

# PLS 500 – Managing Public & Nonprofit Organizations

Fall 2014

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Office Hours: Mon 1:00 - 2:00 & by appointment

Classroom: Mon. LH 254A/Tues. LH 254A

Class times: Mon 6:30 - 9:15/Tues. 3:30 – 6:15

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[http://people.uncw.edu/imperialm/UNCW/PLS\\_500/pls\\_500.htm](http://people.uncw.edu/imperialm/UNCW/PLS_500/pls_500.htm)

## 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. During the course you will be introduced to a wide range of theories, concepts, tools, and approaches to public administration. It is also hoped that you will develop an appreciation for the complexity of issues, problems and challenges associated with the management of public and nonprofit organizations and the context within which they operate. Accordingly, it is an important core course within the MPA program because it focuses on developing a wide range of learning competencies including:

- Demonstrating your ability to lead, motivate, and manage a diverse workplace-within and across organizations
- Demonstrating your understanding the impact of changing market and political conditions on organizational practice and resource streams.
- Demonstrating your ability to define, frame, think critically about and analyze important management problems.
- Demonstrating your ability to communicate effectively and professionally to diverse audiences.
- Demonstrating your understanding of how to work effectively in diverse groups.

Students will develop these competencies in a variety of ways using a series of readings from a variety of theoretical perspectives. The readings are supplemented with a variety of handouts and web-based resources available on the course website and through Blackboard. Students will learn how to apply the concepts through in-class exercises, discussion of video clips, simulations, and case discussions. 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.. *Understanding and Managing Public Organizations*. Fourth Edition (Edison, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.,2009).
- 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 and case materials are available on Blackboard. Copies of the lecture notes and overheads used in class and other materials related to each course topic 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.

### **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, cases, 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 may 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. 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, texting friends, surfing the web, 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 complete your assignments.

#### ***Case Memos (Individual)***

One of the ways we will examine and apply the concepts discussed in the readings is by analyzing a series of cases contained in Blackboard. Each case study will consist of a one or more main case readings and possibly some related materials (e.g., new stories). 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 a total of **9 cases** over the course of the semester and you will prepare **memos and attachments for at least 7 cases**, 1 of which you will present to the class. Each memo is limited to 2 single-spaced pages and must be in a standard professional format. It should include an attachment (limited to 3 single-spaced pages) that includes the following: a discussion of how at least 3 – 5 different theories and concepts from the Rainey and Tompkins texts or theory oriented readings in blackboard help you understand the case; a discussion of the theory of organizational effectiveness from Tompkins competing values framework seems to best explain what happened (or should have happened) in the case; and identify at least one piece of advice from the Ashworth text would have helped improve the outcomes of the case. You will also be assigned to present your analysis of **1 case** to the class. The presentation should be in the form of a briefing about the main problems and recommended actions and should also speak to the material from your attachment. You should use PowerPoint or other appropriate audiovisual aids for your presentation.

All students are required to prepare a memo and attachment for the first case – The Blast in Centralia No. 5. You will then be randomly assigned to prepare and present your memo and attachment to the class for 2 cases. For the remaining 6 cases, you can select the cases to prepare your remaining memos and attachments. However, I will take your **best 4 of 6 grades** should you chose to do additional memos. Your memos and attachments must be submitted to me in both hard copy and electronically as one document. Additional instructions and guidance for preparing the memos and attachments is posted on the course web site.

***Organizational Assessment (Individual)***

The objectives of this assignment are to apply the theories and concepts from the readings to better understand how a public or nonprofit organization operates. I encourage you to also consider using the assignment as an opportunity to network with professionals in an area where you work or wish to seek employment. Each student must select a public or nonprofit organization with at least 10 employees to analyze for this assignment. It cannot be affiliated with UNCW. You cannot be a past or present employee of the organization. You have to interview at least 3 employees, at least one of whom should be an organizational leader or manager and one should be staff. During your interviews, you should attempt to find out the answers to a variety of questions and prepare a short written report and be prepared to discuss your findings in class. A detailed description of this assignment is posted on the course web site.

***Exams***

There will be one take home final 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)	
Individual memo – Centralia	5% (50 points)
Assigned Memo Presentations (1 @ 10% each)	10% (100 points)
Individual memos (best 4 of 6 @ 5% each)	20% (200 points)
Organizational Assessment	20% (200 points)
Final Exam	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). There is no rounding up or down. 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.

All members of UNCW's community are expected to follow the academic Honor Code. Please read the UNCW Honor Code carefully (as covered in the UNCW Student Handbook). Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated in this class. Be advised that I have a zero tolerance policy for cheating or plagiarism. Anyone caught cheating or plagiarizing an assignment will receive a failing grade for the course.

**Late Assignments/Incompletes**

All members of UNCW's community are expected to follow the academic Honor Code. Please read the UNCW Honor Code carefully (as covered in the UNCW Student Handbook). Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated in this class. Be advised that I have a zero tolerance policy for cheating or plagiarism. Anyone caught cheating or plagiarizing an assignment will receive a failing grade for the course.

Unless I have agreed in advance, all assignments are due at the beginning of the class period listed on the course schedule. Informing the instructor of your intention to be absent does not waive your obligation to submit the work that is due on time. Late assignments lose one full letter grade per day they are late. The final exam and policy project lose a full letter grade at a minimum if they are submitted after the posted deadline. They lose an additional letter grade each day they are late. An incomplete will only be granted when there are serious extenuating circumstances that occur after the withdrawal period. Inability to complete the policy project and final exam by the posted deadline is not grounds for an incomplete and may result in a failing grade and dismissal from the MPA program.

**Disabilities, Respect, and Harassment**

Students with diagnosed disabilities should contact the Office of Disability Services (962-7555). Please give me a copy of the letter you receive from Office of Disability Services detailing class accommodations you may need. If you require accommodation for test-taking please make sure I have the referral letter no less than three days before the test.

UNCW has recently instituted a Respect Compact to affirm our commitment to a civil community, characterized by mutual respect. That Compact should be affixed to the wall of each classroom and can be accessed at: <http://www.uncw.edu/stuaff/pdc/documents/SeahawkRespectCompact.pdf>. Students are expected to treat others in this class in accordance with this campus policy.

UNCW practices a zero tolerance policy for any kind of violent or harassing behavior. If you are experiencing an emergency of this type contact the police at 911 or UNCW CARE at 962-2273. Resources for individuals concerned with a violent or harassing situation can be located at <http://www.uncw.edu/wsrc/crisis.html>.

**Other Class Policies**

Cell phone use and texting will not be tolerated in this class. Turn off the ringer on your cell phone prior to class. If your phone rings, the Professor reserves the right to answer the call and/or to confiscate the phone.

Laptops, tablets, and smart phones may be used in this class. Users should sit in the back row or at the edge of class to avoid distracting others. Laptops, tablets, and smart phones will be banned from the classroom for the rest of the semester the first time any user is seen engaging in non-classroom related activity (e.g., texting, surfing the web, checking Facebook, monitoring scores of ball games, etc.). The instructor reserves the right to randomly inspect the screen of any user during class.