

UEP 410 Controversies in Policy and Politics
Fall 2025, Occidental College
Wednesdays, 1:55 – 5:00 p.m.
Fowler Hall 307

Professor Martha Matsouka

Email: matsuoka@oxy.edu

Office Hours in UEP 201

Tuesday 2-3:30; Wednesdays
9-10:30 or by appointment.

[Sign up here.](#)

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Office Hours in UEP Room 205

via appointment only on
Wednesdays, 10:00-12:00

p.m. and Thursdays,
12:00-3:00 p.m. [Sign up here.](#)

Professor Madeline Wander

Email: mwander@oxy.edu

Office Hours in UEP Room 203

on Tuesdays, 4:45-6 p.m. and
Fridays, 10:15 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

[Sign up here.](#) Or email for an
appointment.

Course Overview

This advanced seminar in UEP is designed to guide UEP seniors in completing their capstone project requirement for the major. The UEP senior comps project is a significant applied research project that captures the breadth and depth of the coursework, internships, and experience in the UEP major. The course focuses on research and data analysis skills and writing for applied research. Research projects will take different forms. Below, we include summaries of the four project types. Refer to [this document](#) for more detailed descriptions and requirements for each type of senior comps project.

Research Project (Proposal + Completed Project)

Students can design an original research project to meet the requirements for the senior comps in UEP where they design the project for UEP 410 and conduct research during the winter break, and enroll in UEP 493 in the Spring semester to complete the project.

Policy Brief/Policy Analysis

Students apply Eugene Bardach and Eric Patashnik's *Eightfold Path* to conduct a structured, comparative policy analysis on a real-world issue of your choosing.

Case Study

Students may opt to write a researched report and/or case study that documents current topics, issues, place, policy, campaign, events, conditions or process. The purpose of this form of comps research is to critically examine a particular case/issue and derive findings that inform future best practices, decision-making, scholarship, or policy interventions.

A Community-Engaged Project

A community-engaged comps project includes a community partner in critical stages of the project, particularly in the design of your comps project, whereby students work in partnership with a community partner on a relevant project for the community.

Class readings, discussions, and assignments will include examination of social science research methodology and applications, particularly in the fields of urban and environmental policy, urban planning and social change. You are expected to have already taken (or be concurrently enrolled in) a research methods course. We will not be doing a lengthy overview of methods in this course with the expectation that you have this background already from UEP 305 or other relevant methods course. Rather, we will focus on deepening your understanding of research methods applications as you discern which research methods are appropriate to pursue for your particular topic.

NOTE: If you plan on doing any video work, you must have completed or be currently enrolled in the documentary film or other relevant courses in the Media Arts and Culture department.

Class times are scheduled and structured to support your individual research projects. At the same time, the goal of the course is to create a learning community where students work together as peer reviewers and research colleagues. Students are expected to complete all assignments on time and participate fully in class and in your small group discussions.

Course Learning Objectives

- Complete a capstone project that synthesizes concepts and practices learned and experienced in the UEP major.
- Design a research proposal and/or conduct research relevant to addressing urban and environmental challenges.
- Produce a polished written work that includes relevant policy recommendations
- Present final work to peers and Oxy community.

Credit Hour Policy

UEP 410 is a 4-unit course. It is expected that students in this class will be devoting at least twelve (12) hours a week (including in-class time) on average.

Course Materials

- The current syllabus will be posted on Canvas
- Readings and course materials will be posted to Canvas. We are using select chapters from **Brown and Hale (2014) *Applied Research Methods in Public and Nonprofit Organizations*. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco. The book is available for free via the Oxy library website :**
https://oxy.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01OCOL_INST/1p3uacb/cdi_perlego_books_998619. Other sources related to methods are available on Canvas and Zotero.

All assignments will be submitted on a Shared Google Drive. Written documents should be either in Microsoft Word format (for easier tracked changes) or PDF for more final documents.

Grading Criteria

Final grades will be assigned based on the following:

Participation (20%)

- Class attendance and one-on-one meetings with assigned professor.
- Each student will be assigned a primary faculty person. Participation includes scheduled check-ins (during class time and/or office hours and/or by email) with your faculty, and coming prepared for these check-ins.
- Group participation: peer review, group portions of comps, etc. in a timely and well-done manner

Timely submission of quality versions of the following (20%):

- Annotated Bibliography
- Detailed Project Description
- Research Design and Methodology or Analytical Plan, depending on your comps project.
- Literature review, Policy Background, or Research Background, depending on your comps project.

Final Comps Project Submission (60%)

- Includes draft submissions and the final submission of the senior comps.

Late Assignment Policy

Timely submission of assignments (including drafts) will keep you on track for the comps project this semester. With the increased amount of digital communication and responsibilities for staff and faculty this semester, timely submission is even more crucial. Late assignments derail the faculty's ability to provide necessary comments on your drafts.

Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) Policy

All work submitted in this course must be your own. Please do not use ChatGPT or other AI composition software. AI keeps you from developing useful skills on your own. It's also terrible for the environment. [Check out how bad AI is for Climate Change.](#)

Grading rubric

A: 93-100; A-: 90-93; B+: 87-90; B: 83-87; B-: 80-83; C+: 77-80; C: 73-77; C-: 70-73; D+: 67-70; D: 63-67; F: 0-63.

Assignments and Submission Deadlines

Research Project (Proposal + Completed Project)	Policy Brief/ Policy Analysis	Case Study	Community-Engaged Project	Upload to Google Drive by 6 p.m. on the due date
Annotated Bibliography (10 sources)	Annotated Bibliography (10 sources)	Annotated Bibliography (10 sources)	Annotated Bibliography (10 sources)	Sept. 9, 2025
Detailed Project Description	Detailed Project Description	Detailed Project Description	Detailed Project Description	Sept. 18, 2025
Research Design and Methodology	Analytical Plan	Analytical Plan	Analytical Plan	Sept. 25, 2025
Literature Review	Policy Background	Literature Review	Research Background	Oct. 9, 2025
Introduction and Background	Preliminary Analysis	Preliminary Findings	Preliminary Results	Nov 12, 2025
Draft Comps Submission	Draft Comps Submission	Draft Comps Submission	Draft Comps Submission	Nov. 25, 2025
	Draft Poster	Draft Poster	Draft Poster	Dec. 2, 2025
Final Comps Submission	Final Comps Submission	Final Comps Submission	Final Comps Submission	Dec. 11, 2025

Course/College Policies and Support Services

Classroom Responsibilities

Teachers and students share the responsibility of learning and teaching. We see our responsibilities as creating the space and stimulating enthusiasm for learning, coming prepared to class, creating the goals and structure for a course, introducing concepts and ideas, and facilitating the sharing of knowledge amongst the students and between the professors and the students. Students are responsible for attending and participating in class, completing assignments in a timely manner, and being prepared to discuss readings and material in class.

Classroom Community

The comps class is designed to facilitate a co-learning community of students as researchers. Students are responsible for engaging in respectful, open, and thoughtful discussion with each other and the professors; faculty are responsible for ensuring that discussions in the classroom are inclusive and productive.

Mid-semester Progress Reports: Mid-semester progress reports are not intended to be used as determinative or predictive of the final grade in a course, but to provide an opportunity for the faculty to communicate an approximate estimation of progress by the students in the course by the midpoint of the current semester. Fall 2025 mid-semester Progress reports submission window is October 6-19.

Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity is a shared community value. It is built around trust and respect between members of the Occidental Community, and embodies a commitment to honesty and integrity in every aspect of one's academic life.

All members of the Occidental community are committed to uphold the highest degree of academic integrity. Unless stipulated otherwise, the academic work done for all assignments is expected to be the student's own; students are expected to give proper credit to the ideas and work of others.

Signing the Academic Integrity Commitment at the beginning of every semester represents a student's affirmation to uphold the shared values of honesty and integrity. When signing the Integrity Commitment associated with work in a course, students are affirming that they have not cheated, plagiarized, fabricated, or falsified information; nor assisted others in these actions.

Refer to [Student Handbook](#) for the framing of the commitment, definitions of Academic Ethics, and Process for alleged violations of the commitment.

Student Support Services

The College provides a wide range of [Student Academic Support Resources](#).

If you'd like to take advantage of the **College's Academic Coaching resource**, which offers one-on-one sessions focused on supporting your time management skills, online learning strategies, and other study skills, you may schedule an academic coaching meeting by sending an email to academiccoaching@oxy.edu. Share what you'd like to work on, and an academic coach will schedule an appointment with you within a few days.

The [Writing Center](#) offers opportunities to work on all forms of writing for any class or other writing tasks such as personal statements, senior comprehensives, etc. We offer peer-to-peer consultations with knowledgeable Writing Advisers and sessions with Faculty Writing Specialists. See the [Writing Center website](#) for more information about hours and how students can sign up for appointments. Please contact the Writing Programs-Center Director, Julie Prebel (jprebel@oxy.edu; x1307) for more information on how the Center can work with you.

[Emmons Wellness Center](#) also provides important support services and can help you address issues of stress, medical and mental health, and overall well-being. For more information, see their website at <https://www.oxy.edu/student-life/resources-support/emmons-wellness-center>

*Emmons can also help you locate resources out-of-state.

Title IX statement, and statement of role of faculty member as a mandatory reporter([Link to Title IX](#))

In the event that you write or speak about having experienced discrimination or harassment on the basis of a protected characteristic or sexual misconduct (including sexual assault, dating/domestic violence, stalking, sexual exploitation or any other form of sexual and/or gender-based harassment), as a designated Responsible Employee, I must inform the [Civil Rights & Title IX Office](#). They will contact you to let you know about resources and support services at Oxy, as well as reporting options both on and off-campus. You have no obligation to respond to the Civil Rights & Title IX Office or to meet with them to discuss support services and reporting options.

If you do not want the Civil Rights & Title IX Office contacted, instead of disclosing this information to your instructor, either through conversation or a class assignment, you can speak confidentially with:

- Oxy's Survivor Advocate, Project SAFE (survivoradvocate@oxy.edu)
- Emmons Counseling (For appointments, call: 323-259-2657)
- Rev. Dr. Susan Young, Office of Religious and Spiritual Life (young@oxy.edu)
- Oxy 24/7 Confidential Hotline (323-341-4141)

The College's civil rights policies, along with additional resources, can be found at: <https://www.oxy.edu/civil-rights-title-ix>. If you would like to contact the Civil Rights & Title IX Office directly, you may email Civil Rights & Title IX Coordinator Alexandra Fulcher at afulcher@oxy.edu or call 323-259-1338.

Special Accommodations/Learning Differences

Occidental College (Oxy) complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 as amended, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended, and other applicable state and federal law prohibiting discrimination against individuals with disabilities.

- All accommodation requests including academic, housing (ESA & Services Animal) and temporary accommodations are managed by the Disability Services Office. It is a student's responsibility to request accommodations via the [Disability Services](#) website. For information about additional accommodations and support services, students can email accessibility@oxy.edu.
- Oxy's Psychological Testing Program: We offer low cost psychological testing for students who qualify. Any student who thinks they may have a learning, or psychological disability may complete [Oxy's Psych Testing Application](#) to be added to the waitlist.
- Academic Success Coaching: Our Academic Success Coach assists students in developing skills and strategies to enhance their academic performance. They provide personalized guidance on time management, organization, study techniques, goal setting, and self-regulation. By collaborating with students, our coach helps identify and overcome obstacles to academic success, fostering a supportive environment that promotes personal and educational growth. Contact: academiccoaching@oxy.edu
- Learning Disability Specialist: Our Learning Disability Specialist evaluates and supports students with (diagnosed or suspected) learning disabilities. They also provide counseling and resources to help students develop effective learning strategies. By collaborating with students, our Learning Disability Specialist helps identify and overcome obstacles to academic success, fostering a supportive environment that promotes personal and educational growth. Please contact: accessibility@oxy.edu.

Accommodations for Reasons of Faith and Conscience

Consistent with Occidental College's commitment to creating an academic community that is respectful of and welcoming to persons of differing backgrounds, we believe that students should be excused from class for reasons of faith and conscience without academic consequence. While it is not feasible to schedule coursework around all days of conviction for a class as a whole, faculty will honor requests from individual students to reschedule coursework, to be absent from classes that conflict with the identified days. Information about [this policy](#) is available on the [ORSL website](#).

Equity & Justice in an Inclusive Learning Environment

Drawing from the Shared Academic Integrity Commitment and the Office of Student Conduct, Oxy's commitment to academic integrity is fundamental to being an educational community. It represents our commitment to respectfully engage with each other and with ourselves. This is especially important when we discuss relevant topics and issues that are unfamiliar and/or at times, uncomfortable. In these situations, it is essential to guarantee the open and thoughtful intellectual exchanges that provide the foundation for teaching, learning, research, and knowledge production, and as such it reflects the high value we place in the processes and products of education at Oxy. With that in mind, classroom exchanges must be grounded in the

values of trust, honesty, and respect. Ad hominem attacks are considered a violation of the Code of Student Conduct.

This classroom is a place where you will be treated with respect, and we welcome individuals of all ages, backgrounds, ethnicities, gender identities and expressions, national origins, political affiliations, religious affiliations, sexual orientations, abilities, and other visible and nonvisible identities. The wide array of perspectives that each of us contributes to this class is a resource that will strengthen and enhance our intellectual community. All members of this class are expected to co-create and engage in a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive environment for every other member of the class. In this context, we may speak as individuals or we may choose to represent ourselves as a member of a group. You need not represent any group, only yourself, though you may choose to represent a group, if you wish. Additionally, part of equity & justice work is to dismantle barriers to success for all people, particularly those who belong to groups that have been marginalized and minoritized. If there are aspects of the design, instruction, and/or experiences within this course that result in barriers to your success or accurate assessment of achievement, or if there are ways we can improve the effectiveness of this course for you personally or for other students or student groups, please let me know. Your suggestions about how to improve the value of justice, equity, inclusion, and diversity in this course are encouraged and appreciated.

Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation Policy

We strive to foster an inclusive classroom environment. Consistent with College policy on discrimination, harassment, and retaliation, we seek to maintain an environment of mutual respect among all members of our community. Please reach out to us with any concerns.

You can also find more information on the website:

<https://www.oxy.edu/student-handbook/general-college-policies/discrimination-harassment-and-retaliation>

Land Acknowledgement

Occidental College occupies the traditional territory and homelands of the Tongva people. Please click through to read more about the [Gabrielino-Tongva tribe](#) and about the practice of [land acknowledgement](#).

Lived name policy

Occidental College seeks to provide an inclusive and non-discriminatory environment by making it possible for students to use [a lived first name](#) and pronouns on college records when a legal name is not required. Students are encouraged to use Zoom to display their lived name and pronouns. These can be set at <https://occidental.zoom.us/profile>.

The [Intercultural Community Center \(ICC\)](#) seeks to uplift and support the experiences of students who identify as BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, low income or first generation college students. The ICC also aims to reduce institutional barriers for minoritized groups through intersectional programming, identity-specific services and structural resources. To learn more, contact icc@oxy.edu, or reach out directly to Vanessa Gonzalez-Wright vgonzalez2@oxy.edu.

Covid-19

The most recent guidance on COVID-related policies can be found here:

<https://www.oxy.edu/back-oxy>

Mental Health Implications of Missing Class

Your mental health and emotional well-being impacts learning and academic success. Symptoms like depression, anxiety, and trauma may cause loss of motivation, difficulty concentrating, and other issues that make learning difficult. Emmons Counseling staff are committed to supporting the mental health needs of our students. Emmons counseling services are available M-F from 9a-4p and include individual and group therapy, drop-in chats, case management, and referral consultations. Walk-ins are available M-F from 2-4p. All of these services are offered in person and via teletherapy. Students can also utilize the 24/7 confidential hotline at (323) 341-4141. To get connected to any of the free, confidential services at Emmons call (323) 259-2657.

Class Schedule

Wednesday, August 27, 2025: Senior Comps Overview

We'll review the requirements of the senior comprehensive projects and discuss the timeline for this semester and the year.

Wednesday, September 3, 2025: Library Session with Kristin Peace.

Librarian Kristin Peace will give the class an overview of library resources and strategies for research that will help refine your topic and research question. We will also review strategies for organizing research and citation management. To prepare for this class session, please read the following:

- Brown and Hale (2014) *Applied Research Methods in Public and Nonprofit Organizations*. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco. **Chapter One: Overview and Context of the Research Process.**

Wednesday, September 10, 2025: The Ethics of Research, Community Partnerships, and Policy and One-on-Ones with Faculty

We'll discuss the importance of ethics in research and how it may apply to your individual projects. Please read the following:

- Birch, E. L. (2012). Cities, People, and Processes as Planning Case Studies. In *The Oxford Handbook of Urban Planning*. Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195374995.013.0014>
- Boston, P. Q., Strouble, B., Balogun, A., Lugo-Martinez, B., McClain, M., Mitchell, M. M., Wasserman, K., Rahn, D., Greenberg, M., & Garibay, C. (2023). Community Voices on the Experiences of Community-Based Participatory Research in the Environmental Justice Movement. *Social Sciences*, 12(6), Article 6. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12060358>
- Raphael, C. and Matsuoka, M. Chapter 2. Community Engaged Research in "Ground Truths: Community Engaged Research for Environmental Justice. Luminos/UC Press. 2024. [Online here.](#)

Wednesday, September 17, 2025: Research Methods and Design I

The methods you employ in your project should correspond to your research question and sub-questions. For this week, we'll explore qualitative methodologies and learn how to apply mixed techniques for environmental justice initiatives such as interviews and community-based participatory mapping. Please read the following:

- Brown and Hale (2014) *Applied Research Methods in Public and Nonprofit Organizations*. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco. **Chapter Four: Qualitative Data Collection in the Field.**
- Gregory, K., & Ajibade, I. (2024). Participatory mapping of tree equity, preferences, and environmental justice in Portland, Oregon. *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, 97, 128374.
- Hall, D. M., & Steiner, R. (2020). Policy content analysis: Qualitative method for analyzing sub-national insect pollinator legislation. *MethodsX*, 7, 100787.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mex.2020.100787>

Wednesday, September 24, 2025: Research Methods and Design II

- Brown and Hale (2014) *Applied Research Methods in Public and Nonprofit Organizations*. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco. **Chapter Six: Data Analysis.**

Wednesday, October 1, 2025: No class; work on projects; 1:1 meetings with faculty.

Wednesday, October 8, 2025: No class; work on projects; 1:1 meetings with faculty.

Wednesday, October 15, 2025: No class; work on projects; 1:1 meetings with faculty.

Wednesday, October 22, 2025: Qualitative Data Analysis

Please read the following:

- Saldaña (2016). "An Introduction to Codes and Coding."
- Bowen (2009). "Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method."

Wednesday, October 29, 2025: No Class; work on projects.

Wednesday, November 5, 2025: No class; work on projects; 1:1 meetings with faculty.

Wednesday, November 12, 2025: No class – Preliminary Findings DUE

Wednesday, November 19, 2025: Data Visualization and Prepare for Poster Presentation

Wednesday, November 26, 2025: No class – First Draft Comps Project DUE

December 11, 2025: Final Comps Project DUE

