

**PADP 6920: Public Personnel Administration
Spring Semester 2017**

**Room 118, UGA Gwinnett Campus
Thursday evenings, 6:00 – 8:45 p.m.**

The University of Georgia
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Course Description and Objectives

Public Personnel Administration is a dynamic, rapidly evolving field that is central to the study and practice of Public Administration. The people who work for government agencies and nonprofit organizations are among their most valuable assets. Public employees are instruments of the state and wield enormous power and influence. They perform many important functions for society and help to ensure the public safety and promote the public interest. Many other individuals are employed by nonprofit organizations and private sector contractors. They may also perform public functions and work in the public square, broadly defined. In these roles, such individuals are also surrogates of the state. They often perform many of the same tasks as public employees, make vital contributions to civil society, and work for the betterment of humanity. The recruitment, selection, development, and retention of these employees are key elements in governmental and organizational effectiveness.

This course provides a survey of the field with emphasis on the historical events and reform movements that have helped to shape it. The unique political environment that public and nonprofit organizations operate in, as well as their strengths and weaknesses when compared with private sector business firms, are also emphasized. Attention is focused on some of the major activities in Public Personnel Administration such as position classification, job evaluation, compensation, employee motivation and supervision, training, performance appraisal, and pay for performance. The course also focuses on major issues that affect the conduct of Public Personnel Administration. These issues include employee rights and responsibilities, equal employment opportunity, affirmative action, anti-discrimination laws, grievance procedures, and labor-management relations. Finally, the course turns to the future of Public Personnel Administration. In the face of widespread concerns about a “quiet crisis” in the civil service in which many veteran employees may simultaneously leave or retire from their jobs, and considering the radical transformation of the public sector in recent years, the future

¹ Office hours are by appointment, but please feel free to drop by whenever I am in the office. Also feel free to contact me by email or telephone whenever necessary. Email usually works best.

seems an open question. What can be done to ensure that the public is served and protected by a highly qualified, motivated, and trained workforce well into the 21st Century?

Student Learning Outcomes

Overall, this course aims to provide a foundation that will allow students to deal successfully with personnel concepts in other classes and ultimately in their careers, both as public and nonprofit employees and as managers who are responsible for leading organizations and overseeing the work of others. The course format and content requires students to think rigorously about a number of practical issues facing contemporary public administrators. Students will have ample opportunity to demonstrate their newly acquired knowledge and skills in the course.

Completion of the course will thus provide a foundation that enables students to better understand the role of public administrators in effectively leading and managing people in public organizations, and their subordinate role as implementers of public policy in democratic and other forms of government. Students will, in addition, gain knowledge of the principles and practices of public personnel administration, and they will learn about strategies to enhance equity, diversity and representativeness of the public workforce. The relationship between effective public personnel administration and enhanced individual and organizational performance is emphasized.

Seminar Sessions

This course will be taught primarily in a seminar format with lecture and discussion on headline topics listed in the tentative course schedule (see below). All relevant contributions to the business at hand are welcome. Students are encouraged to discuss ideas and ask questions that are germane to the material being covered. During class sessions, the instructor will present material, pose questions for discussion, help guide the search for answers, and aid in the process of critical inquiry. Students will also give presentations on specific issues, lead discussions on assigned readings and cases, complete homework-type assignments, and participate in small group exercises. Visuals and other types of media will be employed.

Student laptop or tablet computers are permitted, but web browsers, email software, and messaging applications should remain closed. Mobile phones and other electronic devices should be turned off and stored out of sight during class.

Assignments and Grades

Grades will be based on students' performance on four elements: group work and group presentations (20 percent), a midterm and final examination (20 and 30 percent, respectively), a research paper (20 percent), and attendance and participation in the course (10 percent). These components are explained below, and they will be discussed in more detail during the initial class session.

Note: PhD students will have additional readings and substantially different deliverables as determined by the instructor.

Group Work and Group Presentations

Students will be assigned to permanent work groups early in the semester. These groups will lead discussions and give presentations on supplemental readings and cases assigned to them on the tentative course schedule (see below). The instructor will assess the quality of group work based on the in-class deliverables and assign grades accordingly. These grades will count 20 percent of the final course grade. Students are encouraged to call on their group members for support when needed. If a student misses a class, for example, their group members can brief them on the class and provide copies of lecture notes and handouts.

Two deliverables of considerable importance are preparing abstracts and leading in-class discussions. Each group should prepare a one-page written abstract for each supplemental reading and each case they are assigned. The abstract should begin with a proper bibliographic reference, followed by a summary of the item, plus any additional thoughts, insights, takeaways, and/or discussion questions that will be posed to the class. The abstracts should be emailed to me by noon on the day before the in-class discussion, which should last for 10-15 minutes for each reading or case. Note: each group is jointly responsible for preparing the abstracts and leading the in-class discussions, although individual members may be assigned specific roles or tasks.

Midterm and Final Examination

Students will take comprehensive, open-book midterm and final examinations worth approximately 20 and 30 percent of the final course grade, respectively. These examinations will consist of several essay type questions. These questions will focus on major issues covered in the course. Students are expected to craft a thoughtful, well-informed response to the questions and write coherent answers that are grammatically correct. Light referencing should be provided. The papers should be type-written in a conventional 10- to 12-point font and double-spaced with one inch margins on all sides. All pages should be numbered and collated into a single Microsoft Word document (no PDFs!). This document should be emailed to the instructor by the due date. For grading purposes, the main emphasis will be on content but quality of presentation will also be considered. The due dates for these “take-home examinations” are shown on the tentative course schedule (see below).² Late penalties will apply.

Research Paper

Students will complete a research paper on a topic closely related to public personnel administration. This is an open-ended assignment worth approximately 20 percent of the final course grade. Students are encouraged to design a project and write a paper that will further their own personal and professional interests in the field. Some topics and/or research-related activities might include: complete an in-depth case study of a HRM system in a public or

² Note: university policy provides that any student with three final examinations scheduled on the same calendar day or two examinations at the same time may petition an instructor to reschedule one exam at a different time.

nonprofit sector organization; interview a public personnel officer and write a report on the interview; read an important book on public personnel administration and write an in-depth book review; identify a topic that is not adequately covered in course readings (such as motivation or training), find several articles related to the topic, and write a report assimilating these readings; and select a controversial topic or issue, research both sides, and write a position paper. There are many other ways that students can satisfy the research paper requirement. Importantly, each student's paper topic and research plan must be approved in advance by the instructor. A short prospectus is due midway through the semester and the final paper is due at semester's end.

Students should strive for papers that are high quality, stylistically and grammatically correct, well-organized, and easy for readers to follow. The papers should be type-written in a conventional 10- to 12-point font and double-spaced with one inch margins on all sides. All pages should be numbered and collated into a single Microsoft Word document (no PDFs!) that is submitted to the instructor by email. The papers should be formatted according to the American Psychological Association style guide, 6th edition. Shortened versions of this style guide are widely available on the internet. The papers will be graded based on presentation and content. The due date is shown on the tentative course schedule (see below). Late penalties will apply.

Attendance and Participation

Attendance and participation are required in this course and represent approximately 10 percent of the final grade. Students are expected to attend all class meetings and be on time. Late arrivals are especially disruptive and should be avoided. Students who miss excessive time should expect to receive a lowered grade in the course, regardless of their performance on graded assignments. With respect to participation, I first consider attendance because it is a prerequisite for participation; then I consider how frequent, valuable, and constructive a student's contributions have been to class discussions, group projects, and other activities, and how responsive they have been to course assignments and my specific requests during the semester. This component may also include completion of several short homework-type assignments during the semester.

Reasonable Accommodations

Students with disabilities that could affect their ability to participate in the course or perform well on graded assignments should see me early in the semester. I am receptive to these situations and will try to make any reasonable accommodations.

Academic Honesty

The ethical bar is set very high for public administrators and a strong work ethic is expected. Students should familiarize themselves with the University Honor Code and Academic Honesty Policy, particularly as it relates to plagiarism and related concerns. All academic work must meet the standards contained in "A Culture of Honesty." Students should inform themselves about these standards before performing any academic work. For more information, visit <https://ovpi.uga.edu/academic-honesty>.

Course Readings and Other Resources

Principal Textbook:

- Lloyd G. Nigro and J. Edward Kellough, 2014. *The New Public Personnel Administration*, 7th ed. Boston, Massachusetts: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.

Supplemental Resources:

- Richard C. Kearney and Jerrell D. Cogburn, 2016. *Public Human Resource Management: Problems and Prospects*, 6th ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press, Sage Publications.
- T. Zane Reeves, 2005. *Cases in Public Human Resource Management*, 2nd ed. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing, Cengage Learning.
- *Government Executive*. Available through print subscription or online at: <http://www.govexec.com/magazine/>
- Other readings as assigned.

All books are available at the UGA main campus bookstore and some off-campus bookstores in the area. Limited copies may also be available for temporary use from the main library, departmental library, or directly from the instructor. Note: the UGA main campus bookstore offers a variety of formats and prices for these books. Contact them for details. All supplemental readings will be provided by the instructor or will be accessible through the main library portal. Students should subscribe to the online or print version of *Government Executive* magazine, which is free of charge.

Tentative Course Schedule

Assignments are in the tentative course schedule (see below). Please complete all readings and assignments before the applicable class period. This schedule will serve as a guide but not a rigid constraint throughout the semester. Some topics will likely take less than the allotted time, while others may require more attention. Some minor rescheduling may also occur. Any changes to the syllabus or course schedule will be announced in advance. Students should check their UGA email inbox regularly for updates and other information pertinent to the course.