

PLS 500 – Managing Public & Nonprofit Organizations

Spring 2008

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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 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 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 discussed 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 grant proposal 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. 2003. *Understanding and Managing Public Organizations*. Third Edition. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers. ISBN 0-7879-6561-8.
- Tompkins, Jonathan R. 2005. *Organization Theory and Public Management*. Belmont, CA: Thompson Wadsworth. ISBN 0-534-17468-X.
- Ashworth, Kenneth. 2001. *Caught Between the Dog and the Fireplug - or - How to Survive Public Service*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press. ISBN 0-87840-847-9.

Additional required readings have been placed 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 can also be found 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 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. You will prepare two cases as a team. This does not mean that you need to do everything related to the case as a team. However, you are expected to meet as a group to brainstorm about the issues in the case, diagnose the problems, identify solutions or alternative courses of action, and critique your group's case memo. The remaining three cases will be prepared individually, although I encourage you to discuss the cases with others prior to class.

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 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, or present their case memos. 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.

While attendance will not be taken on a regular basis, poor classroom attendance may 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 at the library or to borrow the video. 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 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.

Case Memos

One of the ways we will examine and apply the concepts discussed in the readings is by analyzing a series of cases contained in Stillman's *Public Administration: Concepts and Cases* and other sources. 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 at the end of each case study or those posed on the class web site.

We will discuss 9 cases over the course of the semester and you must be prepared to discuss each of them or it will adversely affect your class participation grade. At the beginning of the semester, you will be assigned to a project team. Each team will be responsible for presenting their analysis of one case to the rest of the class. Each team must also prepare a case memo as a group analyzing the case (limited to 2 single-spaced pages). You are also required to include an attachment (limited to 3 single-spaced pages) that discusses the case in light of the readings. Your group memos and attachments must be submitted to me in both hard copy and electronically so that I may forward your electronic version to the rest of the class. Students enrolled in this class should understand that case analysis executed as a team is a key element of your course responsibility and you should be available outside of classroom time to meet with your group members. Your individual grade on these assignments will be the group grade. However, groups are not expected to carry free riders. A peer evaluation form will be used and an individual grade may be adjusted lower if the team reports that one of its members did not contribute to the group project.

Individually, you must prepare at least 6 additional case memos for the remaining cases with your best 6 of 8 grades counting towards your final grade. You do not need to include an attachment for your individual case memos and only a hard copy should be submitted. Additional instructions and guidance for preparing the individual and group case memos and leading the case discussions is posted on the course web site. Each memo is limited to 2 single-spaced pages and must be in a standard professional format. A sample memo can be downloaded from the course web site and most word processing programs have templates that can be used.

Grant Proposal Assignment (Group Project)

During the first few weeks of class, project teams will be created with 2 to 4 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 15 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 one take home exam near the end of the class 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	20% (200 points)
Case memos (7 total)	
Group memos (1 @ 10% each)	10% (100 points)
Individual memos (6 @ 5% each)	30% (300 points)
Group Project – Grant Proposal	15% (150 points)
Mid-Term	25% (250 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). In the event that an assignment is given a letter grade, points are allocated by using the midpoint of the grade range and multiplying it the number of possible points. For example, an A for a 5% memo would equal 95% of 50 points or 47.5 while a B+ would equal 89% of 50 points or 44.5. There is no rounding up or down.

Be advised that you must maintain a B average to remain in the MPA program. 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 class 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.