modern web browser (Chrome, Firefox, Safari, or Edge)
- Microsoft Word or a compatible word processing program
- Adobe Acrobat Reader or a compatible PDF reader

Long- and short-term computer and internet access loans are available through the [Student Genius Center](#).

Student Resources Website

It is the student's responsibility to read and understand the required and important [student information for course syllabi](#). Included is information about:

- University learning goals
- General Education learning objectives
- Netiquette/appropriate online behavior
- Students' rights to accommodations
- Campus student support resources
- Academic integrity
- Emergency preparedness/what to do
- Library services
- Student IT services and competencies
- Software privacy and accessibility
- Accessibility statement
- Diversity statement
- Land acknowledgment
- Final exam schedule
- Semester calendar

Classroom Management

Classroom Policies

- **Attendance:** Regular attendance matters for success in this course. If you must miss a class, please notify me in advance and make arrangements to catch up on missed material.
- **Participation:** Active participation in class discussions is expected. Please come prepared to engage with the readings and contribute to group activities.
- **Technology Use:** Laptops and tablets are allowed for note-taking and accessing course materials. However, please refrain from using your devices for non-class-related activities during class.

- **Respectful Communication:** Treat your classmates and instructor with respect. Disagreements are natural, but please express them constructively and courteously.

Course Schedule

Week 1, Starting 8/24: Course Launch

- **In-person Session:** What Mastery Means, the Comprehensive Exam, and How This Course Works
 - What the comprehensive exam actually asks of you, and why breadth fails it
 - The weekly cycle, the two feedback tracks, and the AI policy in full
 - Facilitation pair sign-ups
- **No reading due.** Read [Denhardt \(2015\)](#), *The New Public Service*, Chapters 1–6 for Week 2.
- **Action item this week:** Request your ChatGPT Edu account through CSUF IT if you intend to use Track B. Do not wait until Week 2.

Week 2, Starting 8/31: Public Administration Theory I — The New Public Service

- **In-person Session:** Serving, Not Steering (instructor-led). Setting the frame: Old PA, New PA, NPM, NPS.
- Readings:
 - [Denhardt \(2015\)](#), *The New Public Service*, Chapters 1–6
- **Due Monday (8/31):** Annotated Bibliography
- **Monday (8/31):** Class Discussion + matrix-building workshop
- **Due Friday (9/4):** Comparative Matrix, Version 1 (no AI) and Reflection
- **No synthesis paper this week.** You are building the instrument instead. See “The Week 2 Arrangement” above.

Week 3, Starting 9/7: Classical Foundations — Reading Week (Labor Day)

- **No class meeting:** Labor Day, campus closed
- **Read** (this is the heaviest set of the semester; the two-week runway is deliberate):
 - [Wilson \(1887\)](#), “The Study of Administration”

- [Weber \(1946\)](#), “Bureaucracy”
- [Gulick \(1937\)](#), “Notes on the Theory of Organization”
- [Follett \(1926\)](#), “The Giving of Orders”
- [Simon \(1946\)](#), “Proverbs of Administration”
- **Due Friday (9/11):** Annotated Bibliography
- No synthesis paper and no reflection this week.

Week 4, Starting 9/14: Public Administration Theory II — Classical Foundations

- **In-person Session:** The Founding Arguments and Simon’s Demolition (instructor-led)
- Readings: the Week 3 set, discussed in full
- **Due Monday (9/14):** Rough Draft Synthesis Paper
- **Monday (9/14):** Peer Review Studio (20 min), then Class Discussion
- **Due Wednesday (9/16):** Final Synthesis Paper
- **Due Friday (9/18):** Reflection

Week 5, Starting 9/21: Ethics and Values in Public Administration

- **In-person Session:** Public Service Values and Ethics
- Readings:
 - [Friedrich \(1940\)](#), “Public Policy and the Nature of Administrative Responsibility”
 - [Finer \(1941\)](#), “Administrative Responsibility in Democratic Government”
 - [Goss \(1996\)](#), “A Distinct Public Administration Ethics?”
 - [Denhardt \(2015\)](#), *The New Public Service*, Chapter 7
- **Also in class (20 minutes):** this course’s AI policy, read as a Friedrich–Finer case. See “Revisiting This Policy” for what to come prepared to argue.
- **Note:** We return to the Friedrich–Finer question in Week 11, and it will not survive the encounter intact. Keep your answer somewhere you can find it.
- **Due Monday (9/21):** Annotated Bibliography and Rough Draft Synthesis Paper
- **Monday (9/21):** Peer Review Studio (20 min), then Class Discussion
- **Due Wednesday (9/23):** Final Synthesis Paper
- **Due Friday (9/25):** Reflection, including at least one added or revised Comparative Matrix row (Denhardt Ch. 7)

Week 6, Starting 9/28: Leadership and Motivation

- **In-person Session:** Leadership and Motivation
- Readings:
 - [Christensen, Paarlberg and Perry \(2017\)](#), “Public Service Motivation Research”
 - [Denhardt \(2015\)](#), *The New Public Service*, Chapter 8
 - [Lachance \(2017\)](#), “Public Service Motivation”
 - [Perry and Wise \(1990\)](#), “The Motivational Bases of Public Service”
 - [Fairholm \(2004\)](#), “Different Perspectives on the Practice of Leadership”
- **Due Monday (9/28):** Annotated Bibliography and Rough Draft Synthesis Paper
- **Monday (9/28):** Peer Review Studio (20 min), then Class Discussion
- **Due Wednesday (9/30):** Final Synthesis Paper
- **Due Friday (10/2):** Reflection, including at least one added or revised Comparative Matrix row (Denhardt Ch. 8)

Week 7, Starting 10/5: Performance Management

- **In-person Session:** Performance Management
- Readings:
 - [Behn \(2003\)](#), “Why Measure Performance?”
 - [Denhardt \(2015\)](#), *The New Public Service*, Chapter 9
 - [Douglas and Ansell \(2021\)](#), “Getting a Grip on Performance of Collaborations”
 - [Marvel \(2015\)](#), “Unconscious Bias in Citizens’ Evaluations...”
 - [Nicholson-Crotty \(2004\)](#), “Public Management and Organizational Performance”
- **Due Monday (10/5):** Annotated Bibliography and Rough Draft Synthesis Paper
- **Monday (10/5):** Peer Review Studio (20 min), then Class Discussion
- **Due Wednesday (10/7):** Final Synthesis Paper
- **Due Friday (10/9):** Reflection, including at least one added or revised Comparative Matrix row (Denhardt Ch. 9)

Week 8, Starting 10/12: Street-Level Bureaucrats (Book Deep-Dive)

- **In-person Session:** Street-Level Bureaucrats
- Readings:
 - [Lipsky \(2010\)](#), *Street-Level Bureaucracy*
- **Due Monday (10/12):** Annotated Bibliography and Concept Application Analysis (Part A)
- **Returned Monday (10/12):** Seminar Performance, Checkpoint 1 (Weeks 2–7)
- **Monday (10/12):** Peer Review Studio (20 min), then Class Discussion
- **Due Wednesday (10/14):** Decision and Practice Analysis (Part B)
- **Due Friday (10/16):** Reflection

Week 9, Starting 10/19: Privatization and Contracting

- **In-person Session:** Privatization and Contracting
- Readings:
 - [Milward and Provan \(2000\)](#), “Governing the Hollow State”
 - [Hood \(1991\)](#), “A Public Management for All Seasons?”
 - [Brown, Potoski and Van Slyke \(2006\)](#), “Managing Public Service Contracts”
 - [Jos and Tompkins \(2009\)](#), “Keeping it Public”
 - [Rainey and Bozeman \(2000\)](#), “Comparing Public and Private Organizations”
- **Due Monday (10/19):** Annotated Bibliography and Rough Draft Synthesis Paper
- **Monday (10/19):** Peer Review Studio (20 min), then Class Discussion
- **Due Wednesday (10/21):** Final Synthesis Paper
- **Due Friday (10/23):** Reflection

Week 10, Starting 10/26: 21st Century Challenges and Social Equity

- **In-person Session:** 21st Century Challenges
- Readings:
 - [Maynard-Moody and Musheno \(2012\)](#), “Social Equities and Inequities in Practice”
 - [Gooden \(2017\)](#), “Social Equity and Evidence”

- McCandless, Bishu, Gómez Hernández, Paredes Eraso, Sabharwal, Santis and Yates (2022), “A Long Road”
- Denhardt (2015), *The New Public Service*, Chapters 10–12
- **Due Monday (10/26):** Annotated Bibliography and Rough Draft Synthesis Paper
- **Monday (10/26):** Peer Review Studio (20 min), then Class Discussion
- **Due Wednesday (10/28):** Final Synthesis Paper
- **Due Friday (10/30):** Reflection, including at least one added or revised Comparative Matrix row (Denhardt Ch. 10–12)

Week 11, Starting 11/2: Unmasking Administrative Evil (Book Deep-Dive)

- **In-person Session:** Technical Rationality, Moral Inversion, and the Masking of Administrative Evil
- Readings:
 - Balfour, Adams and Nickels (2020), *Unmasking Administrative Evil*, 5th ed.
- **Due Monday (11/2):** Annotated Bibliography and Concept Application Analysis (Part A)
- **Monday (11/2):** Peer Review Studio (20 min), then Class Discussion
- **Due Wednesday (11/4):** Decision and Practice Analysis (Part B)
- **Due Friday (11/6):** Reflection

Week 12, Starting 11/9: Integration Seminar

- **In-person Session:** Assembling the Field
 - Three-minute Field Map presentations from every student
 - Collective diagnosis: what we all missed
 - Open review; bring your hardest unresolved question about the discipline
- **Readings:** Revisit core course texts; reread your own synthesis papers and your Comparative Matrix
- **Due Monday (11/9) by class time:** Field Map (one page, built from your Comparative Matrix, no AI, credit/no credit)
- **Monday (11/9) at 9:45 p.m.:** Comprehensive General Area Essay Exam distributed

Week 13, Starting 11/16: Comprehensive Exam and Concentration Paper Launch

- **Asynchronous Session:** No class meeting
- **Due Monday (11/16) by 4:59 p.m.:** Comprehensive General Area Essay Exam (1,620 words maximum; no AI)
- **Posted Monday (11/16):** Concentration Area Paper guidelines and concentration-specific assignment sheets
- **Begin reading:** [Pahlka \(2023\)](#), *Recoding America: Why Government Is Failing in the Digital Age and How We Can Do Better*

Week 14, Starting 11/23: Fall Recess

- **No class:** Fall Recess (11/23–11/29). Campus open 11/23–11/25; closed 11/26–11/27.
- **Nothing is due this week.** Finish [Pahlka \(2023\)](#) if you can; if you cannot, take the holiday and finish it next weekend.

Week 15, Starting 11/30: Concentration Area Paper — Topic

- **Asynchronous Session:** No class meeting
- **Due Monday (11/30) by 11:59 p.m.:** Topic Selection (including your provisional tradeoff position)
- Draft your literature review this week for Monday's workshop.

Week 16, Starting 12/7: Concentration Area Paper Workshop

- **In-person Session:** Concentration Area Paper Workshop — our last meeting
- **Due Monday (12/7) by class time:** Literature Review Draft
- **Monday (12/7):** Peer review. Come prepared to attack a classmate's tradeoff position, and to have yours attacked.
- **Monday (12/7):** Paper defense. Three questions on your own paper, put to you cold, and Seminar Performance Checkpoint 2 is scored from this session.
- Last day of classes: Friday, 12/11

Finals Week, 12/12–12/18

- **Due Monday (12/14) by 11:59 p.m.:** Final Concentration Area Paper
- Comprehensive exam retake window, if needed, runs through Friday, 12/18.
- Semester ends Friday, 12/18.

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