

# Course Resources

## Governing Across Boundaries: Intergovernmental and Cross-Sector Collaboration

PUBA-739 Fall 2026

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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### Course Information

**Credit Hours:** 3

**Schedule:** Tuesdays, 2:00-5:00 PM

**Instructional Format:** In-Person

**Classroom:** Knapp-Sanders 3108

### Instructor Information

**Name:** Colt Jensen

**Email:** [cjensen@sog.unc.edu](mailto:cjensen@sog.unc.edu) (<mailto:cjensen@sog.unc.edu>)

**Office:** Knapp-Sanders 4506

**Office Hours:** Wednesdays, 11:00 am - Noon and 1-3 PM

### Course Description

The evolution of the American federal system has brought significant changes in the distribution of powers, finances, and responsibilities across levels of government. The debate over national versus subnational authority, first articulated in *The Federalist Papers*, continues to shape U.S. governance today. Recognizing that public problems rarely fall neatly within governmental boundaries, this course explores how national, state, and local governments interact with nonprofit and for-profit organizations in systems of shared governance. We will analyze the cooperation, conflict, accountability challenges, and collaborative strategies that arise in these interdependent systems.

This course is designed to enhance the practical skills of future public administration practitioners in navigating complex relationships across organizational and sectoral boundaries. Students will learn how to support elected officials and organizational leaders in shaping policy and policy outcomes through effective intergovernmental and collaborative strategies, all grounded in professional ethics. This is an elective course in the MPA program. There are no prerequisites for enrollment.

## Class Expectations

This course requires active engagement with complex issues of federalism, intergovernmental relations, and cross-sector governance. Students are expected to:

- **Come prepared** by completing readings before class and bringing questions or insights.
- **Think critically and challenge assumptions**, including your own, your classmates', and those embedded in U.S. governance systems.
- **Engage respectfully** in discussions involving conflict, cooperation, power, authority, and policy design across government, nonprofit, and for-profit sectors.
- **Connect theory to practice** by applying course concepts to contemporary issues, case studies, and North Carolina-specific examples.
- **Collaborate constructively** in group activities, mirroring the cross-boundary work of real-world public administrators.
- **Demonstrate professionalism** in writing, presentation, and communication, with attention to clarity, accuracy, and ethical reasoning.

## Course Goals & Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

The learning objectives for PUBA 739 are as follows:

1. Students will be able to analyze how constitutional design, historical developments, and political dynamics shape contemporary relationships among national, state, and local governments.
2. Students will be able to identify and assess accountability challenges that arise when public, private, and nonprofit actors jointly implement programs or deliver services.
3. Students will be able to demonstrate effective professional skills, including analytical reasoning, systems thinking, written and oral communication, and ethical judgment, when addressing intergovernmental and cross-sector policy issues.
4. Students will be able to apply intergovernmental and cross-sector governance frameworks to evaluate real-world cases and propose strategies for improving policy coordination and

implementation.

Readings and class discussions will blend national perspectives with North Carolina-specific examples. Class assignments focus on practical skills development such as critical thinking, analytical reasoning, effective presentation, and proficient writing.

## Required Course Texts & Materials

- Hanson, R. L., & Zeemering, E. S. (Eds.). (2021). *Cooperation and conflict between state and local government*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Hamilton, D. K., & Stenberg, C. W. (Eds.). (2018). *Intergovernmental relations in transition: Reflections and directions*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351182164>   
(<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351182164>)

## Grading & Assessments

This course uses the UNC-Chapel Hill Graduate School's H/P/L/F grading system. The Graduate School defines the letter grades and their meanings; the numeric ranges below are specific to this course:

- **H (High Pass)** – Clear excellence in graduate work (96–100)
- **P (Pass)** – Entirely satisfactory graduate work (85–95)
- **L (Low Pass)** – Inadequate graduate work (70–84)
- **F (Fail)** – Unsatisfactory performance (below 70)

Graduate students do not receive a numerical GPA, and grades are not converted to the traditional A–F scale. Final grades are rounded to the nearest whole number before the scale is applied: a decimal of .5 or higher rounds up, and anything below .5 rounds down. For more on the Graduate School grading system, see the [Graduate School Handbook](https://handbook.unc.edu/grading.html)   
(<https://handbook.unc.edu/grading.html>).

| Assignment                  | Percentage of Final Grade |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Participation               | 25%                       |
| Stakeholder Mapping Project | 20%                       |
| Case Reports                | 30%                       |
| Course Project              | 25%                       |

Assignment weights as a percentage of the final grade.

All assignments will be graded according to the criteria posted with each assignment on Canvas. Please reach out early if you have questions about grading expectations or feedback on your progress.

## Assignment Descriptions

## Participation (25% of the final grade)

Participation in this course means showing up prepared and contributing to a shared learning environment, consistent with the Class Expectations above. Much of the value of a graduate course comes from what you bring to it, so your participation grade reflects consistent, good-faith engagement across the whole semester rather than any single performance. It is assessed across four components:

- **Attendance.** Being present is the foundation of participation, since you cannot contribute to work you are not present for. Attendance is governed by the Attendance Policy below: you may miss one session without documentation, and each additional unexcused absence reduces your participation grade as described there.
- **Weekly Perusall assignments.** Before most sessions, you will complete the assigned readings in Perusall, our social annotation platform. Strong Perusall work means substantive annotations that raise questions, connect ideas across readings, and respond to classmates, rather than highlighting or one-line reactions. I reserve the right to require a 250-word threshold for all comments and responses.
- **In-class group work.** Many sessions include breakout and small-group activities that mirror the cross-boundary collaboration of real public administrators. You are expected to take part actively and constructively, contributing to your group's product and supporting your peers.
- **Informed questions.** I place particular value on your ability to ask thoughtful, well-informed questions. Contributions that draw on the assigned readings, build on what others have said, draw on your own lived experiences, and move the conversation forward count for more than simply speaking often.

Participation is evaluated holistically across these four components over the full semester. If anything makes participating harder for you, whether an accommodation, language, or discomfort speaking in front of the group, let me know early, and we will find an approach that works.

## Stakeholder Mapping Project (20% of the final grade)

**Due:** Week 8 (see the Course Schedule)

Public problems rarely sit inside a single organization, so identifying who is involved is the first step in governing across boundaries. For this project, you will choose a real policy problem or collaborative arrangement and map the landscape of actors around it: national, state, and local governments alongside nonprofit and private organizations. You will submit a stakeholder map (a visual representation of the actors and their relationships) together with a short written analysis that:

- identifies the key stakeholders and their roles, interests, and goals;
- assesses each stakeholder's relative power, influence, and stake in the outcome;
- describes the relationships and interdependencies among them, including likely points of cooperation and conflict; and
- draws out what the map implies for coordination, accountability, and collaborative strategy.

Plan on a one-page map and roughly three to four pages of analysis. Full instructions and the grading criteria are posted on Canvas.

## Case Reports (30% of the final grade; three reports at 10% each)

**Due:** Cases 1, 2, and 3 (see the Course Schedule)

Three times during the semester, you will write a short case report responding to an assigned case. Each report asks you to take the perspective of a public administrator: diagnose the intergovernmental or cross-sector problem at the center of the case, apply the relevant concepts and frameworks from our readings and discussions, and recommend a clear course of action with your reasoning. Write each report as a concise, professional memo of roughly two to three pages. Strong reports are analytical rather than descriptive: they use course concepts to explain what is happening and why, and they defend a specific, actionable recommendation. Full instructions and the grading criteria are posted with each case on Canvas.

## Course Project (25% of the final grade)

**Due:** Week 13 (see the Course Schedule)

The course project is the culminating assignment for the semester and your opportunity to apply the full course toolkit to a real governance challenge. Building, when possible, on your stakeholder mapping work, you will analyze an intergovernmental or cross-sector collaboration problem of your choosing and develop a set of practical, well-justified recommendations for improving coordination, accountability, or performance. A strong project defines the problem clearly, grounds its analysis in course frameworks and outside evidence, and offers recommendations a practitioner could act on. Plan on roughly eight to ten pages, not counting references, appendices, or introductory material. Full instructions and the grading criteria are posted on Canvas.

## Late Work

For every calendar day an assignment is submitted after the due date, 20% will be deducted from the final grade on that assignment.

## Attendance Policy

The MPA program follows guidance from the University's [Class Attendance Policy](https://catalog.unc.edu/policies-procedures/attendance-grading-examination/#text)  (<https://catalog.unc.edu/policies-procedures/attendance-grading-examination/#text>), which provides the standards for when students have University-approved absences. For more information, see [FAQs for Faculty](https://uaao.unc.edu/faqs-for-faculty/#fac)  (<https://uaao.unc.edu/faqs-for-faculty/#fac>).

In this class, you may miss one session without providing documentation. Any absence beyond that must be approved through UNC's [University Approved Absence Office \(UAAO\)](https://uaao.unc.edu/)  (<https://uaao.unc.edu/>). Each unexcused absence, meaning one not approved by the UAAO, will reduce your participation grade by 15 percentage points.

# A Statement on Course Readings and Perspectives

This course draws on diverse scholarly and professional perspectives to build your skills in critical thinking, analysis, and debate. Including a reading does not imply that I, the School, or the University endorse its views. You are expected to engage each perspective critically and form your own reasoned judgments.

## Course Schedule

Below is our anticipated weekly schedule. Our final exam will follow the published [Final Examination Schedule](https://registrar.unc.edu/academic-calendar/) [↗\(https://registrar.unc.edu/academic-calendar/\)](https://registrar.unc.edu/academic-calendar/).

| Class<br>(Date/Week) | Topic(s)                                                        | Readings & Assignments Due            |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1                    | International Intergovernmental Relations (IGR)                 | Week 1 Pre-Assessment Quiz            |
| 2                    | Revisiting the Foundations of Federalism and IGR                | Email Submission: Reading Questions   |
| 3                    | IGR in the 21st Century and its Evolving Pressures              | Perusall                              |
| 4                    | IGR in Transition?                                              | Case 1, Perusall                      |
| 5                    | Laboratories of Democracy                                       | Perusall                              |
| 6                    | Diffusion of Innovation                                         | Perusall                              |
| 7                    | Towards Collaborative Governance and Network Structures, Part 1 | Case 2, Perusall                      |
| 8                    | Towards Collaborative Governance and Network Structures, Part 2 | Perusall                              |
| 9                    | Alternative Service Delivery                                    | Stakeholder Mapping Project, Perusall |
| 10                   | Relationships: Putting the “R” in IGR                           | Case 3, Perusall                      |
| 11                   | Fiscal Federalism: An Introduction                              | Perusall                              |
| 12                   | Tribal Collaboration                                            | Perusall                              |
| 13                   | New and Emerging Trends in Governing Across Boundaries          | Final Project Due                     |

Anticipated weekly schedule of topics, readings, and assignments due.

## Policy Statements

## Academic Policies

# University Class Attendance Policy

The MPA program follows guidance from the University's [Class Attendance Policy](https://catalog.unc.edu/policies-procedures/attendance-grading-examination/#text) , which provides the standards for when students have University-approved absences. For more information, see [FAQs for Faculty](https://uaao.unc.edu/faqs-for-faculty/#fac)  [. \(https://uaao.unc.edu/faqs-for-faculty/#fac\)](https://uaao.unc.edu/faqs-for-faculty/#fac).

## Code of Conduct

All students are expected to adhere to University policy and follow the guidelines of the UNC Code of Conduct. Additional information can be found at [Student Conduct](https://studentconduct.unc.edu/)  [\(https://studentconduct.unc.edu/\)](https://studentconduct.unc.edu/).

## Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Policy

*This course adheres to AI usage guidelines noted in the [MPA Program Policies](https://carolinampa.web.unc.edu/home/mpa-student-handbook-program-policies/) , which were adapted from guidelines provided by the [UNC Generative AI Committee](https://ai.unc.edu/learning/)  [\(https://ai.unc.edu/learning/\)](https://ai.unc.edu/learning/). Students are responsible for 100% of the final product and for engaging with AI in a responsible and ethical manner.*

Additionally, you are responsible for adhering to the following AI guidelines:

1. In this course, AI tools can be used for non-content-generating tasks, such as grammar checking, formatting, or organizing ideas, but they cannot create new intellectual content unless otherwise specified in the assignment instructions listed on Canvas.
2. If AI use is permitted by assignment instructions, engage responsibly with AI. You must evaluate AI-generated outputs for potential biases, limitations, inaccuracies, false outputs, and ethical implications. Do not put personal or confidential data into these tools.
3. If allowed, the use of AI must be open and documented. You should declare, explain, and cite any use of AI in the creation of your work using applicable standards (e.g., APA, MLA, course guidelines). Understand that you are ultimately 100% responsible for your final product.
4. Follow specific AI guidelines in this syllabus. If you are unsure, check with me. Guidance offered in this syllabus would be referenced should an issue be referred to Student Conduct for alleged academic misconduct.
5. To confirm that submitted work reflects your own learning, I may request a brief (about 15-minute) follow-up conversation about any assignment submission. In this conversation, you may be asked to explain your approach, your sources, your reasoning, and any AI use you have declared under points 3 and 4. Your ability to discuss and account for your submission is part of demonstrating that you met the assignment's learning objectives and may inform the assignment grade on that basis. This is an assessment of comprehension, not a disciplinary proceeding. If a concern about a possible AI or syllabus policy violation arises, I will address it through the MPA Program's academic-integrity process rather than through this conversation's effect on your grade.

## Syllabus Changes

The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus, including project due dates and test dates. These changes will be announced as early as possible.

## Acceptable Use Policy

By attending the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, you agree to abide by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill policies related to the acceptable use of IT systems and services. The Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) sets the expectation that you will use the University's technology resources responsibly, consistent with the University's mission. In the context of a class, it's quite likely you will participate in online activities that could include personal information about you or your peers, and the AUP addresses your obligations to protect the privacy of class participants. In addition, the AUP addresses matters of others' intellectual property, including copyright. These are only a couple of typical examples, so you should consult the full [Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy](https://policies.unc.edu/TDClient/2833/Portal/KB/ArticleDet?ID=131247) , which covers topics related to using digital resources, such as privacy, confidentiality and intellectual property. Additionally, consult the [Safe Computing at UNC](https://safecomputing.unc.edu/) , website for information about data security policies, updates, and tips on keeping your identity, information, and devices safe.

## Data Security & Privacy

UNC-Chapel Hill is committed to fulfilling its responsibilities of transparency as a state-sponsored institution of higher learning, protecting certain types of information, and using information Carolina collects only for appropriate purposes. Consult the [UNC-Chapel Hill Privacy Statement](https://www.unc.edu/about/privacy-statement/) , for additional information.

## Grade Appeal Process

If you have any concerns with grading and/or feel you have been awarded an incorrect grade, please discuss it with me as soon as possible. If we cannot resolve the issue, you may follow the MPA Program grade appeal process by submitting a written appeal to the MPA Program Director, with further appeal available to The Graduate School.

## Services & Student Support Policies

### Equal Opportunity and Compliance - Accommodations

The Equal Opportunity and Compliance Accommodations Team ([Accommodations - UNC Equal Opportunity and Compliance](https://eoc.unc.edu/accommodations/) ) receives requests for accommodations for disability, pregnancy and related conditions, and sincerely held religious beliefs and practices through the University's Policy on Accommodations. The EOC Accommodations team determines eligibility and reasonable accommodations consistent with state and federal laws.

## Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS)

UNC-Chapel Hill is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body. The [Heels Care Network](http://care.unc.edu)  (<http://care.unc.edu>) website is a place to access the many mental health resources at Carolina. CAPS is the primary mental health provider for students, offering timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services. Go to the [CAPS website](https://caps.unc.edu/)  (<https://caps.unc.edu/>) or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health building for an initial evaluation to learn more. Students can also call CAPS 24/7 at 919-966-3658 for immediate assistance.

## Title IX Resources

Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek resources on campus or in the community. Reports can be made [online to the EOC](https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/)  (<https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/>) or by contacting the [University's Title IX Coordinator](mailto:cehall@email.unc.edu) (<mailto:cehall@email.unc.edu>), Elizabeth Hall, or the [Report and Response Coordinators](mailto:reportandresponse@unc.edu) (<mailto:reportandresponse@unc.edu>) in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office. Please note that I am designated as a Responsible Employee, which means I must report to the EOC any information I receive about the forms of misconduct listed in this paragraph. If you'd like to speak with a confidential resource, those include Counseling and Psychological Services and the [Violence Prevention and Advocacy Services](mailto:vpas_support@unc.edu) ([mailto:vpas\\_support@unc.edu](mailto:vpas_support@unc.edu)). Additional resources are available at [safe.unc.edu](https://safe.unc.edu/)  (<https://safe.unc.edu/>).

## Policy on Non-Discrimination

The University is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and to ensuring that educational and employment decisions are based on individuals' abilities and qualifications. Consistent with this principle and applicable laws, the University's [Policy Statement on Non-Discrimination](https://eoc.unc.edu/our-policies/policy-statement-on-non-discrimination/)  (<https://eoc.unc.edu/our-policies/policy-statement-on-non-discrimination/>) offers access to its educational programs and activities as well as employment terms and conditions without respect to race, color, gender, national origin, age, religion, genetic information, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Such a policy ensures that only relevant factors are considered, and that equitable and consistent standards of conduct and performance are applied.

If you are experiencing harassment or discrimination, you can seek assistance and file a report through the Report and Response Coordinators (email [reportandresponse@unc.edu](mailto:reportandresponse@unc.edu) (<mailto:reportandresponse@unc.edu>) or see additional contact info at [safe.unc.edu](https://safe.unc.edu/)  (<https://safe.unc.edu/>)) or the [Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office](https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/)  (<https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/>). Please note that I am designated as a Responsible Employee, which means that I must report to the EOC any information I receive about harassment or

discrimination. If you'd like to speak with a confidential resource, those include Counseling and Psychological Services and the University's Ombuds Office.

## Inclusive Learning

In the MPA Program at UNC-Chapel Hill, we are committed to fostering learning environments where all students feel supported, respected, and empowered to succeed. We work to cultivate a classroom culture that values diverse perspectives, encourages open dialogue, and promotes academic excellence for every student.

We recognize that students bring varied experiences, strengths, and challenges to their learning. Our goal is to provide equitable access to course materials, meaningful engagement opportunities, and responsive support throughout the semester. If there are ways we can better support your learning or well-being, we encourage you to reach out.

Together, we will build a collaborative and respectful learning community that reflects Carolina's commitment to student success and belonging.

## Writing Center

For free feedback on any course writing projects, check out UNC's [Writing Center](http://writingcenter.unc.edu)  (<http://writingcenter.unc.edu>). Writing Center coaches can assist with any writing project, including multimedia projects and application essays, at any stage of the writing process. You don't even need a draft to come visit. To schedule a 45-minute appointment, review quick tips, or request written feedback online, visit the [Writing Center's website](http://writingcenter.unc.edu)  (<http://writingcenter.unc.edu>).