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ENVIRON 898K

# MASTERS PROJECT

Fall 2018



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Dates / course meeting time: 14 weeks

Academic credit: 3 credits

Course format: Lecture + Discussion

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## Instructor's information

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## What is this course about?

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This course is designed to help students develop a Masters Project (MP). This course will guide students in conceptualizing an idea, identifying key environmental policy question, writing a prospectus, finding an advisor, finding a client, designing an analytical approach, data collection, and a producing a draft of their project.

## Course Requirements

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The MP is required of all master's students in environmental policy program to graduate. This course is a requirement for all second-year iMEP students. It is designed to help each student develop their project, to provide some exposure to fundamental questions related to applied policy research (IRB procedures and survey design) and to write a prospectus or proposal that will be reviewed by a faculty committee. The MP will ultimately culminate in a 15-25 page single-spaced manuscript, policy memo, or journal article(s). A student may lead their own masters project, or work in groups (specific requirement may vary depending on size of group and objective, in consultation with the DGS).

## MP Types

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### Research-Based MP

- This type of MP more closely resembles a thesis. Research MPs follow the usual format for scientific research (i.e. abstract, introduction, methods, results, and discussion), introduce a brand new idea or theory, and may involve original field data collection. Students interested in a doctoral degree or employment in research roles may benefit from this type of MP through tangible research experience.
- Working with the MP advisor, the student needs to follow scientific methods in their topic area. The research topic must be relevant to environmental policy, and involves rigorous quantitative and/or qualitative methodology. If analysis involves using data with human subjects, then students may need the DKU IRB to review and approve your protocol.
- Research MPs should be of publishable quality, although they do not need to be published.

### Client-Based MP

- This type of MP is designed to help a client decide what to do about an environmental policy problem. The purpose is to recommend a specific course of action. Thus, a client with a problem in need of analysis is a key starting point. This project must also measure up to standards of good analysis, including a clear definition of the problem and careful evaluation of the relevant evidence, identification of important trade-offs, and identification of conclusions and recommendations.
- The student needs to identify a client or a policy problem as the first step. This could be connected with the summer internship, or an organization that the student would like to work with in the future, or an area of student's interest. The student will conduct initial research into a general policy problem, conduct relevant research to identify a specific policy problem. To be approved as a MP topic, the client must have a significant policy problem posed in the form of "What should the client do?"
- Students are encouraged to turn their MP into a case study, potentially used as teaching material in future iMEP classes.

### Preparation before the course

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- Before the beginning of the fall semester of their second year, students should have identified a client, a policy problem, and an MP Advisor. The MP Advisor must be a faculty with a primary appointment at DKU, or from Duke University with a secondary appointment at DKU.
- The student should have also completed a 1-page summary brainstorm proposal, turned into the DGS during the summer.
- It is recommended that students be proactive in communicating with the MP advisor and in cultivating client relationships during the summer internship period. Students should be vigilant to determine if their summer placements can yield MP client relationships and policy problems.
- Students should check with their employer about whether there is a confidentiality clause and if data from the internship can be stored in the public domain.
- If the projects involve human subjects, then the student should begin the IRB process and prepare proper documents to submit in the beginning of the Fall semester.
- Students can view previous MPs from the Nicholas and Sanford schools here:  
<https://nicholas.duke.edu/programs/masters/advising/masters-projects>  
<http://sanford.duke.edu/academics/master-public-policy/curriculum/practical-experiences>

### Progress during the course

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The MP class is composed of a combination of lectures and small groups, based on your topic area, methodology and MP type. Students need to work with their faculty advisors, and committee members to develop their final report. While the final prospectus is due by the 11<sup>th</sup> week, other assignments have flexible due dates, and they should be completed sequentially.

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|--------------------------------|---|
| • Brainstorm proposal          | (due in the summer)                           |
| • 100-word Statement of Intent | (due by 2 <sup>nd</sup> week of class)        |
| • Literature Review            | (flexible due date after statement of intent) |
| • Methods and Analysis Plan    | (flexible due date after literature review)   |
| • Prospectus                   | (due by 11 <sup>th</sup> week of class)       |

### How will my grade be determined?

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This course will be graded on an A, B, C, D and F scale. The final grade will be determined in consultation with your MP advisor and completion of class requirements. This course will provide feedback from both

faculty and your peers. Small group discussions with the instructors and your peers will guide your prospectus development. Your MP advisor must approve the final draft of your prospectus before the end of the semester

- Attendance 10%
- Feedback to others 10%
- Brainstorm Proposal 10%
- 100-word Statement of Intent about your MP Project 10%
- 5-page Literature Review 10%
- 5-page Methods and Analysis Plan 10%
- 10-page Prospectus 30%
- Presentation 10%

## What are the course policies?

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### **Academic Integrity:**

As a student, you should abide by the academic honesty standard of the Duke Kunshan University. Its Community Standard states: “Duke Kunshan University is a community comprised of individuals from diverse cultures and backgrounds. We are dedicated to scholarship, leadership, and service and to the principles of honesty, fairness, respect, and accountability. Members of this community commit to reflecting upon and upholding these principles in all academic and non-academic endeavors, and to protecting and promoting a culture of integrity and trust.”

### **Academic Policy & Procedures:**

You are responsible for knowing and adhering to academic policy and procedures as published in University Bulletin and Student Handbook. Please note, an incident of behavioral infraction or academic dishonesty (cheating on a test, plagiarizing, etc.) will result in immediate action from me, in consultation with university administration (e.g., Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Student Conduct, Academic Advising). Please visit the Undergraduate Studies website for additional guidance related to academic policy and procedures.

### **Academic Disruptive Behavior and Community Standard:**

Please avoid all forms of disruptive behavior, including but not limited to: verbal or physical threats, repeated obscenities, unreasonable interference with class discussion, making/receiving personal phone calls, text messages or pages during class, excessive tardiness, leaving and entering class frequently without notice of illness or other extenuating circumstances, and persisting in disruptive personal conversations with other class members. Please turn off phones, pagers, etc. during class unless instructed otherwise. If you choose not to adhere to these standards, I will take action in consultation with university administration (e.g., Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Student Conduct, Academic Advising).

### **Academic Accommodations:**

If you need to request accommodation for a disability, you need a signed accommodation plan from Campus Health Services, and you need to provide a copy of that plan to me. Visit the Office of Student Affairs website for additional information and instruction related to accommodations.

## What campus resources can help me during this course?

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### Academic Advising and Student Support

Please consult with me about appropriate course preparation and readiness strategies, as needed. Consult your academic advisors on course performance (i.e., poor grades) and academic decisions (e.g., course changes, incompletes, withdrawals) to ensure you stay on track with degree and graduation requirements. In addition to advisors, staff in the Academic Resource Center can provide recommendations on academic success strategies (e.g., tutoring, coaching, student learning preferences). Please visit the Office of Undergraduate Advising website for additional information related to academic advising and student support services.

### Language Learning Studio

If you want additional help with academic writing – and more generally with language learning – you are welcome to go to the Language Learning Studio (LLS), located in the Conference Center. You can find more information on the LLS website.

## What is the expected course schedule?

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Date	Class topic	Assignments due
<b>Week 1: Lecture</b>	Introduction to the course an MP	
<b>Week 2: Lecture</b>	The MP prospectus: goals, structure, and content The client process Presentations on potential MP topics	Statement of Intent (mandatory due date)
<b>Week 3: Lecture</b>	Research methods Reviewing relevant policy literature Understanding the IRB Process Data confidentiality	
<b>Week 4: Small Group</b>	Small group sections on MP statements of intent Client Based MP and Research Based MP	
<b>Week 5: Lecture</b>	Shaping the literature review	
<b>Week 6: Small Group</b>	Small group section on literature review	Literature Review (suggested due date)
<b>Week 7: Small Group</b>	Small group section on literature review	
<b>Week 8: Lecture</b>	Research Methodology: Quantitative, Qualitative, Case Method	
<b>Week 9: Lecture</b>	Research Methodology: Case Study Approach	

<b>Week 10: Small Group</b>	Small group discussions on analysis plan	Analysis Plan (suggested due date)
<b>Week 11: Small Group</b>	Small group discussions on prospectus	Prospectus Due (mandatory due date)
<b>Week 12: Small Group</b>	Presentation in small group with MP advisor	
<b>Week 13: Small Group</b>	Presentation in small group with MP advisor	
<b>Week 14: Lecture</b>	The next steps and preparation for Spring semester	MP Advisor written approval of your prospectus