

# **POLS 590- THE M. P. A. PAPER SYLLABUS**

3 Credit Hours

M. P. A. students must complete the M. P. A. Paper as part of their program. The M. P. A. Paper, although not a thesis, should reflect a level of effort and accomplishment beyond that required for a typical course research paper. Students writing a M. P. A. Paper should adhere to the following guidelines regarding the selection of a M. P. A. Paper Committee, the approval of a research topic, and the submission and oral presentation of the finished paper.

## **Choosing Alternative Paper Models**

With faculty review and approval, students may choose to write a traditional research paper for this requirement or may instead choose to write a paper on an applied topic. This choice must be made no later than submission of the student's Application for Admission to Candidacy (after completing 12 semester hours but prior to completing 18 hours). However, students may choose their alternative, register for POLS 590, and begin work as early as their second semester in the program.

## **The M. P. A. Paper Committee**

In consultation with the M. P. A. Coordinator, each student will form a three member M. P. A. Paper Committee. This committee will include a chairperson from the M. P. A. faculty who will have the primary responsibility for supervising the preparation of the paper, and two other faculty members, at least one of whom must be a member of the M. P. A. faculty. These committee members will serve as second and third readers of the student's paper. The M. P. A. Coordinator will have final approval over the membership of the student's committee.

The committee will work with the student to develop a suitable research proposal; direct the necessary research; prepare a paper that will serve as the basis for the oral presentation; and conduct the student's oral examination. The committee will also determine whether or not the student's paper and oral presentation fulfill departmental requirements.

## **The M. P. A. Paper Proposal**

Prior to beginning formal work on the M. P. A. paper, each student must prepare a three to five page proposal outlining his or her research project. This proposal should be submitted to the members of the student's committee for review. After the committee members have had an opportunity to review the proposal, the major professor will convene a conference with the committee and the student. At this conference the student will discuss his or her proposal and the committee will offer suggestions or changes. Once the committee has formally indicated its acceptance of the proposal, the student may begin work on his or her paper.

Please note that in order to schedule a proposal defense, MPA Paper proposals must be completed, including any required revisions, and submitted to the committee chair no later than midterm of the semester in which the student intends to defend. We recommend that the proposal be turned in by the fourth or fifth week of the semester to help ensure that all revisions will be completed before the midterm cutoff date. Defenses for proposals submitted after midterm will be scheduled in the following semester. Students should also note that it is much more difficult to arrange defenses during the summer.

Proposals for papers that will report the results of basic research should include four sections:

1. an introduction setting out the research problem and its importance;
2. an abbreviated review of the relevant literature;
3. a discussion of the methods which will be used to collect and analyze the data; and
4. the hypotheses or research propositions to be tested.

Proposals for conceptual papers or papers which attempt to synthesize the existing literature in an area should also include four sections:

1. an introduction;
2. an abbreviated review of the relevant literature;
3. an explanation of the need for integration or theoretical development; and
4. a discussion of the direction the proposed paper will take.

Proposals for applied research papers should include:

1. an introduction describing the issue or problem to be addressed and its importance;
2. a review of the status of the issue or problem citing sources consulted;
3. a discussion of data sources; and
4. a discussion of how the paper will contribute to resolving the problem or issue.

### **The Oral Presentation of the M. P. A. Paper**

When the major professor believes the paper is of acceptable quality, he or she will assist the student in scheduling an oral presentation before members of the student's M. P. A. Paper Committee. The student must schedule the presentation at least three weeks in advance of the proposed presentation date. This means that no paper defenses will be scheduled within three weeks of the final day of class. Students who complete their paper after this deadline will be scheduled to defend in the following semester. It is the student's responsibility to see that each member of his or her committee receives a final copy of the M. P. A. Paper at least two weeks prior to the scheduled presentation. Failure to meet these scheduling requirements may require the student to reschedule his or her presentation.

Presentation of the student's paper will be open to interested students and non-committee faculty. Following the initial presentation, committee members and others in attendance may ask questions or make comments about the paper for no more than thirty minutes. The student and observers will then leave, and the student's committee will discuss the paper and the oral presentation and agree to one of the following outcomes:

**UNCONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE** - The committee accepts the paper as defended. All members of the committee will sign and date the approval page.

**CONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE** - The committee recommends acceptance of the paper pending completion of specific changes or additions that require review only by the major professor. The second and third reader will sign and date the approval page after the presentation. The committee chair will sign and date the approval page after the student completes all required changes.

**RECOMMENDATION FOR SUBSTANTIAL REVISIONS** - The committee identifies the need for substantial revisions and a subsequent scheduling of another presentation. None of the committee members will sign and date the approval page. The student must make a revised version of the M. P. A. Paper available to his or her committee at least two weeks prior to the rescheduled presentation.

For reporting purposes, the committee will assign a letter grade to the completed paper. Completion of the M. P. A. Paper, including signatures of all committee members, is required prior to the student's graduation from the program.

### **Time Limit**

Students must successfully submit the M. P. A. paper in its final and approved form within two years after completing all other courses taken to fulfill degree requirements as set forth on the Application for Admission to Candidacy and before the expiration of their candidacy. After completing one semester in the M. P. A. program, students may register for the M. P. A. Paper in any semester in which he or she is registered as a M. P. A. student. A student may form his or her committee and begin work on the research paper without registering for POLS 590. Students who do not complete their research papers in the semester in which they initially register for POLS 590 will receive a grade of IP (In Progress). According to university regulations, an IP must be converted to a regular grade within one calendar year.

### **M. P. A. Paper Specifications**

- I. **Style:** All papers prepared for POLS 590 must conform to the most current editions of the *APSA Style Manual*, published by the American Political Science Association, or the *APA Style Manual*, published by the American Psychological Association.
- II. **Sources:** References used in the preparation of a research paper must be consistent with academic standards. In general, this means that students should use peer-reviewed reference material. The peer review process assures that the source has been subjected to criticism by others knowledgeable in the area under consideration. Most academic journals use a rigorous peer review process to assure that the information they print meets the standards of their field.

Other sources may be used, however, in writing research papers. Government documents are generally acceptable references. Newspaper articles may be appropriate sources of information. The Internet continues to increase in usefulness as a source of material.

The key considerations in selecting source material should be the validity and reliability of the information, as well as its appropriateness to the research topic. Generally, students should use non-peer reviewed material sparingly and avoid popular, mass media publications (*People*, *TV Guide* and the like) entirely. Trade publications, such as *PM (Public Manager)* or *Personnel* are also suspect, as are journals with heavy ideological bents such as *Mother Jones* or *National Review*. Web-based sources should also be limited.

- III. **Abstract/Executive Summary:** Place an abstract or executive summary of no more than 150 words as the first page of the manuscript. The abstract/summary should present the principal substantive or theoretical points discussed in the paper. In addition, it should include the central question addressed by the paper and the author's findings and conclusions.
- IV. **Text:** M. P. A. Paper manuscripts are not limited to a certain number of pages, nor is there a minimum page number requirement. The paper should be as long as necessary for adequate treatment of the topic at hand, but no longer. The executive summary, endnotes, reference list, tables, and charts are all considered supporting material and not part of the manuscript.

All material should be double-spaced on one side of the page with margins of 1.5 inches. Each table or illustration should be on a separate page at the end of the manuscript. Indicate the placement of tables and illustrations in the text as follows: leave two double spaces after the last line of text; insert the sentence, "Table (Figure) N here," and leave two double spaces before beginning the next line of text.

Your readers potentially represent a wide range of professional interests and specialties; do not use jargon or overly technical language. Use acronyms sparingly and spell them out the first time you use them. Do not construct acronyms from phrases you repeat frequently in the text.

- V. **Notes:** Do not use footnotes. Use endnotes sparingly to elaborate or comment on material in the text and include them under an appropriate heading at the end of the paper. Do not use the feature of your word processing software that allows you to embed endnotes in your text.
- VI. **Methodology and Research Design:** Students should include a section detailing methodology and research design information as appropriate. This section should be presented within the body of the paper with an appropriate heading.
- VII. **Reference List:** Prepare a list of all the works you cite in the text and arrange them alphabetically by author. If you cite more than one work by the same author, arrange them by the year of publication in ascending order (earliest to latest). If you cite more than one work by the same author published in the same year, arrange them alphabetically by title and differentiate among them by putting a letter after the year of publication.

VIII. **Preparing the paper for submission:**

- Use a word processor and letter quality printer to prepare all copy.

- Use margins of 1.5 inches.
- Double-space all material, including indented quotations, footnotes, references, and tables.
- Place notes and references at the end of the paper on separate pages headed "Notes" or "References."
- Place each table or figure on a separate page at the end of the paper.
- Place an abstract of no more than 150 words on a separate page at the front of the paper. The abstract should present the principal substantive or theoretical points discussed in the paper.
- Place an approval page in front of the abstract. The approval page should take the following form:

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TITLE OF THE PAPER

by

NAME OF STUDENT

Submitted to satisfy the requirements for POLS 590, The M. P. A. Paper  
Masters of Public Administration Degree  
The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Approved:

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Committee Chair

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Second Reader

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Third Reader

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