



KAUTILYA SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY

GITAM (Deemed to be University)
Rudraram, Patancheru Mandal
Hyderabad, Telangana 502329

Course Code: PPOL6341	Course Title: Introduction to Public Problem Solving	
Trimester: 5	Course Type: Elective	Credits: 3
Home Program(s): MPP	Batch/Academic Year: 2023-2025	
Course Lead: Dr. Ashwin Mahesh	Assigned TA/RA:	

Course Description

Many of the large development challenges we see around us in India and elsewhere have been persistent for decades. Education, healthcare, the environment, housing, public services, etc. The list of domains that need large-scale and impactful interventions is high.

But this understanding is not new. We have been confronted with these for decades now. That should prompt us to ask - why is under-development so persistent? And equally importantly, what can we do differently that might begin to have some of the positive outcomes we want?

This course is founded on a premise - that large, complex 'wicked' problems cannot be solved by individuals or even by institutions, not even by governments with all their resources. Instead, given the scale of the problems, the only meaningful and lasting way to make a difference is by building ecosystems whose collective strength contains the potential to address them. A large number of people and institutions, of different types, must come together, each adding a piece to the jigsaw puzzle that when completed forms the overall solution.

Course Objectives

This is not a course about the solutions to public problems. Instead, it is a course to learn how to build an ecosystem that can respond to a problem impactfully. And the primary task of students in the course will be to build an ecosystem in response to a particular problem, and in doing so cultivate a network around themselves that they can further develop even after the course. A second, related goal is for students to find intersections between the networks they develop to look for second-order potential for impact.

- Learn why ecosystems present a better choice to solve complex problems other than the standard approaches to development deficits.

- Learn how to build an ecosystem in a deliberate manner that can respond to a problem in an impactful way.
- Find intersections between the networks they develop to look for second-order potential for impact.
- Studying examples of this approach to public problem-solving, and exploring why they have been partially - as well as only partially - successful.
- Explore how many more of the wicked problems that India is faced with can be addressed by this approach.
- Build the first baseline for a multi-year program of continuous problem-solving.
- Learn the skills and mindsets needed to be a 'wicked mind that solves wicked problems, and ways to intentionally apply them.

Course Outcomes

The course will include initial sessions introducing this approach to public problem-solving, and showcase examples that have been partially successful. Students will also learn how to distinguish an ecosystem for problem-solving from a mere network that they are part of. Thereafter, students will be expected to choose from a slate of public problems, or pick one of their own, and develop an ecosystem that is well-suited to respond to their chosen problem.

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

- Build an ecosystem in response to a particular problem they would like to help solve, and cultivate a network around themselves that they can further develop.
- Distinguish an ecosystem for problem-solving from a mere network that they are part of.
- Develop an ecosystem that is well suited to respond to one of the slate of public problems.
- Operationalise philosophy and design.
- Imagine the future they want to live in and help to make that real

Course Schedule

Module 1

- 1. Intersections and interventions**
- 2. The How Framework- State, Market and Society**
- 3. Public Problem-Solving**
- 4. Ecosystem at play**
 - a). Introduction to the course**
 - Introduce journaling exercise (preferably creative) that spans across two modules
 - b). Dreams with Deadlines** (upto two-member teams)
 - An initial set of ideas for the course project
 - Offer optional office hours for project discussion
 - Assign activity for Module 2
- 5. Wicked Minds solve wicked problems**
 - a). Mindcraft Tools**
 - Systems Mapping
 - Iceberg Model
 - Hero's Journey
 - b). Mindcraft Tools**
 - Power Map
 - Three Horizon framework
 - Multi Level Perspective
 - c). Fieldcraft**
 - EcoWisdom Lab

Module 2 and Module 3

Module 2 and Module 3 will include guest lectures by various Public Problem Solvers who will introduce students to approaching different types of public problems and discussions with students on their projects to learn to effectively engage with the ecosystems where their chosen public problems reside.