

The University of North Carolina Wilmington  
Department of Public & International Affairs – MPA Program  
Fall 2009

**PLS 500-001: MANAGING PUBLIC AND NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS**

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Office Hours: Tuesdays: 2:00 – 3:00 p.m.  
Wednesdays: 5:00 – 6:00 p.m.  
or by appointment (recommended)

Class Hours: Tuesday 3:30 – 6:15 p.m. Leutze Hall 131

**Course Objectives**

Effective public administration is as much an art as it is a science. Theory informs practice while practice contributes to the development of theory. This course is designed to give you a greater appreciation for the breadth and scope of public administration theory in order to improve your ability to effectively manage public and nonprofit organizations. Specifically, the course objectives are to:

- Improve your understanding of public and nonprofit organizations and the context within which these organizations operate;
- Introduce you to the theories, concepts, tools and techniques associated with managing public and nonprofit organizations;
- Develop your appreciation for the complexity of issues, problems and challenges associated with effective management of public and nonprofit organizations; and
- Enhance your skills and ability to think, act and communicate more effectively in today's public and nonprofit organizations.

These objectives will be met by exposing you to a variety of theories and conceptual frameworks as well as the practical management tools and techniques that are derived from these theories. The course will develop your critical thinking abilities by analyzing cases and using the theories in this course to analyze an organization. Your oral communication skills will be developed through class presentations while the preparation of case memos and the organizational analysis project will improve your ability to communicate your ideas and arguments in written form.

**Readings**

The following books are required for this course and can be purchased at local book stores or through vendors on the internet:

- Rainey, Hal. G... *Understanding and Managing Public Organizations*. Third Edition (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2003).
- Tompkins, Jonathan R. *Organization Theory and Public Management* (Belmont, CA: Thompson Wadsworth, 2005).
- Ashworth, Kenneth. *Caught Between the Dog and the Fireplug, or How to Survive Public Service* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2001).

Additional required readings have been placed on reserve in the library and be accessed through the UNCW library website (go to Reserves link under course or instructor).

## **Expectations and Approach**

This is not a lecture-dominated class where the instructor speaks and the students passively listen. This is a seminar class where students take an active part in their learning through class discussions, group work, and case analysis. Course readings are supplemented with videos, occasional guest speakers, and other information available on the class web site. Part of your learning will be cognitive or factual in nature. However, much of what you learn in this course will involve developing your management skills, enhancing your self-awareness of the organizations in which you work, and sharing your experiences with others in the class. I encourage you to prepare yourself for, and be open to, the variety of ways that you can learn from this course.

Teams will also play a part in your learning. Although you may prefer to complete assignments on an individual basis, teams often do tasks more effectively than individuals and provide you with an opportunity to participate more than is possible in a larger class. Teams also provide an opportunity to work directly with and learn from your fellow classmates and allow you to observe how others analyze and solve problems. Moreover, work teams play an increasingly important role in managing today's public and nonprofit organizations. Therefore, it is important for you to develop your ability to work effectively in teams.

Another important part of your learning involves the analysis of case studies. Case studies are compilations of problem situations actually faced by public managers. A case places you into a real world situation and forces you to sort through and analyze various issues or courses of action.

## **Course Requirements**

Your grade in this class will be based on your ability to understand and apply the theories discussed in the course readings. More specifically, your grade will depend on your performance on the following course requirements:

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

As a course in a graduate professional degree program, students are expected to complete the

assigned readings and come to class prepared to discuss all readings, handouts, and assignments that are due. To ensure that students are prepared to discuss the readings, I will randomly ask students to summarize a reading, describe a theory, present their case memos, or present the applicable portion of the organizational analysis assignment. Each student should also be prepared to share with the class questions that the readings raised and be able to identify the most significant point or contribution that the author makes to the practice of public administration.

One page “reflection essays” will also be required throughout the semester and will be part of the participation grade.

Since the class only meets once per week, attendance at every class is expected. Therefore, you should notify the instructor when you are unable to attend class. As a general rule, missing more than one class is unacceptable and will result in a lowering of the participation grade. Your participation grade will also be lowered due to the frequent inability to respond to the instructor’s questions, poor class preparation, lack of enthusiastic participation in class exercises, or the failure to treat others in the classroom with respect (e.g., talking while others are talking, ridiculing other students, etc.). Simply put, in order to receive an “A” in this class you must be a civil, active contributor to class and not merely score well on exams and assignments.

Students are expected to be familiar with the *Seahawk Respect Compact* posted on the classroom wall and conduct themselves accordingly.

### **Case Memos (40%)**

One of the ways we will examine and apply the concepts discussed in the readings is by analyzing a series of cases provided in the library course reserves. Since case analysis is essentially self-learning through simulated experience, its success depends on the lively exchange of information, ideas, and opinions during case discussions. Students must come prepared to discuss all aspects of the case, apply the concepts in the readings to the case, and be able to answer the questions related to the case. Additional instructions and guidance for preparing the individual and group case memos and leading the case discussions is attached to the syllabus. Each memo is limited to 2 single-spaced pages and must be in a standard professional format. You are also required to include an attachment (limited to 2 single-spaced pages) that discusses how the class readings relate to the case (at least three specific connections must be discussed). Your memos and attachments must be submitted in both hard copy and electronic form so that they can be posted to the class.

Students will be assigned to be discussion leaders for each of the cases.

### **Organizational Assessment (20%)**

You will be assigned to a team that will act as a “consulting” group that will analyze a management problem within an organization that you are familiar with. [This may include a place of employment, membership or volunteer activity]. Summarize and provide support for the problem – how do you know that this is a problem? [your case analysis will depend upon thorough data collection]. How is it affecting the performance of the organization? Draw upon the readings or other existing research on this issue to offer recommendations to your

organization. Examples of appropriate problems include: organizational group think, team dysfunction, high turnover, high absenteeism, generational conflict, bullying in the workplace.

**Alternatively**, your group may wish to identify an organization that has been written about, either because of problems or exemplary performance in an area. This alternative would involve research to familiarize your group with the organization and identifying key themes from class readings or other existing research.

Regardless of which alternative is chosen, your analysis must include explicit connections with at least three concepts or theories from class readings. Papers should be at least 15 pages (typed, double-spaced). Attachment 2 provides a format for the paper. A team presentation with PowerPoint will be provided at the end of the semester on December 1.

### **Exam (25%)**

There will be one take home exam at the end of the semester consisting of a series of questions that require you to apply the theories and concepts discussed over the course of the semester.

### **Grading**

All written work will be evaluated based on your analysis of the readings and cases, the organization of your ideas, the strength and substance of your arguments, your ability to properly apply the concepts discussed in class, and the quality of your writing (e.g., spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc.). Failure to complete an assignment or failing to follow directions will result in a 0 for the assignment. The final course grade will be calculated based upon the following weights:

Class Participation: 15%

Case Memos (4): 40%

Organizational Assessment: 20%

Exam: 25%

Be advised that you must maintain a B average to remain in the MPA program. Three grades of C or one grade of F results in dismissal from the graduate program. Anyone caught cheating will receive an F for the course and therefore be dismissed from the program.

### **Late Assignments**

As a course in a professional degree program, late assignments will not be accepted and

receive an automatic F. All assignments are due at the beginning of the assigned class period. If a student anticipates missing a class when an assignment is due, the work must be emailed or turned in before class.

### **Other Class Policies**

All cell phones and laptops are to be turned off in class. More than one warning will result in a lowering of the class participation grade.

### **Course Schedule**

#### **August 25**

- Introductions
- Review of Syllabus
- Group Reflection and Discussion of Classic Management Questions

#### **September 1 -- Overview**

- Public Administration: science, process and art
- Management as a second profession

#### **Readings:**

- Rainey: 3-21
- Tompkins: 1-8
- Ashworth: 34-44; 152-167
- Reserve #1: "Serving the Homeless: PA as Science, Process and Art"

#### **Assignment Due:**

- Reflection Essay: Provide your own example of PA as a science, process and art (1 page, single-space)

#### **September 8 – Foundations of Public Administrative Theory**

- Politics vs. administration
- Overview of theories of management and organization
- Differences between public, nonprofit and private organizations

#### **Readings:**

- Rainey: 22-78
- Tompkins: 9-25
- Ashworth: 1-22

Assignment Due:

- Reflection Essay: The most useful management or organizations theory from your perspective and why (1 page, single-space)

## **September 15: The Environment of Public Organizations**

- Environmental conditions
- How organizations respond to the environment
- Intergovernmental relations
- Issue networks
- Political power and public policy

Readings:

- Rainey: 79-123
- Tompkins: 26-40; 211-269
- Ashworth: 23-33; 89-120
- Reserve #2: "Hurricane Katrina: A Man-Made Crisis?"

Assignment Due:

- Case Memo: Hurricane Katrina Case

## **September 22: Organizing**

- Bureaucracy
- Organizational goals and effectiveness
- Organizational structure, design and technology

Readings:

- Rainey: 127-150; 169-218
- Tompkins: 41-125
- Ashworth: 121-133
- Reserve #3: "Organizing"

Assignment Due:

- Reflection essay: Describe and briefly critique the structure of an organization with which you are familiar (work, school, team, etc.) (1 page, single-space)

## **September 29: Organizing (cont'd)**

- Organization design
- Work groups and teams
- Advantages and disadvantages of groups

Readings:

- Rainey: 332-339
- Tompkins: 126-182
- Ashworth: 145-151
- Reserve #4: How Kristen Died

Assignment Due

- Case Memo: Kristen case

**October 6: No Class—Fall Break**

**October 13: Decision Making**

- Bounded rationality
- Incrementalism
- Garbage-can model

Readings:

- Rainey: 151-169; 338-339
- Tompkins: 183-210
- Ashworth: 73-81

**October 20: Leadership, Power and Organizational Culture**

- Leadership theories
- Sources of power
- Administrative power
- Managerial roles
- Transformational vs. transactional leadership

Readings:

- Rainey: 289-307
- Ashworth: 63-72; 168-177

**October 27: Leadership, Power and Organizational Culture (cont'd)**

- Finish leadership and power discussion
- Organizational culture

Readings:

- Rainey: 307-331
- Tompkins: 360-391
- Reserve #5: “Crisis Management in the Catholic Church: Lessons for Public Administrators”

Assignment Due:

- Case Memo: Crisis Management case

### **November 3: Motivation**

- Values and motives
- Competing ethical obligations
- Work motivation
- Incentives
- Public service motivation
- Motivation theories

Readings:

- Rainey: 219-288
- Tompkins: 270-326
- Ashworth: 82-88; 134-144
- Reserve #6: "The Motivational Bases of Public Service"

Assignment Due:

- Write an essay on what motivates you (1 page, single-space)

### **November 10: Motivation (cont'd)**

- Motivation theories (cont'd)
- Methods used to enhance work motivation

Readings: TBD

### **November 17: Communication & Conflict**

- Communication theory
- Barriers to effective communication
- Functional vs. dysfunctional conflict
- Conflict resolution

Readings:

- Rainey: 339-352
- Ashworth: 45-62
- Reserve #7: "The Last Flight of the Space Shuttle Challenger" and Reserve #8: "The Columbia Accident"

Assignment Due

- Case Memo: The Shuttle Failures



## **November 24: New Governance**

- Reengineering/TQM
- Privatization
- Managing third party government
- Tools of government
- Information management and technology

Readings:

- Rainey: 355-424
- Tompkins: 327-359

## **December 1: Team Presentations on Organizational Assessments**

Assignment Due:

- Teams provide PowerPoint presentation on organizational analysis and turn in papers.

## **December 8: Take Home Exam Due**

## PLS 500: Format of Case Memos

In order to help develop your analytical and communication skills, we will conduct a series of case analyses this semester. Case analysis means that you draw out the pertinent issues from a case. It does not mean you rehash the facts of the case or simply summarize what has occurred. Instead, your job is to identify and point out the significant issues, some of which will be implicit rather than explicit, and their linkages with broader management issues. The readings and class discussions should assist you in this regard. Facts and examples from the case or readings should be used to support your analysis and conclusions. However, this does not mean that you should cite sources from class materials. Instead, referring to the main idea will often be sufficient using clear language understandable to a practitioner...you will have an opportunity to cite theory and concepts from the readings in your attachment.

It helps if you follow a fairly fixed pattern when preparing memos and it is often useful to summarize the main issues and recommended course of action in the first few paragraphs (it isn't a mystery novel). A useful structure (subject, of course, to variation and adaptation when appropriate) for these assignments is to address the following:

- **State the issue/problem as clearly as possible:** Trying to state the issue or problem as a one-sentence question or statement is a useful habit to get into. When necessary, this can be followed by a brief explanation or clarification (no more than a paragraph or two). If more than one issue is presented, use bullets to summarize and then explain in more detail in subsequent paragraphs. If extensive background is required, use an attachment.
- **Major factors that must be addressed or solved:** Many times significant factors will be implicit rather than explicit and are linked to larger management issues. Part of your task is to point out the significance of the larger issues. As a general guideline, you should identify three key management-related factors that contribute to your stated issue/problem.
- **Recommend a specific course of action:** Be sure to clearly state the recommended course of action(s) and the consequences you expect to flow from the selected course of action. This section should focus on what specifically needs to be done to address the management factors you have identified that are contributing to the issue/problem in the case. Since this is a management memo, focus on implementation rather than merely suggesting new policies.

Obviously, a single format cannot fit all circumstances and will have to be adjusted. Since many of the cases descriptive in nature, you can pick one of the key actors and write your memo to that character, but the audience should be a public official who is at a management level.

Your case memos will be evaluated based on your analysis of the case, the organization of your ideas, your ability to properly apply the theories and concepts discussed in class and the quality of your writing (e.g., spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc.). Your goal is to write as clearly, concisely, and directly as possible. Elegance of style, while desirable, is a secondary consideration. Short declarative sentences convey ideas well; convoluted grammar confuses things and often leads to misunderstandings. Remember that you are trying to convey your ideas to people who have infinite demands on their time. A simple, direct style economizes on time.

Your memo should also be as specific as possible. A decision maker should know precisely what you want them to do about the problem/issue and what you plan to do to carry out your recommendations. Length is another critical matter, particularly if your memos is addressed to top agency officials. If greater length is required, it should take the form of an attached analytical paper with a short cover memo summarizing its contents. For this class, your case **memos should not exceed 2 single-spaced typed pages with 1-inch margins**. If it is longer, I will only read the first two pages and it will be graded accordingly.

Your memos are also expected to be professional in nature. Thus, they should utilize a standard professional format such as the one exhibited in this memo. Most word processing programs also have templates that can be used and any format is acceptable for this assignment provided that your memo is businesslike and prepared in a professional manner.

### **Connection to Theory in Class Readings (Attachment)**

A two page (typed, single-space) essay must be attached to your professional memo that highlights a minimum of three specific connections to theories or concepts from the class readings. This is where you can demonstrate your understanding of how the readings informed your memo. For example, in a case where you believe Max Weber's theory of bureaucracy is relevant, you wouldn't specifically discuss Max Weber in your professional memo. However, you would make the connection to the instructor in your attachment. In other words, the case memo is your application of theory for a practitioner audience, while the attachment demonstrates your understanding of theory to the instructor.

**PLS 500: Organizational Assessment Paper**

**Sample Format**

- I. Description of Organization and Nature of Problem or Reason for Recognition (3 pages)
- II. Documentation (**data** showing significance of problem or accomplishment that demonstrates how you know) (4 pages)
- III. Analysis (using at least three concepts or theories from readings (5 pages)
- IV. Recommendations to address problem or assessment of key best practices from exemplary organization (3 pages)