

**Fall 2024**

**PS 181**

**Public Organization & Administration**

TuTh 3:30-4:59pm  
20 Social Sciences Building

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**Course Overview and Objectives**

Public agencies have a far-reaching impact on our lives. They protect us from harm, administer laws, conduct diplomacy, regulate the economy, protect the environment and provide a wide range of social services. How they carry out these tasks has a tremendous influence on the quality of our democracy and our trust in government. While many public agencies provide public-spirited and even heroic public service, their role is often politically contested, and they commonly operate under significant political, institutional, and fiscal constraints. Critics see “bureaucracy” as a waste of taxpayer money, a source of irritating red tape, or as democratically unaccountable.

The course is organized into three parts: Part 1 draws on political science and administrative law to investigate the historical political and legal basis of the administrative state; Part 2 draws on public administration and public management to explain the efficiency, effectiveness and equity of the public sector; and Part 3 uses organization theory to investigate the influence of organizational structure, culture and information-processing on the behavior of public organizations.

The course has three key learning objectives: 1) to introduce you to a wide range of public organizations (primarily, but not exclusively U.S. organizations) and illuminate their importance for achieving public policy objectives; 2) to introduce you to political science, administrative law, public administration, and organization theory perspectives on public agencies; and 3) to

build your critical reading and writing skills through regular reading responses and two paper assignments.

The assigned readings are carefully selected to illustrate the many ways that public agencies impact democratic governance. Most of the readings examine a specific public organization from a particular theoretical perspective. The common theme that runs across the readings is “how can we understand the efficiency, effectiveness, equity and democratic accountability of public organizations?”

*All course readings are posted in bCourses (>Files>Course Readings) under the last name of the first author.*

## **Course Schedule and Readings**

**Thurs, Aug 29: Introduction**

### **Part I: Political Science and Administrative Law Perspectives**

**Tues, Sept 3: The Political and Legal Theory of the Administrative State**

Ernst, D. R. (2014). *Tocqueville's Nightmare: the Administrative State Emerges in America, 1900-1940*. Oxford University Press, USA. Ch. 1, Introduction: Tocqueville's Nightmare, pp. 1-8.

*Discuss the distinctive features of the American administrative state, especially in relation to law and the courts*

**Thurs, Sept 5: Administrative State-Building: The State Department**

Simeonov, S. A. (2021). Jacksonian Consular Reform and the Forging of America's First Global Bureaucracy. *Journal of Policy History*, 33(4), 401-428.

*Based on this case, discuss the political nature of administrative state-building*

**Tues, Sept 10: Agency Autonomy, Reputation and Politicization: The Food and Drug Administration**

Carpenter, D. (2014). *Reputation and Power: Organizational Image and Pharmaceutical Regulation at the FDA*. Princeton University Press. “Introduction: The Gatekeeper,” 1-19.

*Discuss how Carpenter links the FDA's gatekeeper role to the agency's reputation and autonomy*

**Thurs, Sept 12: Agency Design: The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau**

McCoy, P. A. (2018). Inside Job: The Assault on the Structure of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. *Minnesota. Law Review*, 103, 2543-2567 (**Introduction and Part I**)

*Discuss how the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau was designed by Congress to make it effective.*

**Tues, Sept 17: Democratic Oversight: The Central Intelligence Agency**

Zegart, A. B. (2022). *Spies, Lies, and Algorithms: The History and Future of American Intelligence*. Princeton University Press. Ch. 8, Congressional Oversight: Eyes of Spies, 195-224.

*Discuss why Congressional oversight of the CIA is challenging.*

**Thurs, Sept 19: Rulemaking: The Occupational Safety and Health Administration**

Michaels, D. (2020). *The Triumph of Doubt: Dark Money and the Science of Deception*. Oxford University Press. Ch. 8, "Deadly Dust," 117-140.

*Discuss how this account of OSHA's development of silica particle regulation illuminates the politics of agency rulemaking.*

**Tues, Sept 24: Regulatory Enforcement: The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission**

Kim, P. T. (2015). Addressing systemic discrimination: Public enforcement and the role of the EEOC. *Boston University Law Review*, 95, 1133-1154.

*Discuss the issues surrounding EEOC's enforcement of law related to systemic discrimination.*

**Thurs, Sept 26: The Administrative State and the Courts**

Lens, V. (2023). "Deconstructing the Administrative State": Legal Trends and Consequences. *J. Soc. & Soc. Welfare*, 50, 35.

*Discuss how current court and legal perspectives present a fundamental challenge to the administrative state.*

## **Part II: Public Administration and Management**

### **Tues, Oct 1: The Pros and Cons of Bureaucracy**

Goodsell, C. 2019. *The New Case for Bureaucracy*. Sage Publications. Ch. 1. "What, Defend Bureaucracy?" pp. 2-37.

*Discuss the contrasting perspectives that Americans have on "bureaucracy."*

### **Thurs, Oct 3: Leadership and Institutionalization: The World Doping Agency**

van Bottenburg, M., Geeraert, A., & de Hon, O. (2021). *The world anti-doping agency: Guardian of elite sport's credibility*, in Boin, A., Fahy, L. A., & t Hart, P. (Eds). *Guardians of Public Value: How Public Organisations Become and Remain Institutions*. Springer Nature. (pp. 185-210).

*Discuss how the World Anti-Doping Agency developed into a respected international organization.*

### **Tues, Oct 8: Bureaucratic Effectiveness: Public Schools**

Mangla, A. (2015). Bureaucratic norms and state capacity in India: Implementing primary education in the Himalayan region. *Asian Survey*, 55(5), 882-908.

*Discuss why the educational bureaucracy of the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh outperformed other regions in providing rural education.*

### **Thurs, Oct 10: Performance Management: Public Schools**

McDermott, K. A. (2011). *High-Stakes Reform: The Politics of Educational Accountability*. Georgetown University Press. Ch. 9, "Assessing Performance Accountability in Education," 165-179.

*Discuss how performance accountability works in theory and practice to improve schools and education.*

### **Sun, Oct 13: Submit your Midterm Essay**

### **Tues, Oct 15: Accountability and Representative Bureaucracy: Police Departments**

Headley, A. M. (2022). Accountability and police use of force: Interactive effects between minority representation and civilian review boards. *Public Management Review*, 24(11), 1682-1704.

*Discuss how minority representation in police departments interacts with civilian oversight to affect police use of force.*

#### **Thurs, Oct 17: Administrative Burdens: The Social Security Administration**

Herd, P., & Moynihan, D. P. (2019). *Administrative burden: Policymaking by other means*. Russell Sage Foundation. Ch. 9, "Social Security: How the Biggest Bookkeeping Organization in the World Banished Burdens," pp. 215-239

*Discuss how the Social Security Administration reduced administrative burdens*

#### **Tues, Oct 22: Contracting: NASA**

Mahler, J. (2016). NASA Contracting and the Direction of Space Science. *Administration & Society*, 48(6), 711-735.

*Discuss the development of contracting in NASA and the challenges it poses for effective management.*

#### **Thurs, Oct 24: Collaborative Governance: Homelessness Services**

Doberstein, C. (2016). Designing collaborative governance decision-making in search of a 'collaborative advantage'. *Public Management Review*, 18(6), 819-841.

*Discuss how collaborative governance has shaped homelessness policy in Vancouver Canada.*

#### **Tues, Oct 29: Street Level Bureaucrats: The Departments of Homeland Security and Health and Human Services**

Edlins, M., & Larrison, J. (2020). Street-level bureaucrats and the governance of unaccompanied migrant children. *Public Policy and Administration*, 35(4), 403-423.

*Discuss the roles, responsibilities, and interactions of street-level bureaucrats with unaccompanied immigrant children.*

### **Part III: Organization Theory**

**Thurs, Oct. 31: Organizational Structure and Culture: The FBI**

Zegart, A. (2007). *Spying Bind: The CIA, the FBI, and the Origins of 9/11*. Princeton University Press. Ch. 6: "Real Men Don't Type: Adaptation Failure in the FBI," 120-155.

*Discuss how the FBI's organizational structure, culture and incentive system affected its response to the 9/11 terrorist attack.*

**Tues, Nov. 5: The Political Sociology of Organization: Police Departments**

Campeau, H. (2018). "The Right Way, the Wrong Way, and the Blueville Way": Standards and Cultural Match in the Police Organization. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 59(4), 603-626.

*Discuss the distinctive culture of policing that developed in Blueville and its implications for controlling police behavior.*

**Thurs, Nov. 7: Organizational Innovation and Change: New York City Medicaid Offices**

Isett, K. R., Glied, S. A., Sparer, M. S., & Brown, L. D. (2013). When change becomes transformation: A case study of change management in Medicaid offices in New York City. *Public Management Review*, 15(1), 1-17.

*Discuss how successful organizational change was achieved in New York City Medicaid Offices.*

**Tues, Nov. 12: Task, Work and Identity: The Border Patrol**

Rivera, K. D. (2015). Emotional Taint: Making Sense of Emotional Dirty Work at the US Border Patrol. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 29(2), 198-228.

*Discuss the emotional and identity tensions that Border Patrol agents encounter*

**Thurs. Nov. 14: Professionalism, Skill and Experience: The Federal Aviation Administration**

Vaughan, D. (2021). *Dead Reckoning: Air Traffic Control, System Effects, and Risk*. University of Chicago Press. Ch. 3, "From Skill Acquisition to Expertise," pp. 129-161.

*Discuss the challenging process through which Air Traffic Controllers become experts at their jobs.*

## **Tues, Nov. 19: Interorganizational Coordination: The Columbia Space Shuttle Response**

Beck, T. E., & Plowman, D. A. (2014). Temporary, emergent interorganizational collaboration in unexpected circumstances: A study of the Columbia space shuttle response effort. *Organization science*, 25(4), 1234-1252.

*Discuss how interorganizational coordination developed in response to Columbia space shuttle disaster.*

## **Thurs, Nov. 21: Team Coordination and Communication: The National Weather Service**

Roeder, A. C., Bisel, R. S., & Howe, W. T. (2021). High-reliability organizing and communication during naturalistic decision making: US National Weather Service (NWS) forecasting teams' use of 'floating'. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 49(4), 441-459.

*Discuss how team norms affect decision-making in high-reliability teams.*

## **Tues, Nov. 26: Sensemaking: The National Park Service (Online lecture only; attendance not taken)**

Nowell, B., & Stutler, J. (2020). Public management in an Era of the unprecedented: Dominant institutional logics as a barrier to organizational sensemaking. *Perspectives on Public Management and Governance*, 3(2), 125-139.

*Discuss how the National Park Service interpreted information about the CT2 fire and how their interpretation shaped their response.*

## **Thurs, Nov 28: Holiday**

## **Tues, Dec 3: Decision-making: The Navy SEALs**

Fraher, A., & Grint, K. (2018). Agonistic governance: The antinomies of decision-making in US Navy SEALs. *Leadership*, 14(2), 220-239.

*Discuss the features of Navy SEAL organization that allow them to be ultra-resilient in the face of dynamic and uncertain situations.*

## **Thurs, Dec 5: Conclusion and Review**

## **Reading week, 12/9-12/13**

**Final Essay: Submit your final essay by Thurs, Dec. 20 (Note: there is no “in-class” final exam, but this is the scheduled date for the final exam)**

## **Course Requirements and Grading Policies**

### **Overall Grading Distribution**

**Reading Responses: 25%; Attendance: 10%; Class Participation: 15%; Midterm Essay: 25%; Final Essay: 25%**

### **Grading Conventions**

I use the following conventions to convert letter grades to numerical grades: A = 4.0; A- = 3.7; B+ = 3.3; B = 3.0; B- = 2.7; C+ = 2.3; C = 2.0; C- = 1.7; D+ = 1.3; D = 1.0; D- = .7; F = 0.

I use the following cutoffs to assign the final grade: A  $\geq 3.75$ ; A-  $\geq 3.50$ ; B+  $\geq 3.25$ ; B  $\geq 2.75$ ; B-  $\geq 2.50$ , C+  $\geq 2.25$ ; C  $\geq 1.75$ , etc.

### **Reading Responses (25%)**

A short analysis (at least 1 double-spaced page but not more than 2) of each of the class readings must be up-loaded to bCourses (under >Assignments) **at least one hour before class**. Papers turned in late (after the bCourses deadline) will count as ½ credit. If you are unable, exceptionally, to upload your paper to bCourses, bring a printed copy to class and give it to me before class begins. You should then upload the paper to bCourses as soon as possible.

These short papers are used to encourage you to read and reflect on class readings and prepare you to get the most out of each lecture. **The discussion question for each analysis is listed below each reading in the syllabus above.**

Reading responses are also intended to help you refine your reading and writing skills. Therefore, you should NOT copy and paste from the article (that is plagiarism!) and you should NOT use AI programs like ChatGPT to produce your reading response.

**The first reading response is due for the Tuesday, September 3 class** (the Ernst reading) and a reading response will then be due for each class meeting that a reading is assigned.

For purposes of grading, each reading response will count for one point, for a total of 26 possible points. Late responses will count for ½ point. Grades will be assigned based on your total points, as follows:

A = 23 or more  
A- = 22



B+ = 21  
B = 20  
B- = 19  
C+ = 18  
C = 17  
Etc.

**Note:** We scan your papers at the end of the semester; those with negligible responses will be treated as 0s.

### **Attendance (10%)**

I will take attendance at the beginning of each class.

I have the following policy about attendance: **I expect you to attend class and be on time.** However, I know that things come up for all of us that make it hard to make it to every class or to always make it on time. So I build flexibility into my attendance grading policy by assuming that everyone may have to miss a couple of classes during the semester. At the same time, I don't like to adjudicate the legitimacy of further "excused" absences (e.g., "my best friend is getting married in Hawaii," "I have to attend a Model UN meeting," "I have a dental appointment," "My manager said I had to work that day," "My roommate got COVID," "I want to participate in a protest march," "my car broke down," etc.). These may all be real reasons you could not attend class, but I see them as covered by the flexibility that I have built into grading. Beyond this built-in flexibility, I am not so flexible about excusing absences. Of course, if you have serious medical, family emergency, or DSP-related reasons for missing additional classes, please let me know and I can make an exception to this policy.

There are **27** class meetings. Attendance will be evaluated as follows (**Grade: Number of Unexcused Absences**):

A: 0-3 missing  
A-: 4  
B+: 5  
B: 6  
B-: 7  
C+: 8  
C: 9  
C-: 10  
D: 11  
F: 12 or more

With respect to being late, it is not a problem if you are late a few times. If you are late, however, it is up to you to let me know at the end of class that you were in class (Note: I won't correct this if you tell me several classes later). Chronic lateness will count against your attendance grade. Please let me know early in the semester if there is some reason for chronic lateness. I will treat

leaving early from class in a similar manner. Needing to leave a little early a few times is no big deal, but if I observe a pattern of leaving early it will count against your attendance grade.

### **Class Participation (15%)**

In addition to attendance, I include a grade for active class participation.

There are a number of ways to participate actively in the class, including contributing to class discussion, coming to office hours, participating in team exercises and breakout groups, and active engagement in various participation exercises that I will introduce during the semester (Note: these exercises will not be graded, but will be used to get everyone participating).

This is a course about politics and we will inevitably touch on issues where we have different political opinions. These topics can be emotional for all of us. Nevertheless, it is important to maintain an open classroom where people can feel comfortable having different political views. Thus, there is a general expectation in this class that classroom participation will be civil and respectful.

We will keep a rough tally of your participation over the course of the semester and use it to grade your participation according to the following broad criteria.

**A:** Active, thoughtful and respectful participation in class discussions, class participation exercises, and office hours.

**B:** A modest amount of thoughtful and respectful participation in class discussions, class participation exercises, and office hours.

**C:** Limited engagement in class discussions, class exercises or office hours and/or some less thoughtful or uncivil behavior.

### **Midterm Essay (25%)**

The midterm essay will analyze a case or research question and will be explained more fully as the date for this exercise approaches. However, the essay itself will be a 5-9 page double-spaced typed essay that should incorporate perspectives drawn from the class readings and lectures through Thursday, October 10.

***Post your midterm essay on bCourses under >Assignments by Sunday, October 13.***

### **Final Essay (25%)**

The final essay will be based on the analysis of a second case or on a theoretical synthesis of the course. Details of the assignment will be introduced after the midterm essay project is complete. The essay should be 5-9 page double-spaced typed essay and should utilize theoretical

perspectives and empirical findings drawn from the readings and lectures throughout the semester.

***Post your final essay on bCourses under >Assignments by Friday, Dec. 20 at 10:00pm.***