



To: MPA Students considering enrolling in PA 8990 (Capstone Project) for Summer 2023  
From: Dr. Tara Kolar Bryan  
Subject: Summer Capstone Course Proposals – Due April 16, 2023

Date: February 27, 2023

I will facilitate the PA 8990 Capstone Project for Summer 2023. MPA students must submit a proposal for their project and obtain the permission of the Capstone instructor before enrolling in this course. Students who wish to enroll in PA 8990 for summer 2023 must e-mail a proposal to me at [tbryan@unomaha.edu](mailto:tbryan@unomaha.edu) no later than 11:59 PM CST on Sunday, April 16, 2023.

I will review the proposed projects and meet with each student individually prior to approval of proposal for enrollment in the course. The review process may involve revisions of the proposal. After several revisions, your proposal may not be accepted for the coming semester. A proposed project will be approved based on substantive and methodological merits and whether it can be reasonably completed in one semester. Therefore, it is essential to devote time and energy to developing a solid proposal.

**The presumption is that you have already given your topic some thought and have done some preliminary research on existing literature.** A proposal based entirely on conjecture, with little/no thought given to the existing research or methodology, will not fare well in the proposal review stage. *Therefore, I strongly encourage you to contact me well before the proposal is due to discuss your idea.* It is also helpful to talk to another faculty member familiar with your area of interest.

Your proposal should be in a Word file, not exceeding two single-spaced pages (12-point font, with 1" margins). Use the following format:

- Student Information: Your name and current e-mail address;
- Courses Completed: Number and names of MPA courses you have completed or are in process. If you are a dual-degree student, indicate how many MSW courses you have completed. Students must have completed all their core courses and be in the last 9 hours of their MPA program to be eligible to enroll in this course.
- Project Title: Tentative title of your project;
- Research Purpose Statement: Provide a clear, concise statement of the issue, problem, and/or program to be examined, analyzed, and studied. What specific question(s) are you seeking to address? Why are you doing this research (have a hook to get the reader's attention)?



- **Proposed Literature Review:** Based on your research purpose statement, what central area(s) of the scholarly literature do you intend to review? If there are theoretical frameworks you plan to use as a basis for your project, identify and describe them

**Keep in Mind:** A strong literature review will address the following questions: a. What are the established categories in the literature on your chosen topic? b. What does the literature cover in great depth (what do we know)? c. What are the gaps in the literature (what do we not know)? d. What are the implications for theory and practice based on the literature review?

- **Proposed Research Design:** Discuss your project's likely research design and feasibility within the time limits of the semester, including specific information addressing the following:
  - What research design might be utilized?
  - Do you expect to use quantitative or qualitative methods?
  - Will the proposed project require collecting new data, or will it use existing data?
  - How many organizations and participants (units of analysis) will be involved?
  - Do you or will you have access to the persons or organizations you want to analyze or study?
  - What approaches might be used to analyze your data?
- **Linkage to MPA competencies:** Identify 2-3 MPA competencies (the list of all five competencies listed below) that are most relevant to your proposed capstone project. Briefly describe why you chose them.
  - **MPA Competencies:**
    - to lead and manage in the public interest
    - to participate in, and contribute to, the policy process
    - to analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems, and make evidence-informed decisions in a complex and dynamic environment
    - to articulate, apply, and advance a public service perspective
    - to communicate and interact productively and in culturally responsive ways with a diverse and changing workforce and society at large

The syllabi for the summer 2023 Capstone course are also being sent with this note for your information. Four mandatory meetings will take place during the summer 2023 session. First, we will have an orientation meeting via Zoom on Monday evening, May 22, 2023. Second, you will each meet one-on-one with me midway through the semester. Third, you will meet with me in groups to practice your presentations. Finally, all students must participate in the final presentations on Friday afternoon, **August 10, 2023, via Zoom.**

For more background information, please visit the School of Public Administration web page for Current MPA Students ( <http://www.mpa.unomaha.edu/>). Click "MPA Curriculum," then click "Capstone Project." Included on this page are examples of previous capstone project papers.

