

**YORK UNIVERSITY**  
**FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES**  
**MASTER OF PUBLIC POLICY, ADMINISTRATION AND LAW**  
**School of Public Policy and Administration**

<b><u>Course:</u></b>	GS/PPAL 6230 B 3.0 <i>Topics in Public Policy</i>
<b><u>Term:</u></b>	Fall/Winter 2024-25
<b><u>Time and location:</u></b>	Sundays, 9:30am to 4:30pm on Sept. 15, Oct. 6, Nov. 10, Jan. 12, Feb. 9, and Mar. 23 – DB 0004 (with DB 0011 and DB 0013 as breakout rooms)
<b><u>Instructor:</u></b>	Thomas R. Klassen <a href="http://www.linkedin.com/in/thomasklassen">http://www.linkedin.com/in/thomasklassen</a> <a href="http://tklassen.blog.yorku.ca/">http://tklassen.blog.yorku.ca/</a>
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<b><u>E-mail:</u></b>	<a href="mailto:tklassen@yorku.ca">tklassen@yorku.ca</a>
<b><u>Office hours:</u></b>	The instructor is available before and after each class to meet with students individually. Meetings on other days over Zoom can also be arranged.

**Purpose and objectives of the course**

This course allows students to investigate an area of public policy of specific interest to them. Students meet in a seminar format class to learn approaches to the analysis of public policy, which allows them to conduct a research project. Students may choose a topic in any area of public policy, public administration, public management or public law.

The objective of the course is to develop research skills and to move through the various phases of writing research paper: identifying and using research sources; writing a literature review; creating an outline of the paper; providing a research-in-progress presentations to colleagues in the course; and polishing the research paper for oral presentation and submission in final form.

Students in the course meet as a class six times between September and March to discuss the progress of their research, the problems they are encountering and solutions to these. Between these formal class meetings, students are encouraged to be in contact with the instructor on an as-needed basis regarding their progress on each of the required assignments, and to collaborate with other students.

At the end of the course, students will be able to conduct an independent policy-oriented research project and will understand the nature of scholarly and applied research in the fields of public policy, public administration, public management and/or public law.

The best way to learn how to write a research paper on public policy is to: (1) read voraciously in the area you are interested in; (2) develop an understanding of the appropriate



standards of quality of research in the area you are interested in; and (3) write as often as you can whenever the need or desire strikes you.

Many students will already be engaged in this important combination of intellectual and professional activities because of their work and related career interests and goals. This course will be useful whether you come with extensive or more limited experience in conducting research.

### **Required text**

Baglione, Lisa A. 2020. *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science. A Practical Guide to Inquiry, Structure, and Methods*. Boston (MA): Wadsworth.

### **Supplementary texts (available as a free download or electronically via the York Library)**

Klassen, Thomas R. and John A. Dwyer. *How to Succeed at University (and Get a Great Job!): Mastering the Critical Skills You Need for School, Work and Life*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press. 2015. Free download at: <https://www.ubcpres.ca/how-to-succeed-at-university-and-get-a-great-job>

### **Organization of the course**

The course consists of short lectures, group work, class discussions of different aspects of research and assigned readings, individual assignments, research work, and presentations by students. The final class is an opportunity for students to present their research findings to colleagues and to guests.

### **Research with human participants**

If the proposed research involves interviews with human participants, the appropriate forms for York University's research ethics approval must be received prior to finalizing the outline/proposal and before students commence their research. The [research ethics approval process](#) may take several weeks. The Course Director must approve the proposal **and all ethics forms** must be submitted to the MPPAL program office (for approval by the SPPA Ethics Committee) **by mid October**. If the topic changes or if the outline changes substantially, the student must submit a new outline to the Course Director, and it must be approved by the Course Director.

Details are found [here](#). The forms will be submitted electronically at: <https://laps.apps01.yorku.ca/machform/view.php?id=988087>. The course director will also submit the attestation form: <https://laps.apps01.yorku.ca/machform/view.php?id=1037205>.

## SCHEDULE OF CLASS MEETINGS

**SEPTEMBER 15:** *Introduction to research, identifying sources, and developing a research proposal*

- Welcome
- 1 minute elevator pitch on "What I wish to get from this course"
- Lecture: *Welcome, introductions, review of syllabus, the research process*
- Refreshment break
- Policy Case Study #1 (individual assignment – graded 5%)
- Library session on research skills
- Lunch
- Lecture: *Studying public policy*
- Group review of Policy Case Study #1
- Research ethics

### Required readings

Baglione, Chapters 1 and 2

Klassen, Thomas and Suzanne LeBlanc. 1993. "Methodological issues in research on public policy: Utilizing interviews," *Society*, 17.2: 21-26. [to be provided]

Klassen, Thomas and Suzanne LeBlanc. 1993. "Methodological issues in research on public policy: Utilizing government documents," *Society*, 17.1: 9-13. [to be provided]

**OCTOBER 6:** *Working with sources and writing an annotated bibliography*

- Welcome
- 1 minute elevator pitch on "My research question"
- Library information session
- Policy Case Study #2 (individual assignment – graded 5%)
- Refreshment break
- Lecture: *Review of public policy and introduction to annotated bibliographies*
- Group review of Policy Case Study #2
- Lunch
- Lecture: *Annotated bibliographies*
- Break out groups to discuss the proposal
- Preparing for the annotated bibliography

### Required readings:

Baglione, Chapters 3 and 6

**NOVEMBER 10:** *Completing a literature review*

- Welcome
- 1 minute elevator pitch on "What I learned about my topic from the annotated bibliography"
- Break out groups to discuss annotated bibliography
- Refreshment break
- lunch
- Lecture: *The Literature Review*
- Preparing for the literature review

**Required readings:**

Baglione – chapters 4 and 7

**JANUARY 12:** *Theories and data*

- Welcome
- 1 minute elevator pitch on "What others know about my research question"
- Group review of literature review
- Refreshment break
- Lecture: *Features of public policy and administration*
- Research ethics
- Lecture: How to structure a research paper
- Lunch
- 1 minute elevator pitch on "How I will make my paper and presentation interesting to the reader/listener"
- Lecture: How to structure a research paper

**Required reading:**

Baglione – chapters 5 and 8

**FEBRUARY 9:** Each student will present his or her research to-date in class. Guests are invited to observe and serve as conference audience, including other MPPAL students, faculty and family members. All students must attend the entire class.

**Required reading:**

Baglione – chapter 9

## **MARCH 23: – Optional workshop to continue developing your research paper**

### **EVALUATION**

Students will receive marks for completing each phase of the research project; for the quality of their presentations and written assignments; participating in class discussions and activities; and including supporting colleagues.

The final grade for the course is based on the following items weighted as indicated:

<b>Type of evaluation</b>	<b>Weight</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
Policy case study #1	5%	Policy case study #1 – September 15 (in class)
Policy case study #2	5%	Policy case study #2 – October 6 (in class)
Research proposal	5%	October 6 (before 9:00am)
Annotated bibliography	15%	November 10 (before 9:00am)
Literature review	10%	January 12 (before 9:00am)
Research paper outline	5%	February 9 (before 9:00am)
Participation	15%	Over the course of the course
Research paper presentation	10%	February 9
Research paper	30%	April 25

**The major assignments are as follows:**

#### **Research Proposal (3 pages double spaced)**

For this assignment, students outline the key research question they wish to answer in their final paper and give some idea of the type of research they expect to carry out in order to answer the research question. The types of research can include reading legal cases, conducting quantitative analysis, using primary sources such as government documents or newspapers, surveying secondary literature, interviews, and surveys of individuals or organizations. A brief discussion of limitations and potential problems is also to be included.

Elements the research proposal should at the very least contain:

- Title
- Key research question
- Relevance of the question (why is this an important and interesting question/problem)
- Type of research to be conducted
- Limitations and problems that are likely to be encountered

### **Annotated Bibliography (8 pages double spaced)**

This assignment consists of presenting a list of key sources students expect to use in writing their research paper. The bibliography should present at least 20 references and list at least:

- 5 scholarly books
- 8 articles from peer review journals
- Other sources include: government reports, newspapers articles, research reports

The relevance of each reference must be explained in two or three lines. The material from this assignment should be used in the final research paper.

### **Literature Review (10 pages double spaced)**

The literature review is based on reading secondary sources and consists of identifying: 1) What theoretical perspectives are used by other researchers: 2) What are the main areas of disagreement and controversy within the literature; and 3) How the previous findings contribute to the research to be undertaken.

The literature review will also identify at least two different views or approaches to the research topic and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each. The material from this assignment will be used in the final research paper.

Note: The Annotated Bibliography presents a sequential summary of articles, while the Literature Review is a thematic analysis of the relevant research issues.

### **Research Paper Outline (4 pages double spaced)**

This assignment is an outline the main sections of the final paper including the major points that will comprise the content. The material from this assignment will be in the final research paper.

### **Research Paper Final Presentation**

Each student will have 15 minutes to present his or her paper, similar to an academic conference format. Students **must** use PowerPoint to make their presentation and/or other forms of audio-visual support.

## Research Paper

The paper presents the findings of the research conducted for this course. The paper must be at least 25 double spaced pages and must contain proper citations.

### PLEASE NOTE

**Late Assignments** (those not submitted or completed on the times and dates shown in this syllabus) are **not accepted** and will earn a grade of zero.

**Class participation** is crucial. Students must come prepared and ready to contribute to discussions in an informed way and ask questions, as well as support colleagues. Class participation includes attendance in classes, contributions to discussions and group work, awareness of issues in required readings, and supporting others in the course.

### MPPAL Attendance Policy

As one (1) full day the Saturday/Sunday class is equivalent to two or even three (2-3) weeknight classes, students who are absent from a weekend class must provide written justification for their absence to the course instructor and will be required to undertake independent work to make up for the missed class. Students who are absent from a weekend class may receive a failing grade in the course unless they successfully complete the makeup assignment(s) required to demonstrate a sufficient breadth and depth of mastery of the course content covered in their absence.

### Prima Facie Legitimate Grounds for Being Absent from a Class

The following are recognized as legitimate grounds for being absent from a class, thus triggering the alternative route of independent work undertaken to satisfy the requirements for the specific missed class.

#### 1. Medical Emergencies and Illness

Students who are unable to attend a class due to serious illness must notify the course instructor, in writing and as soon as possible. In recognition of the facts that our students are trustworthy professionals, that obtaining a doctor's note may put unnecessary demands on the health system, and that physicians charge significant fees for notes, course directors will not normally require a doctor's note explaining a medically-based absence. Students unable to attend two consecutive weekday classes or two weekend classes due to serious illness may, however, be asked to provide a doctor's note to the course instructor as soon as possible following the absence.

In cases where a student is unable to contact his or her instructors due to major illness, serious injury, or hospitalization, a notice may be sent to the program office (whose staff will

distribute the information in confidence to the student's instructors) or to the student's instructors directly, by the relevant medical personnel. This notice is for the course instructor's information only and does not relieve the student from contacting the course instructor as soon as possible to arrange alternate means of demonstrating mastery of the content missed.

Given our commitment to making the MPPAL degree accessible to professionals working full time in the public service, broadly construed, we also recognize that many of our students will have children or elders whose care is a significant responsibility. It is expected that regular, ongoing or predictable primary care responsibilities (to children, elder parents or others) will be arranged so that students can attend classes as scheduled. In extraordinary circumstances, however, we recognize that our adult students may be unable to attend a class because of inescapable familial responsibilities. It is expected that such absences will be explained by relevant documentation. Student must contact the course instructor as soon as possible to arrange alternate means of demonstrating mastery of the content missed.

## 2. Religious Accommodation

In recognition of the diversity of the student body, the University provides that a student may request an excused absence from class for participation in religious observances. In all such instances, it is the student's responsibility to request, in writing, that the instructor excuse the absence. The course instructor will at that time inform the student of what alternative work the student must provide in order to make up for his or her absence. Students should make any such requests no later than the commencement of classes.

## 3. Students with Disabilities

Students who miss classes because of a disability and who are registered with York University Counseling and Disability Services (CDS) must be given reasonable accommodation, which is to be negotiated at the beginning of the course between the student, CDS, and the course instructor.

## 4. Employer Demands

It is expected that students will arrange their work schedules with their employers in such a way as to enable them to attend all classes as scheduled. If, however, a student must miss a class because of workplace demands, the student will be entitled to submit alternative work to demonstrate their mastery of the missed course material, and to have that alternative work treated as this Policy requires.

Please see the MPPAL policies at: MPPAL policies at:

<https://www.yorku.ca/gradstudies/ppal/current-students/guidelines-policies-forms/>



## **Relevant York University policies**

### *Academic Honesty*

The breach of the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty is a serious matter. To quote the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty:

“The Policy on Academic Honesty is a reaffirmation and clarification for members of the University of the general obligation to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty. It outlines the general responsibility of faculty to foster acceptable standards of academic conduct and of the student to be mindful of and abide by such standards.”

Please see: <https://www.yorku.ca/unit/vpacad/academic-integrity/>

Students might wish to review the interactive on-line tutorial on academic integrity at: <https://spark.library.yorku.ca/academic-integrity-what-is-academic-integrity/>

### ***Students with Special Needs***

York University is committed to making reasonable accommodations and adaptations in order to make equitable the educational experience of students with special needs and to promote their full integration into the campus community. Please alert the Course Director during the first class should you require special accommodations.