

Course Syllabus
POLS 5000
(core course in the MPA curriculum)
Survey of Public Administration
Fall 2017

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Office Hours: 1:00-3:00 PM Wednesdays and by appointment
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Course Description:

This is a graduate seminar designed to introduce you to the multidimensional, interdisciplinary field of public administration. The title of the course, “Survey of Public Administration,” indicates that the course focuses on becoming aware of and understanding the different ways that public administration is viewed. In trying to provide you with these perspectives, I make the assumption that the students in this course are either oriented toward becoming professional public administrators, are currently in the public administration field and want to enhance their understandings and skills, or at the very least have an academic interest in the subject. It is my goal to help you gain perspectives that will help you to better understand the “field” of public administration and your professional obligations. I take the term “professional” seriously. It means that you must come to understand yourself as representing a profession and having responsibilities to that profession. Ultimately, it means for me that you must possess some degree of what we call “reflexivity” with respect to yourself, your environment, and your administrative activities. For many public administrators it is enough to know the “nuts and bolts” of public administration—how to survive in a political environment, how to budget, how to develop managerial and personnel skills, etc. As important as those nuts and bolts skills are, a professional administrator’s perspective should be much more than that. Professional administrators should be concerned with their role as administrators in a democratic society, with how their biases influence their views and actions, with the legitimacy of the institutions that have come to represent modern public administration, and with other similar issues.

To get at this professional perspective, the pragmatic goals of the course are as follows:

- I. To ensure that you are familiar with the workings of the American political system with particular reference to modern public administration. This includes:
 - Understanding the historical evolution of our system of administration into its modern bureaucratic forms and the emergence of the administrative state.

- Understanding the intellectual foundations of modern public administration as it has expressed itself through the evolution of organizational and administrative theory.
- Understanding the political setting of modern public administration in the context of traditional legislative, executive, and judicial branches/functions of government with particular focus on bureaucratic reform efforts.
- Understanding the political powers of the administrative branch, in particular the use of administrative discretion, and the various formal means to control these powers.
- Understanding the formal and informal patterns of interaction between and among the various branches of government.
- Understanding the development of federalism and its impact upon modern administration.
- Understanding what is at stake in the current interest of reforming government, particularly the administrative sectors, and how this illustrates enduring issues for professional public administrators.

II. To ensure that you have a good working knowledge of the activities of public administrators. This includes:

- Reviewing the basic ideas of public management – how these have evolved and how they have been influenced by political factors.
- Discussing the basic managerial functions, including managing human resources, organization theory, budgeting and financial management.
- Surveying more advanced managerial functions, including leadership and innovation.
- Being sure that you understand the ethical concerns and issues as public administrators and managers confront them.
- Understanding the role of information management, technology applications, and their applications to public policy.

To help you begin, it is best that you approach this course by being aware that public administration is not a single field of study; indeed, it may not be a traditional field of study at all. There are some scholars who argue that it is not a profession in any traditional sense of that word. Because public administration is a pragmatic endeavor, it minimally divides itself between a practical and academic perspective – though there is certainly no single unified academic perspective either. The practical perspective – one that many of you are likely to think of as primary – is one that tends to emphasize public management, i.e., the role and activities of the public manager. The academic side certainly does not dismiss the issues of public management, though some think it should. Rather, the academic perspective tends to take a broader view examining public managers as they function in a political context and stresses a more formalized, theoretical understanding. Neither side is superior; instead, they are just part of the intellectual “survey of public administration.”

Course Requirements and Evaluation:

This class will follow a seminar format. That is, in large part, students will drive class discussion within the framework provided by the material read for class. Class sessions will include both presentations by the professor (me) and students (largely the latter). Therefore, it is extremely important that students be prepared to discuss the required readings in class. It is critical that each of you complete the readings in a timely fashion, which means **before** each class begins.

Final Overall Grades:

Class Participation	10%
Chapter Presentation	10%
Issue Papers	25%
Case Study Analysis	25%
Final Exam	30%

Final Grading Scale:

- A 94-100 C+ 77-79 D- 60-63
- A- 90-93 C 74-76 F <60
- B+ 87-89 C- 70-73
- B 84-86 D+ 67-69
- B- 80-83 D 64-66

This class uses a plus/minus grading scale where letter grades are translated into a numerical score and all is added up at the end of the semester.

On any individual assignment where a letter grade is given, an individual grade with a “+” will earn a numerical score of 88, 78, 68, etc. A grade followed by a “-“ will earn you a numerical grade of 92, 82, or 72, etc. A letter alone will earn you a number at the center of the indicated range (e.g., A=97, B=85, C=75, etc.). As a result, at the end of the semester you can just do the math and figure out where you stand. (Yes, I realize that the numerical score for the A on an individual assignment is at a different place on the range relative to the B or C grade. Doing so increases a student’s chance to earn an A because using 95 has little lifting power to launch a student into the A category at the end of the semester.)

⇒ **Lateness** - Assignments will be marked down one half grade for each 24 hour period they are late. I am not, however, some tyrant. I will consider excuses on a case-by-case basis. I realize you are busy professionals and things come up. **Give me advance warning if possible! However, you cannot miss an intensive weekend.**

I. Class Participation - Well, you know how this works.... I expect lively and thoughtful discussion. This requires consistent and timely attendance. Attendance at the intensive weekends is mandatory. If you anticipate missing all or part of an intensive weekend, consider taking this course the next time it is offered. If you miss more than

one compressed video class or an intensive weekend you cannot pass this course. Be mindful of this.

II. Chapter Presentation – For each chapter I will request one student from the class to quickly summarize each reading assignment and make a brief presentation to the class. When you decide to volunteer to present the material you should **come to class with prepared remarks. This is a formal presentation of the material (and 10% of your course grade) – not regurgitation. Think through this material carefully and decide how best address the following items:**

Items to consider for your presentation:

- What is the major subject and theme of the chapter?
- What is the major question/issue the chapter addresses?
- What major points does the chapter make?
- What does the chapter conclude? What suggestions are made?
- What is the relevance of the chapter for practicing public administrators AND those interested in the theoretical dimension of the field?

This is the material you need to speak to during your remarks. We have all read this material beforehand. I want you to share your own insights into this chapter and help begin our discussion.

III. Issue Papers -- There are three issue papers due throughout the semester. This assignment is designed to assess whether you understand many of the conceptual matters embedded in the reading material and to evaluate how you understand the material's importance. In addition, they stand as an incentive for you to read and analyze the assigned readings prior to attending class. They are limited to 3 pages (using 12 point font, double-spaced, and standard margins). In each paper you must identify what you believe are the four most important concepts from the entire set of readings. For each of the concepts you must identify and explain the concept AND articulate how and why it is important to the study of public administration. You may use examples from your personal and professional life to bring these concepts into clear focus. This is not an easy task to complete in only three pages. Therefore, there is an incentive to be clear and concise. These are to be considered formal writing assignments and are expected to be well written. The quality (and therefore the grading) of these assignments is based on how well you address the above elements. And by the way, I will only accept three papers – no fourth paper for extra credit or as a replacement for another paper....

The purpose of this assignment is to have you engage and analyze the material, as stated earlier, prior to attending class -- this is where the benefit comes from -- and to convey to me that you have read and thought about, in some detail, the reading. If all students read and analyze the material before class (and are able to demonstrate that in your paper), each session becomes something more than simply a regurgitation of the material. Papers should be emailed as Word attachments. When you email your papers PLEASE name your file something that can uniquely identify it to you, e.g., **smith 5000**

1. Otherwise, I get 25 papers all labeled “issue paper 1” and it becomes an administrative nightmare sorting all of this out....

IV. Case Study Analysis -- Near the end of the course I will distribute three case studies for use in your final Case Study Analysis, which are due on or before **December 4th at 5:00 PM**. Instructions for how to complete a case analysis are attached to this syllabus. Here, you are asked to choose two cases (from among the three) and prepare a 6-8 page analysis (for each case) bringing to bear concepts from class to help frame, understand, and support your ideas for resolving the issue(s) found in the cases. These, too, are considered formal writing assignments and will be graded as such. Please include a title page with includes your name, date, and course title. More information on this at the beginning of class.

V. Final Exam -- Near the end of the semester (the final class) you will take a short-answer exam, which will require you to review, explain, and/or define important public administration concepts. The goal is to make certain that everyone has built a high level of “concept proficiency.” Since many people know little about public administration, and students in public administration arrive from very diverse backgrounds, this exercise assures that you are prepared for future studies. Approximately two weeks before the exam you will be given a list of important and fundamental concepts that we will have already covered in class. When the exam arrives you will be given a shortened list of twenty and then asked to define/explain each concept. This is not a difficult exercise if you keep up with your reading and attend class. More on this during the first class. (*I know it looks like a hassle – but it’s really not!*)

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism:

University regulations concerning academic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. UNIREG 6-802, Revision 2 (subsections 3e-3h) defines academic dishonesty to include:

- Using notes or prepared information in an examination unless authorized by the instructor.
- Copying from, or assisting, another student during an examination.
- Stealing, or otherwise improperly obtaining, copies of an examination before or after its administration.
- Presenting the work of another, wholly or in part, as one’s own work without customary and proper acknowledgement.

The penalty for committing academic dishonesty and/or plagiarism in this class is a grade of “F” for the entire course. In addition, a letter will be placed in your University “citizenship” file. I view plagiarism as antithetical to the public service ethos. The University Regulation that outlines academic dishonesty can be found here under Academic Policy 6-802: <http://www.uwyo.edu/generalcounsel/new-regulatory-structure/academic-policy.html> . In addition, the department’s statement on academic dishonesty can be found here (near the bottom of the page): <http://www.uwyo.edu/pols/syllabus/index.html> . You should read both of these statements before class begins. If you have questions about academic dishonesty, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Disabilities:

It is University of Wyoming policy to accommodate students, faculty, staff, and visitors with disabilities. If you have a physical, learning, sensory, or psychological disability and require accommodations, please let me know as soon as possible. You will need to register with University Disability Support Services (UDSS) in the Student Educational Opportunity offices, Room 330 Knight Hall, and provide UDSS with documentation of your disability.

Required Texts:



Robert B. Denhardt and Janet V. Denhardt (2014), *Public Administration: An Action Orientation*, 7th edition.



Richard J. Stillman (2010), *Public Administration: Concepts and Cases*, 9th edition.



Charles T. Goodsell (2015), *The New Case For Bureaucracy*.



John Hersey, *A Bell For Adano*

Assignment Schedule:

Session 1: September 8/9 – Intensive Weekend (*in-person Laramie*)

Reading Assignment

Denhardt: chapters 1 & 2

Stillman: chapters 1 & 2

Goodsell: chapters 1-4

Topic: Bureaucracy and Public Administration

Session 2: September 19 – Zoom

Issue paper is due (unless you are taking a skip)

Reading Assignment

Denhardt: chapter 3

Stillman: chapters 3 & 4

Goodsell: chapters 5

Topic: The Unique Environment of the Public Sector

Session 3: October 3 – Zoom

Issue paper is due (unless you are taking a skip)

Reading Assignment

Denhardt: chapters 9 & 10

Stillman: chapters 6 & 9

Topic: People, Subsystems, and Groups

Session 4: October 17 – Zoom

Issue paper is due (unless you are taking a skip)

Reading Assignment

Denhardt: chapter 8

Stillman: chapters 5, 7, & 14

Topic: Intergovernmental Relations and Managing Organizations

Session 5: November 3 – 4 Intensive Weekend (held via Zoom)

Reading Assignment

Denhardt: chapters 7 & 11

Stillman: chapters 11, 15, & 16

Hersey: All

Topic: Regulation, Ethics, and People

Session 6: November 14 – Zoom

Issue paper is due (unless you are taking a skip)

Reading Assignment

Denhardt: chapters 5 & 6

Stillman: chapter 10 & 12

Topic: Managing Organizations and Money

Session 7: November 21 – Zoom

Final Exam

Admonitions:

Although at times you may not think so, I recognize that each of you have personal lives that reach beyond academics. I will make every effort to be sensitive to your personal time pressures, etc. Please be forthright and let me know ahead of time. The end of the semester is certainly too late to inform me of a great-uncle who has made it impossible for you to turn your assignments in....

Note: The use of cellular telephones is prohibited during class. You must turn off the ringer on your phone. If you must make or receive a call, you will have to leave the room.



Note: Although the syllabus has a bit of a “formal” or “structured” quality, there is plenty of room for spontaneity and negotiation. I approach my classes similar to that of a tour guide (except that I try to attract people into the discourse of the discipline). Like a tour guide, I often relish cross-country excursions, exploring where interests lead. Student and guides, in my view, travel together. As such, please let me know both when (in the classroom) you wish to take an unplanned excursion and when you feel we need to get back to the proposed itinerary....

Formal Case Study Analysis*

1. *Read the case thoroughly.* To understand fully what is happening in a case, it is necessary to read the case carefully and thoroughly. You may want to read the case rather quickly the first time to get an overview of the substantive area, the agencies involved, the people, and the situation. Read the case again more slowly, making notes as you go.
2. *Define the central issue.* Many cases will involve several issues or problems. Identify the most important problems and separate them from the more trivial issues. After identifying what appears to be a major underlying issue, examine related problems in the functional areas (for example, public law, policy, budgeting, human resource, organization theory). Functional area problems may help you identify deep-rooted problems that are the responsibility of top management.
3. *Define the relevant goals.* Inconsistencies between an organization's goals and its performance may further highlight the problems discovered in step 2. At the very least, identifying the organization's goals will provide a guide for the remaining analysis.
4. *Identify the constraints to the problem.* The constraints may limit the solutions available to the firm. Typical constraints include limited finances, lack of additional capacity, personnel limitations, intergovernmental relations, contradictory goals, problem definition, and so on. Constraints have to be considered when suggesting a solution.
5. *Identify all the relevant alternatives.* The list should all the relevant alternatives that could solve the problem(s) that were identified in step 2. Use your creativity in coming up with alternative solutions. Even when solutions are suggested in the case, you may be able to suggest better solutions.
6. *Select the best alternative.* Evaluate each alternative in light of the available information. If you have carefully taken the preceding five steps, a good solution to the case should be apparent. Resist the temptation to jump to this step early in the case analysis. You will probably miss important facts, misunderstand the problem, or skip what may be the best alternative solution. You will also need to explain the logic you used to choose one alternative and reject the others.
7. *Develop an implementation plan.* The final step in the analysis is to develop a plan for effective implementation of your decision.

Important: In the course of navigating your analysis, you must use relevant concepts from this class to frame the problem and then to support your conclusions. Think about which concepts from class are helpful in understanding the problem(s) and which concepts help to illuminate your implementation decisions. This is a key ingredient to earning a successful grade on this assignment. You must use an appropriate citation style where appropriate.

* Adapted from <http://www.uiweb.uidaho.edu/ag/agecon/391/casestudmeth.html>