

PLS 308 – Public Administration

Fall 2006

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Office Hours: M/T 5:00 - 6:00 & by appointment

Classroom: LH 110

Class times: M/W 3:30 - 4:45

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Course Objectives:

This survey course is designed to give you a greater appreciation of 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 of 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 introducing you to a variety of theories and conceptual frameworks as well as the related management tools and techniques that emerge from this research. The course will develop your critical thinking abilities through case analysis while the preparation of case memos and a group project will improve your ability to communicate your ideas and arguments in written form.

Readings:

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

- Starling, Grover. 2005. *Managing the Public Sector*. Seventh Edition. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.

Additional required readings are on reserve in the library. A list of the reserve readings is provided on the course web site. Copies of the lecture notes and overheads used in class are also available on the class web site.

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 have worked, 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 complete tasks more effectively than individuals and provide 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. We will analyze two types of cases in this class. Critical thinking exercises involve the analysis of a series of short cases. Case Analysis assignments require you to examine several longer, more complicated cases. In both instances, you are required to prepare a series of memos that respond to particular questions pertaining to the cases. These assignments are described in more detail below and on the class web site.

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

Students are expected to complete assigned readings and come to class prepared to discuss all readings, handouts, and assignments that are due. To ensure students are prepared to discuss the readings, I will randomly ask students to summarize a reading, describe a theory, or present their CTE/case analysis memos. Each student should 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. An occasional pop quiz may also be used to ensure that students are keeping up with the readings.

While attendance will not be taken on a regular basis, poor classroom attendance will result in a failing participation grade since you cannot participate if you are not in class. Therefore, you should notify the instructor when you are unable to attend class. If you should miss a session when a video is shown, it may be possible to make arrangements to view the film privately in the PLS Department. In certain circumstances it may also be possible to make-up other in-class activities with a written assignment if frequent absences have become a problem. Your participation grade will 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.

Critical Thinking Exercises

Critical thinking exercises (CTEs) will be available on the class web site or distributed in class approximately one week before they are due. The analysis of case studies essentially is self-learning through simulated experience. Therefore, its success depends on the lively interchange of information, ideas, and opinions brought out in class discussion. Students are required to complete at least 4 memos based on the critical thinking exercises. Each memo should respond to the question(s) in the assignment. The four best memos will count towards your final grade (best 4 out of 6). Accordingly, students concerned about their final course grade should consider completing more additional memos. Guidelines for analyzing cases and preparing memos can be found on the course web site. Your memos are limited to 2 single-spaced pages with 12 point font and 1 inch margins and must be in a standard memo format. A sample memo format can be downloaded from the course web site and most word processing software has templates that can be used.

Case Analyses

You must also complete three case analysis assignments. The readings for the case analysis assignments are longer and are found on reserve in the library. Students are required to prepare a memo for all three assignments that respond to the questions contained on the course web site. These cases are more complicated and students should set aside more time to complete these memo assignments. Where possible, links to supplemental information are

provided to assist in your analyses. Students are advised to review the guidelines for analyzing cases and preparing memos on the course web site. Your memos should follow the same format described above for the CTE assignments.

Grant Proposal

During the first few weeks of class, project teams will be created with 4 to 5 members, depending on the class size. Since your peers will evaluate your contribution to the project team, failure to actively participate in the group assignment will adversely effect your grade. Students should carefully read through the peer evaluation form that is available on the course web site. It will be collected following the completion of your project. Each project team will complete one group project that involves developing a *grant proposal for a new project/program* for either the City of Wilmington or New Hanover County. The project/program will have to address an important social problem in New Hanover County and respond to the request for proposals (RFP) contained on the course web site. Basically, the proposal must discuss: an important community problem; actions proposed to address the problem; expected project outcomes; organizations involved in the project’s implementation; merits of the project relative to its costs; how the project meets fiscal and technical needs of the community; and, it should include a work program that includes timelines and a budget. The proposal is limited to 10 single spaced pages (plus bibliography and appendices) and should be professional in nature. Each project team will present its proposal to class. Your presentation is limited to 10 minutes and should be professional in nature (e.g., use powerpoint, appropriate attire, well rehearsed presentation, etc.). Following the presentations, each team will take on the role of the agency that issued the RFP. Your team will review and rate the other group’s proposals to determine which proposals get funded. The grade for this project will be a combination of the quality of the presentation and your written proposal.

Exams

There will be two mid-term exams and an optional take home final exam. The mid-term exams will contain short answer and essay questions. A review sheet will be posted on the class web site approximately one week before the exam and includes a list of terms and concepts and potential essay questions. The take-home final exam will be due at the end of the regularly scheduled exam period. The final exam will consist of one or more questions that ask students to apply the concepts discussed over the course of the semester. If you elect not to take the final exam, your grade will be based on an average calculated based on 900 points rather than 1,000 points.

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% (150 points)
Critical Thinking Exercises (4 @ 5% each)	20% (200 points)
Case Analysis (3 @ 5% each)	15% (150 points)
Grant Proposal	10% (100 points)
Mid-Term #1	15% (150 points)
Mid-Term #2	15% (150 points)
Final Exam	10% (100 points)

Course grades will be calculated based on the following: A (920 – 1000), A- (900 – 919), B+ (880 – 899), B (820 – 879), B- (800 – 819), C+ (780 – 799), C (720 – 779), C- (700 – 719), D+ (680 – 699), D (620 – 679), D- (600 – 619), and F (0 – 599). There is no rounding up or down.

I have a zero tolerance policy for cheating. Anyone caught cheating will receive a failing grade for the course.

Late Assignments/Incompletes:

Tentative due dates for course assignments are listed on the attached course schedule and are subject to change based on class progress and student preferences. You should check the course schedule and announcements pages on the course web site periodically for changes in due dates. Students may bring forward requests for changing the dates of major assignments for class approval with a minimum of one-week advance notice to the class.

Unless I have agreed in advance, all assignments are due at the end of the class period they are due. Informing the instructor of your intention to be absent does not waive your obligation to submit the work that is due. Late assignments lose one full letter grade per day they are late. An incomplete will only be granted when there are serious extenuating circumstances that occur after the withdrawal period.

Other Class Policies

All cell phones are to be turned off in class. If your phone rings, the Professor reserves the right to answer the call and/or to confiscate the phone.