

# PLS 502 – Public Human Resources Administration

## Fall 2007

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Classroom: LH 110

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### Course Objectives:

This course is designed to give you a greater appreciation of the breadth and scope of the theory, concepts, and practices associated with the effective management of human resources in today's public and nonprofit organizations. Specifically, the course objectives are to:

- Improve your understanding of human resources administration in public and nonprofit organizations;
- Introduce you to the theories, concepts, tools and techniques associated with managing human resources in public and nonprofit organizations;
- Develop your appreciation of the complexity of issues, problems and challenges associated with human resources administration; and,
- Enhance your skills and ability to think, act, solve problems, 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 tools and techniques derived from theories of human resources administration. The course will develop your critical thinking and problem solving abilities by completing a series of individual and group projects as well as in class exercises. Your communication skills will be developed through presentations, class discussions, and writing assignments.

### Readings:

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

- Patton, W. David, Stephanie L. Witt, Nicholas P. Lovrich, Patricia J. Frederickson. 2002. *Human Resource Management: The Public Service Perspective*. Houghton Mifflin Company: New York, NY. (Required)
- Robbins, Stephen P. & Timothy A. Judge. 2008. *Essentials of Organizational Behavior*, 9/E, Prentice Hall: Upper Saddle River, NJ. ISBN-10: 0132431521, ISBN-13: 9780132431521 (paperback) (Required)

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 exercises. 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.

### **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, present the applicable portion of the organizational analysis assignment, or answer the study questions or exercises in the book. 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.

#### ***Issue Paper***

You are required to prepare an issue paper on a topic of your choosing. Since you will obviously spend a lot of time on this assignment I encourage you to choose an issue of interest to you or an organization you are familiar with. Since this is an issue paper, it should be narrowly focused around a specific issue and conclude with a section where you provide advice to managers of public and nonprofit organizations. This advice should be firmly supported by previous research and be grounded in the literature. In certain cases, a project may be accepted in place of a paper if it adds to your professional development.

You will be required to submit a short paper/project proposal early in the semester when indicated on the course schedule. Your paper proposal must include a 1 - 2 page abstract that clearly indicates the human resource management issue you will examine. It should also include a proposed outline of the paper.

The final paper should be 15 to 20 double-spaced pages in length and include a title page, executive summary, page numbers, running header and footer, and any relevant appendices. It must include at least 10 references (in addition to course readings) to government reports, books, or journal articles that will constitute the core bibliography of your issue paper.

***Organizational Analysis Assignment (Multi-part, Group Project)***

This multi-part group assignment is designed to allow you to apply the terms, concepts, and practices described in the readings. This five part group project involves preparing five memos that analyze an individual within the selected organization and complete a: 1) job analysis; 2) recruitment plan; 3) assessment of organizational culture; 4) explore the compensation system; and, 5) examine the performance appraisal system. The website includes detailed directions for each assignment.

Early in the semester you will be assigned to a group of about 4 students. As a group, you will then need to identify a public or nonprofit organization with 10 or more paid employees. It cannot be an organization that you or any of your group members have worked for or done an internship with. You will then need to identify an individual within that organization to interview at some length and obtain all of the data needed to complete each of the assignments described in detail at the hyperlinks below. The individual should be a relatively new employee but be outside of their probationary periods. Since it may take some time to coordinate your schedules and conduct an interview, I suggest getting started well in advance of when the first assignment is due.

In terms of picking an organization, I would recommend choosing an organization that is of some interest to you in terms of possible future employment. I would also suggest interviewing someone who has the type of job you desire upon graduation or one of the jobs you aspire to. If you are having trouble identifying a suitable individual/organization, I would recommend contacting one of alumni or community advisory board members. Many would be happy to help out or direct you to an appropriate employee.

***Exams***

There will be a mid term and final exam to determine the extent to which you understand the theories, concepts, and practices covered in the readings, lectures, and class discussions.

**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)
Organizational Analysis (Group)	
Part 1: Job Analysis	5% (50 points)
Part 2: Recruitment	5% (50 points)
Part 3: Organizational Culture	5% (50 points)
Part 4: Compensation	5% (50 points)
Part 5: Performance Evaluation	5% (50 points)
Issue Paper	25% (200 points)
Mid-Term	15% (150 points)
Final Exam	15% (150 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.