
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND MANAGEMENT

PADM 5308.060

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COURSE OVERVIEW

This course examines how decisions are made, implemented, and evaluated within U.S. local governments operating in complex political, legal, and intergovernmental environments. Emphasis is placed on the roles and responsibilities of professional local government managers and senior administrators as they navigate ambiguity, competing values, and resource constraints in the public sector.

Using a practice-oriented approach, students will assume the role of a local government manager within a fictional jurisdiction they design at the beginning of the course. Throughout the semester, students will apply concepts from *Managing Local Government* and assigned Open Educational Resources to realistic management scenarios involving governance relationships, accountability, public engagement, service delivery, and emerging challenges. The course emphasizes applied analysis, ethical reasoning, and professional communication, preparing students to think critically and strategically about leadership and decision-making in local government.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Analyze the institutional, political, and intergovernmental contexts that shape decision-making in U.S. local governments
2. Apply local government management concepts to realistic administrative scenarios involving ambiguity and competing stakeholder interests
3. Evaluate governance roles and relationships among elected officials, professional managers, and the public
4. Demonstrate ethical reasoning and accountability in administrative decision-making
5. Design strategies for public engagement, service delivery, and organizational capacity within varied local government contexts
6. Communicate managerial decisions clearly and professionally through written and discussion-based formats

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS AND READINGS

- *Managing Local Government (2nd Ed)(2026)*. By Kimberly Nelson and Carl Stenberg, Publisher: Sage; ISBN: 978-1-0719-1657-5
- In addition to the textbook, I will provide Open Educational Resources (OER) on Canvas. You are expected to review these materials, as they will reinforce the topics covered in class and may serve as references or citations for assignments. Engaging with these resources will support your learning and help you succeed in the course.

COMMUNICATION EXPECTATIONS

The best way to contact me is through Canvas messaging or your UT Tyler email. I check both regularly and will typically respond within 24-48 hours. While I am happy to meet by appointment, email or Canvas messages are the preferred method for routine questions and clarifications.

COURSE PHILOSOPHY

Active participation is essential in this course. You are expected to engage fully in group assignments, discussion boards, and other class activities. If you have concerns about participation or classroom dynamics, please speak with me, the department chair, or an academic advisor.

Our discussions are intended to be honest, enlightening, and respectful. All students must maintain professional decorum: respect differing opinions, communicate in a non-judgmental and courteous manner, and challenge ideas thoughtfully and scholarly. Disrespectful or offensive comments will not be tolerated.

Your preparation for readings, weekly discussions, and assessments should reflect your academic commitment. As this is an online course, your written work serves as the primary measure of your performance. Clear, professional writing is an important part of graduate-level work, so please proofread submissions carefully and use proper grammar and style.

All submissions must be completed through Canvas by the posted deadlines.

Finally, I encourage you to print the syllabus and review it thoroughly to familiarize yourself with all course policies and expectations.

MAJOR COURSE REQUIREMENTS

There will be a total of three major assignment types in this course:

- Local Government Profile (5%)
- Knowledge Checks (25%)
- Discussion Boards (25%)
- Applied Management Analysis (45%)

COURSE MILESTONES

Knowledge Check and Discussion Board
Always due on Sundays by 11:59 PM

Applied Management Analysis #1
Due on February 22nd by 11:59 PM

Applied Management Analysis #2
Due on April 5th by 11:59 PM

Applied Management Analysis #3
Due on April 29th by 11:59 PM

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Together, these assignments are designed to build progressively from comprehension to analysis to synthesis, emphasizing applied learning and professional judgment in local government management.

- **Local Government Profile – 5% of final grade**
 - The Local Government Profile serves as the foundational context for all applied assignments in this course.
 - Early in the semester, students will develop a concise profile of a fictional local government jurisdiction that will be used consistently throughout discussions and Applied Management Analyses.
 - The profile should clearly describe the structural, political, and managerial environment in which the student will operate as a local government manager.
 - While jurisdictions are fictional, they should be realistic and internally consistent. Students may draw general inspiration from real communities, but all analysis should be based on the fictional profile created for this course.
- **Knowledge Check – 25% of final grade**
 - Knowledge Checks are designed to assess students' comprehension of key concepts, terminology, and frameworks presented in the assigned textbook readings and accompanying Open Educational Resources (OER) provided in Canvas.
 - Each Knowledge Check corresponds to a chapter in Managing Local Government and reinforces the foundational knowledge necessary for higher-level analysis and applied decision-making throughout the course.
 - Each Knowledge Check consists of approximately 25 questions, including multiple-choice, true/false, and fill-in-the-blank items drawn directly from the textbook and assigned OER materials.
 - Knowledge Checks are open book but timed, requiring students to demonstrate preparation and understanding.
 - There will be a Knowledge Check for each chapter of the textbook.

■ **Discussion Board – 25% of final grade**

- Discussion Boards in this course are designed as applied analytical exercises, not informal conversations.
- Students will engage with realistic local government management scenarios and respond from the perspective of the fictional jurisdiction they created at the beginning of the semester.
- Discussions emphasize professional judgment, critical reflection, and evidence-based reasoning.
- Initial discussion posts must be substantive, analytical, and professionally written. Each post should demonstrate thoughtful engagement with the prompt and contribute meaningfully to the discussion.
- Response posts are intended to advance the conversation and demonstrate engagement with peers' ideas.
- Discussion posts are evaluated based on quality of analysis, use of course materials, clarity of reasoning, and professional communication, not on length or frequency of posting.
- There will be a Discussion Board for each chapter of the textbook.

■ **Applied Management Analysis – 45% of final grade**

- Applied Management Analyses (AMA) are structured, graduate-level writing assignments that require students to analyze complex local government management challenges and justify administrative decisions using course concepts, evidence, and professional judgment.
- These assignments emphasize analysis and synthesis rather than description and are designed to bridge theory and practice in local government management.
- Each AMA is written from the perspective of the local government jurisdiction the student created at the beginning of the course.
- Students are expected to evaluate ambiguity, competing values, and institutional constraints while articulating a defensible managerial decision grounded in course readings and supporting materials.
- Applied Management Analyses are typically 4 to 6 pages and follow a consistent organizational structure provided in the assignment instructions. Three AMAs are completed over the course of the semester, each aligned with major thematic sections of the course.

COURSE POLICIES

- **Attendance** - Regular engagement is required for success in this online course. Attendance is measured by participation in discussion boards, completion of assignments on time, and consistent interaction with course materials. Log in to Canvas frequently to stay current with readings, announcements, and discussions. Late participation or missed assignments will affect your grade. If you anticipate an extended absence or difficulty meeting deadlines, contact me promptly to discuss accommodations. Consistent engagement demonstrates your professional responsibility and ensures you fully benefit from the course.

- **Late Work and Make Up Exam Expectations** - Students are expected to submit assignments on time. The late assignment policy is as follows:

- if 1 day late, the max grade available is 90%;
- if 2 days late, the max grade available is 80%;
- if 3 days late, the max grade available is 70%;
- and there is no credit for any assignment more than 3 days late.

- **Grading** - The final grade will be assigned as follows:

- A (90% or above)
- B (80-89.9%)
- C (70-79.9%)
- D (60-69.9%)
- F (below 60%)
- All written work will be graded on accuracy, content, sophistication, proper usage of common English, and overall communications effectiveness and whether directions were followed. The following will be the basis for all assignments. Specific details for each rubric can be located within Canvas.
- Knowledge Checks:
 - Objective responses
 - Auto-graded assessments
- Discussion Boards
 - Initial Post Quality - 40%
 - Engagement with Peers – 40%
 - Use of Evidence & Professional Tone – 20%
- Applied Management Analysis
 - Context & Problem Definition – 20%
 - Analytical Framework – 30%
 - Managerial Decision & Justification – 30%
 - Implications & Reflection – 20%

CALENDAR OF TOPICS, READINGS, AND DUE DATES

Week of:	Topic	Assigned Reading	Assignments
#1 – Jan 12	SECTION I: CONTEXT AND COMPLEXITY		Class Introductions Local Government Profile
#2 – Jan 19	Leading Local Governments in a Dynamic World of Complexity and Ambiguity	Chapter 1	Knowledge Check #1 Discussion Board #1
#3 – Jan 26	U.S. Local Governments in Historical Context	Chapter 2	Knowledge Check #2 Discussion Board #2
#4 – Feb 2	Types, Functions, and Authority of U.S. Local Governments	Chapter 3	Knowledge Check #3 Discussion Board #3
#5 – Feb 9	Working Across Boundaries	Chapter 4	Knowledge Check #4 Discussion Board #4
#6 – Feb 16	SECTION II: GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP		Applied Management Analysis #1
#7 – Feb 23	Roles and Relationships	Chapter 5	Knowledge Check #5 Discussion Board #5
#8 – Mar 2	Accountability and Ethics in Local Government	Chapter 6	Knowledge Check #6 Discussion Board #6
#9 – Mar 9	SPRING BREAK: NO CLASS		
#10 – Mar 16	Enhancing Council – Manager Effectiveness	Chapter 7	Knowledge Check #7 Discussion Board #7
#11 – Mar 23	Engaging the Public	Chapter 8	Knowledge Check #8 Discussion Board #8
#12 – Mar 30	SECTION III: MANAGEMENT AND STRATEGY		Applied Management Analysis #2
#13 – Apr 6	Local Government Service Delivery	Chapter 9	Knowledge Check #9 Discussion Board #9
#14 – Apr 13	Administering the Local Government Organization	Chapter 10	Knowledge Check #10 Discussion Board #10
#15 – Apr 20	Emerging Issues and Management Challenges Facing Local Governments	Chapter 11	Knowledge Check #11 Discussion Board #11
#16 – Apr 27	Conclusion and Wrap-Up		Applied Management Analysis #3

UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND INFORMATION

- **Withdrawing from Class** - Students are allowed to withdraw (drop) from a course through the University's Withdrawal Portal. Texas law prohibits students who began college for the first time in Fall 2007 or thereafter from dropping more than six courses during their entire undergraduate career. The number includes courses dropped at other 2-year or 4-year Texas public colleges and universities. Make sure to consider the impact withdrawing from any course has on your academic progress as well as the financial implications. We encourage you to consult your advisor(s) and financial aid for additional guidance. CAUTION #1: Withdrawing before census day does not mean students receive a full refund. Please see the Tuition and Fee Refund Schedule. CAUTION #2: All international students must check with the Office of International Programs before withdrawing. All international students are required to enroll full-time for fall and spring terms.
- **Final Exam Policy:** Final examinations are administered as scheduled. If unusual circumstances require that special arrangements be made for an individual student or class, the dean of the appropriate college, after consultation with the faculty member involved, may authorize an exception to the schedule. Faculty members are required to maintain student final examination papers for a minimum of three months following the examination date.
- **Incomplete Grade Policy:** If a student, because of extenuating circumstances, is unable to complete course requirements by the end of the semester, then the instructor may recommend an Incomplete (I) for the course. The "I" may be assigned in lieu of a grade only when all of the following conditions are met: (a) the student has been making satisfactory progress in the course; (b) the student is unable to complete all course work or final exam due to unusual circumstances that are beyond personal control and are acceptable to the instructor; and (c) the student presents these reasons prior to the time that the final grade roster is due. The semester credit hours for an Incomplete will not be used to calculate the grade point average for a student. The student and the instructor must submit an Incomplete Form detailing the work required and the time by which the work must be completed to their

respective department chair or college dean for approval. The time limit established must not exceed one year. Should the student fail to complete the work for the course within the time limit, the instructor may assign zeros to the unfinished work, compute the course average for the student, and assign the appropriate grade. If a grade has not been assigned within one year, then the Incomplete will be changed to an F or to NC, if the course was initially taken under the CR/NC grading basis.

- **Grade Appeal Policy:** - UT Tyler's Grade Appeal policy requires the completion of a Grade Appeal form for this action to take place. The grade appeal begins with the instructor of the course. If a student does not agree with the decision of the instructor, the student may then move the appeal to the department chair/school director for that course. If the student is still dissatisfied with the decision of the chair/director, the appeal moves to the Dean of the College offering that course, who has the final decision. Grade appeals must be initiated within sixty (60) days from the date of receiving the final course grade. The Grade Appeal form is found on the Registrar's Form Library.
- **Disability/Accessibility Services:** In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA), The University of Texas at Tyler offers accommodations to students with learning, physical and/or psychological disabilities. If a student has a disability, including a non-visible diagnosis such as a learning disorder, chronic illness, TBI, PTSD, ADHD, or a history of modifications or accommodations in a previous educational environment, the student is encouraged to visit <https://hood.accessiblelearning.com/UTTyler> and fill out the New Student application. The Student Accessibility and Resources (SAR) office will contact the student when the application has been submitted and schedule an appointment with the Assistant Director Student Accessibility and Resources/ADA Coordinator. For more information, including filling out an application for services, please visit the SAR webpage at <http://www.uttyler.edu/disabilityservices>, the SAR office located in the University Center, # 3150 or call 903.566.7079.
- **Military Affiliated Students:** UT Tyler honors the service and sacrifices of our military-affiliated students. If you are a student who is a veteran, on active duty, in the reserves or National Guard, or a military spouse or dependent, please stay in contact with your faculty member if any aspect of your present or prior service or family situation makes it difficult for you to fulfill the requirements of a course or creates disruption in your academic progress. It is important to make your faculty member aware of any complications as far in advance as possible. Your faculty member is willing to work with you and, if needed, put you in contact with university staff who are trained to assist you. Campus resources for military-affiliated students are in the Military and Veterans Success Center (MVSC). The MVSC can be reached at MVSC@uttyler.edu or via phone at 903.565.5972.
- **Academic Honesty and Academic Misconduct:** The UT Tyler community comes together to pledge that "Honor and integrity will not allow me to lie, cheat, or steal, nor to accept the actions of those who do." Therefore, we enforce the Student Conduct and Discipline policy in the Student Manual of Operating Procedures (Section 8).
- **FERPA** - UT Tyler follows the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as noted in University Policy 5.2.3. The course instructor will follow all requirements in protecting your confidential information.
- **Recording of Class Sessions:** Class sessions may be recorded by the instructor for use by students enrolled in the course. Recordings that contain personally identifiable information or other information subject to FERPA shall not be shared with individuals not enrolled in the course unless appropriate consent is obtained from all relevant students. Class recordings are reserved only for the use of students enrolled in the course and only for educational purposes. Course recordings should not be shared outside of the course in any form without express permission.
- **Absence for Official University Events or Activities:** All courses follow the practices related to approved absences as noted by the Student Manual of Operating Procedures (Sec. 1 -501).
- **Absence for Religious Holidays:** Students who anticipate being absent from class due to a religious holiday are requested to inform the instructor by the second class meeting of the semester.
- **Campus Carry:** We respect the right and privacy of students who are duly licensed to carry concealed weapons in all courses. License holders are expected to behave responsibly and keep a handgun secure and concealed. More information is available at <http://www.uttyler.edu/about/campus-carry/index.php>.