

**PADP 6910: Public Administration and Democracy  
Fall Semester 2017**

**101D Baldwin Hall  
Wednesday evenings, 6:50 – 9:50pm**

The University of Georgia  
School of Public and International Affairs  
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**Course Description and Objectives**

This course provides an introduction to public administration and helps students understand its place in the political system and its relationship to other political institutions and actors, including the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government, special interests, the media, and the public at large. The subject will mostly be addressed in the American context, but the points raised are often relevant to public administration practice in other countries around the world. Much of the coverage will focus on national government institutions and policies, but many examples of state and local administration will also be provided. Nonprofit organizations and business firms will also receive attention, especially when they fall under government regulation or enter the public square and help produce public goods and services.

A basic theme of the course is that the informed and skillful practice of public administration is enhanced by an understanding of the political context of government, and how this complex, dynamic political setting influences the work of public administrators. Conversely, public administrators can help shape the political environment since they implement public policy and deliver services to the public. This ‘give-and-take’ between politics and administration is the essence of our professional field. The course also provides background information about the political and administrative processes that enables students to better understand more specialized subjects within the field such as public budgeting and finance, human resource management, nonprofit administration, and policy analysis.

This course is more than an introductory survey of the various subfields and specialties of public administration. It provides a careful examination of the context, political significance, and enduring need for bureaucratic accountability, both in democratic governments and elsewhere. Another enduring theme is the demand for high performance. Yet performance problems often raise accountability concerns and can lead to the enactment of denser and stricter accountability rules. These reforms may solve the problem at hand, but their constraining nature can stifle public administrators’ creativity, innovativeness and performance. This resulting tension between accountability and performance is the major challenge facing public administrators. The

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<sup>1</sup> Office hours are by appointment, but please feel free to drop by and say hello anytime. Also feel free to contact me by telephone or email whenever necessary. Email usually works best.

course is thus helpful for beginning students who are exploring the scope of the field and learning how public administration works in a complex political environment.

The course is organized into four parts:

- Part I introduces Public Administration as a professional field that is a central part of governments everywhere, and includes coverage of its heritage and intellectual background. The “politics-administration dichotomy” is discussed in detail, the twin themes of bureaucratic accountability and performance are underscored, and their dueling relationship is emphasized.
- Part II explores “external accountability” mechanisms. This section imparts an understanding of the larger political system, particularly other institutions of government such as the executive, legislative, and judicial branches that are tasked with providing oversight and control of the bureaucracy. The political system and political process also influence how administrative institutions are structured and how they operate, thus influencing administrative management, decision-making, and policy implementation. Other influences on the administrative process such as the Constitution, special interests, the media, and the public are examined. Together, these influences may delineate a clear role for public administrators and provide a way to monitor their obedience; thus, it can be argued that they help ensure bureaucratic accountability and performance.
- Part III explores “internal accountability” mechanisms. Public administrators operate in a dynamic political environment that generates an enormous amount of bureaucratic activity that is often technical but not merely technocratic; it has major political ramifications that can promote – or in other cases undermine – the public good. In addition, public administrators have discretion and may condition their actions on their preferences about what is best for the public. It can thus be argued that public administrators with a strong moral compass, who are properly disposed both professionally and ethically, are themselves the best answer to the accountability and performance problems plaguing the field.
- Part IV explores some contemporary issues that are shaping the field of public administration going forward. These issues include globalism, the proliferation of information technology, the trend towards networked governance, and other challenges such as burgeoning social needs, cyber-attacks, civil unrest, persistent racism and xenophobia, terrorism, human trafficking, health pandemics, environmental degradation, energy shortages, and worldwide economic instability. The course concludes by raising some important normative questions about the role of public administration in government, including how it can contribute to or impede the goals being sought, which include high levels of accountability, probity, effectiveness, responsiveness, and serving the common good.

In summary, this course is designed to help students understand the larger significance of public administration in complex governmental settings, and also to improve their ability to analyze issues and operate effectively within the institutional matrix of modern public management by inculcating respect for and sensitivity to democratic principles and the public interest.

### **Class Sessions**

During class sessions, the instructor will present material, pose questions for discussion, guide the search for answers, help resolve disputes, and aid in the process of critical inquiry. On most weeks, themes will be introduced for discussion and possible debate. Students are expected to prepare for class and be active participants. Students will often lead discussions on assigned topics or readings, complete homework-type assignments, and participate in small group exercises. As mentioned below, attendance and the extent and quality of participation will influence final grades.

Students are encouraged to apply the theories and concepts learned in this course to their own individual fields of specialty or interest, and to draw from their own experience and offer relevant insights for the class to consider. Doing so will enrich the learning environment for all. Student laptop or tablet computers are permitted for note-taking, but web browsers, email software, and messaging apps must remain closed. Cell phones and other electronic devices should be turned off and stored out of sight at all times during class.

### **Grading System**

Each student will present a career biography PowerPoint presentation on a public or nonprofit administrator worth 10 percent of the final grade, a take-home midterm examination worth 30 percent, and a combined course project and take-home final examination worth 50 percent. The remaining 10 percent will be based on the student's attendance and participation in the course, and their contributions to group work. These elements are explained in more detail below.

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

### **Career Biography PowerPoint Presentation**

Each student will develop and present a career biography PowerPoint presentation on a public or non-profit administrator. For this assignment, students should select someone who is actively working in government or the nonprofit sector. Ideally, this person should be serving in a responsible position and working in an organization that reflects the student's professional aspirations and could potentially serve as a role model or mentor for the student, although this is not required. After identifying the person you would like to interview and obtaining my approval, you should contact the person and ask if they are willing to serve as the subject for the assignment. This includes granting you a live interview and providing you a resume and/or bio along with a face-shot photograph (unless one is publicly available). Students will utilize the data collected to develop a set of PowerPoints for an in-class presentation that introduces the person, explains their motivation to serve the public, and shares any career advice they offered. The PowerPoints should be uploaded to a designated cloud folder by the announced deadline and each presentation should last approximately 5-10 minutes. Late penalties will apply.

### **Midterm Examination**

Students will write an essay-type paper of 5-10 pages. The essay questions will be distributed one week before the due date. These questions will focus on major issues covered in the first half of the course. Students are expected to craft a thoughtful, well-informed response to the questions and write high quality essays that are stylistically and grammatically correct. 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 one Microsoft Word document which is submitted to the instructor by email. The papers should be formatted according to the American Psychological Association style guide, 6<sup>th</sup> edition. Shortened versions of this style guide are widely available on the internet. The papers will be graded based on presentation and content. Late penalties will apply.

### **Combined Course Project and Final Examination**

Students will identify a major performance failure or accountability lapse in the public sector that has occurred over the past few years and which most people are broadly familiar with. Students will then investigate the event and prepare a formal written report containing a synopsis of this problem, their assessment of the performance and accountability issues involved, and some action recommendations for both resolving the immediate crisis (if it still exists) and preventing future lapses of the same nature. In addition, several specific “final examination” questions must be answered in the report. These questions will be announced later in the semester. Students should write their report like a shortened U.S. General Accountability Office report (see <http://www.gao.gov/browse/>), including the essential elements needed and tailored for the specific purpose at hand. (Try to emulate the professional structure and tone of a GAO report, but not the unusual formatting.) The report should be a maximum of fifteen double-spaced, type-written pages with a standard 10- to 12-point type font and one-inch margins on all sides. All pages should be numbered and collated into one Microsoft Word document that is submitted to the instructor by email. Grading will be based on the quality and content of the report, and a brief classroom presentation on the topic. Late penalties will apply.

### **Attendance and Participation**

Students are expected to attend all class meetings and be on time. Late arrivals are especially disruptive. Students who miss excessive time should expect to receive a lowered grade in the course, regardless of their performance on graded assignments. As stated above, attendance and participation is a grading factor in the course. When scoring 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 assignments, and other activities, and how responsive they have been to course assignments and my specific requests during the semester.

### **Work Groups**

Permanent work groups will be formed early in the semester. These groups will remain intact throughout the semester and serve as support groups for their members when needed. The groups will lead classroom discussions on chapters from the Stillman book and other ad hoc readings shown on the syllabus, and they will complete other assignments as needed.

### **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 make reasonable accommodations.

### **Academic Honesty**

The ethical bar is set very high 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. Students should inform themselves about these standards before performing any academic work. More detailed information about academic honesty can be found at: <https://ovpi.uga.edu/academic-honesty>

### **Course Readings and Other Resources**

Required readings for the course are as follows:

- Donald F. Kettl, 2015. *Politics of the Administrative Process*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Washington, DC: Sage/CQ Press. Note: be sure to purchase the 6<sup>th</sup> edition.
- Richard J. Stillman II, 2010. *Public Administration: Concepts and Cases*, 9<sup>th</sup> ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. Note: be sure to purchase the 9<sup>th</sup> edition.
- Other readings listed on the course schedule and as assigned by the instructor. Most of these readings will be stored digitally on the e-Learning Commons (eLC) course website.
- Some podcasts and video documentaries may also be assigned. These items will usually be accessible through links provided on the course website.

Many other readings and digital media resources are available on the topics covered in this course. Any students who would like to undertake additional readings are encouraged to ask me for suggestions.

### **Tentative Course Schedule**

This syllabus provides a general plan for the course. The tentative course schedule shown below lists major topics and readings and the due dates of major assignments. Any changes will be announced in advance whenever possible. Students should check their UGA email inbox regularly for updates and other information pertinent to the course.