

The University of North Carolina at Wilmington
Department of Political Science
Spring 2002

PLS 217: ETHICS & LEADERSHIP IN PUBLIC LIFE

Instructor: Dr. Tom Barth
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Office Hours: T-Th: 8:30 - 9:30 AM
11:00 – 12:00 PM
Class Hours: T-Th 9:30 - 10:45 Friday Hall 252

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

A strong democracy requires public officials with the ability to lead in an ethical manner. Although the media focuses public attention on ethics violations and failures in leadership at the highest and most visible levels of government, the effectiveness of the vast majority of public sector activity relies on the responsible exercise of discretion by public administrators at every level. Another premise of this course is that ethical leadership is the responsibility of not just elected or appointed public leaders, but every public servant and citizen. Examining your own ethical dilemmas can raise awareness of the challenges of being an ethical public servant.

Students will receive a firm grounding in general leadership and ethics theory, but will then study more specifically how these theories apply to the government setting. Specifically, ethical leadership in government requires an understanding of the shared nature of power and the multiple sources of responsibility in the public sector. Case studies, biographies of exemplary public administrators, literature, cinema, and personal reflection will be used to build awareness and understanding.

II. REQUIRED TEXTS

Cooper, Terry (1998). *The Responsible Administrator*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Required articles will also be placed on library reserve for second part of semester.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Contribution to Class (15%)

Discourse and participation are central features of this course. Students are expected to contribute to class discussion by expressing opinions, asking questions, and challenging each other in a respectful manner. This course will challenge students to engage in authentic dialogue; that is, to be open and honest about their beliefs and the basis for them. Each student is also expected to come to class fully prepared to discuss readings and present any assignments.

Specifically, each student should be prepared to share the following two items for each reading assignment:

*****The single most significant sentence of passage in the readings.**

*****One key question from the reading.**

Since it is not possible to contribute to class without being there, attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. **More than three unexcused absences or frequent lateness to class (or leaving early) will result in a lowering of the grade for this portion of the course.**

Students should understand that earning an A in this class will therefore require more than merely A's on papers and exams.

B. Journal (15%)

Students must keep a personal journal during the course consisting of at least one journal entry each week. Consistent with the purpose of the class, the journal is meant to stimulate personal reflection over class readings and discussion, as well as relevant events experienced in one's daily life or in the news. The purpose is to raise awareness of ethical leadership by continuous mental exercise.

A handout will be provided with guidelines for keeping a journal. The journal may be handwritten; it is required that a standard 8 1/2 X 11 notebook be used to keep the entries together. Each entry must be a minimum of four handwritten pages (single spaced). Entries should begin the first full week of class (January 7-11). To foster exchange between the students and instructor, all journals will be exchanged between students every two weeks, with student comments and suggestions provided each time. The instructor will also collect a random sample of the journals every two weeks, and will read all student journals over spring break and at the end of the course. Grading will be based on level of effort and thought demonstrated.

C. Personal Ethical Case (15%)

Each student must write and present a three page analysis (typed, double spaced) of a real ethical dilemma they have either personally experienced or observed. The Cooper decisionmaking model discussed in class must be used (p. 20 in text). Students will be asked to share their personal cases with the class during the course of the semester.

D. Exemplars Paper (15%)

Students must write and present a ten page paper (typed, double spaced) describing a public official (either current or historical) whose career demonstrates at least five of the ethical leadership concepts discussed in class. The paper must be based on a biography or autobiography of the official. A suggested framework for the paper will be distributed to the class. Student presentations will be scheduled throughout the second half of the semester. Since this assignment will require research on a chosen public figure, students will be expected to identify a public figure within the first month of class (by February 7). **No more than two students can do the same public figure, so subjects will be approved by the instructor on a first-come, first-served basis.**

E. Mid-Term and Final Exams (20% each)

In-class short answer or essay style exams will be given on February 28 and May 3 to test knowledge of course materials and the ability to apply concepts.

IV. CLASS SCHEDULE

Jan. 8 **Introductions and Course Expectations**

PART 1: THE RESPONSIBLE PUBLIC SERVANT

Jan. 10 **Overview of Ethical Decisionmaking**

Cooper, Preface and Chapter 1

Jan. 15 **Public Ethics in Society Today**

Readings to be assigned.

Jan. 17 **Objective and Subjective Sources of Responsibility**

Cooper, Chapter 3

Jan. 22 **Film Excerpt: “The Contender”**

Cooper, Chapter 3 (cont’d)

Journal Exchanges (Entries 1 & 2 Due)

- Jan. 24 **Conflicts of Responsibility**
Cooper, Chapter 4
- Jan. 29 **Film Excerpt: “Primary Colors”**
Cooper, Chapter 4 (cont’d)
- Jan. 31 **External and Internal Controls in Public Organizations**
Cooper, Chapter 5
- Feb. 5 **Film Excerpt: “The Green Mile”**
Journal Exchanges (Entries 3 & 4 Due)
Cooper, Chapter 5 (cont’d)
- Feb. 7 **Integrating Ethics Within the Organization**
Cooper, Chapter 6
- Feb. 12 **Film Excerpt: “Serving in Silence”**
Cooper, Chapter 6 (cont’d)
- Feb. 14 **Safeguarding Ethical Autonomy in Organizations**
Cooper, Chapter 7
- Feb. 19 **Film Excerpt: “Patch Adams”**
Cooper, Chapter 7 (cont’d)
Journal Exchanges (Entries 5 & 6 Due)
- Feb. 21 **Wrap-up of Cooper Text**
Conclusion in Cooper
- Feb. 26 **Mid-Term Review**
- Feb. 28 **Mid-Term Exam**
Journals Due to Instructor (Entries through 7 & 8 Due)
- March 5&7 **Spring Break**

PART 2: ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

- March 12 **Guest Speaker Roundtable on Ethical Leadership**
- March 14 **The Link Between Ethics and Leadership**
Reading: “Political Prudence and the Ethics of Leadership” by Patrick
Dobel
Begin Student Presentations on Personal Ethical Case

March 19	Serving Multiple Masters Reading: “Constitutional Subordinate Autonomy” by Thomas Barth Student Presentations on Personal Ethical Case
March 21	Promoting the Public Interest Reading: “The Public Interest and Administrative Discretion” by Thomas Barth Student Presentations on Personal Ethical Case
March 26	Public Duty and Private Conduct Readings: To be assigned ***Journal Exchange (Entries 9 & 10 Due)*** Student Presentations on Personal Ethical Case
March 28	Easter Vacation
April 2	Leading Citizens Readings: To be assigned Student Presentations on Personal Ethical Case
April 4	Leadership in a Shared Power World Readings: To be assigned Student Presentations on Personal Ethical Case
April 9	Servant and Transformational Leadership Readings: To be assigned
April 11	Building Trust in Government Readings: To be assigned ***Journal Exchange (Entries 11 & 12 Due)***
April 16	Student Presentations on Exemplars
April 18	Student Presentations on Exemplars Readings: To be assigned
April 23	Student Presentations on Exemplars ***Journal Exchange (Entries 13 & 14 Due)***
April 25	Student Presentations on Exemplars
April 30	Review and Course Wrap-Up ***Journals (Entries 1-15) and Exemplars Papers Due***
May 3 (Friday)	Final Exam 8:00 A.M. - 11:00 A.M.

