

Western Michigan University
School of Public Affairs and Administration
PADM6800, Project Paper Seminar
Instructor: Udaya R. Wagle, Ph.D.

Final Project Paper

As a high-quality original piece of critical analysis and empirical research, your project paper will be a source of reference for the communities of academics, researchers, and practitioners. It must be written, organized, and presented with clarity, originality, and thoroughness providing adequate treatment of theoretical, empirical, and practical issues and implications.

Your final project paper generally includes the following sections in sequence. While the organization of legal or historical studies and contemplative treatise may deviate somewhat, consult with me, if your project involves, to make sure that it meets the acceptable standards and guidelines. Note that most of the sections from your proposal will remain with necessary changes to fit the presentation. Instructions on these sections have already been covered in the research proposal instructions. To avoid duplication, the following list provides more elaborate instructions for some of the new and substantively important sections only. Let me know if you need further clarifications.

1. *Title Page*: Make sure to follow the Graduate College Guidelines.
2. *Abstract*: A 200 word summary that includes the problem, methodology, findings, and conclusions.
3. *Executive Summary*: A longer summary that describes the paper in greater detail but does not exceed two pages. The idea is to provide a snapshot overview of the entire project paper in a more elaborate format.
4. *Table of Contents* (with page numbers; also provide a List of Tables and List of Figures when appropriate).
5. *Introduction*: A statement of the problem, the expected contribution to the specific problem situation and to the knowledge in the field of public administration, limitations, and the organization of the paper.
6. *Literature Review*: A critical review of the most important pieces from related scholarly research and professional sources.
7. *Research Design and Methodology*: The overall design and methodology of the research

including the applicable conceptual framework, research questions, hypotheses, and expected outcomes, operationalization of the concepts used, and the types of data and their collection and analysis strategies.

8. *Analysis and Findings*: Presentation and analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data using specific methods as indicated in #7 and reporting and discussion of findings. You need to be detailed so that anyone interested can understand the procedures and replicate the study, supposedly deriving similar findings. Present the necessary data and their results using tables, graphs, or other tools to summarize quantitative data and categories, themes, and keywords to summarize interview transcripts or other qualitative data. Present findings and discuss them addressing your research questions or testing hypotheses. Your discussion should also relate to the larger theoretical or operational context in which the problem is situated, articulating the core contributions of your project. Remember to use findings that are substantiated by the data and analysis and focus on ways to contribute to creating or expanding the theoretical or practical knowledge. Report additional information such as data collection protocol, methodological details, and description of informants in the appendix, providing appropriate references to them in the text.
9. *Conclusions and Recommendations*: A summary of findings, conclusions drawn, and recommendations for actions or further study. You need to focus on findings that are directly relevant to addressing the problem. Be cognizant that recommendations are afterthoughts in research and critical analyses, in which findings are contextualized to formulate a specific course of action.
10. *References* (in APA style)
11. *Appendices*: Data collection protocol, technical and methodological information, agency endorsements, HSIRB approval, and other relevant documents.

Just like the research proposal, the length of the final project paper varies considerably depending on the problem and methodological approaches taken. Project papers at the SPAA typically range between 50 and 80 pages.

Through this project paper, you are making a major contribution to the field and you need to present it effectively. You need to closely follow the Graduate College's "Guidelines for the Preparation of Theses, Specialist Projects, and Dissertations" to consistently format your paper including on margins, pagination, and fonts and location of the text as well as headings (at levels 1, 2, and 3) and titles (of figures and tables). Some of these are also mentioned in the syllabus but the Graduate College Guidelines provide a more comprehensive guide (Let me know if you find any discrepancies).

A copy of the complete draft paper will be due at 5:00 PM on Friday, November 13. I will

review the content, methodology, and presentation of your paper and return it to you after your defense in the last class. I will need two bound copies of the final project papers at my office by 5:00 PM on Friday, December 4. I will return one copy with my comments and the assigned grade and the other copy will remain at the SPAA library for future references.

The evaluation and grading of your paper will focus on the overall quality of the work and the degree to which it:

- Creates value to the larger professional community,
- Conforms to the structure described in the Graduate College Guidelines including the APA style formatting of references,
- Clearly identifies the research questions and the methodology,
- Develops and presents the content in a sequential and coherent manner,
- Excludes material that is not germane to the research questions,
- Provides adequate transition between the sections, paragraphs, and ideas,
- Utilizes correct syntax, grammar, and spelling,
- Documents the findings with data and analytical results,
- Effectively relates the recommendations to the documented findings, and
- Takes into account the impact of politics, economics, history, and culture in discussing the findings and making recommendations.

After the successful conclusion of this exercise, you will be ready to earn an MPA degree.

Accept my congratulations!!!