

POLS 4110: Government Failure?: The American Administrative State FALL 2023

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Office Hours: by appointment
Course Meeting Time and Room: T-TH 12:45 to 2:00pm, Baldwin 301

Course Description:

The size of the American administrative state has grown exponentially in the Post-FDR era. As the scope and complexity of American public policy increases, administrative agencies, such as the Social Security Administration (SSA) or the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), are required to promulgate rules and regulations as dictated by legislation. However, in carrying out their responsibilities, these administrative agencies must be responsive to the conflicting policy mandates of Congress, the President, the courts, and sometimes the public. Federal administrative activity gains the most attention when the federal government has apparently failed to meet the public's expectations of good and effective governance. Some notable examples include the failure to prevent the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) sluggish and ineffective response to Hurricane Katrina, controversies over the State Department's response to terrorist attacks in Benghazi, and the various crises facing the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). This course examines the politics of agency design, delegation, political oversight, and internal agency processes. We will discuss the structure and practices of the federal administrative structure and how federal agencies function. We will also discuss potential reforms and proposals to help government work efficiently and effectively.

This course has three main goals. First, students should gain in-depth knowledge of the structure of the federal executive branch, the federal executive personnel system, and the responsibilities of federal administration agencies. These responsibilities include rule creation, regulation, disaster response and prevention, education and occupational safety. Second, we will explore the concept of government failure. Specifically, what does it mean for a government to fail in its responsibilities? How does failure of government oversight differ from failure of government operation? Third, students will explore the tensions that permeate throughout the federal bureaucracy. Specifically, how does the struggle between the president and Congress affect the way in which bureaucracies carry out their responsibilities? What is red tape and why do we have it? How does internal bureaucratic contribute to efficient or problematic government performance.

Required Texts:

Clark, Anna. 2018. *The Poisoned City: Flint's Water and the American Urban Tragedy*. New York: Picador.

Cooper, Christopher, and Block, Robert. 2007. *Disaster: Hurricane Katrina and the Failure of Homeland Security*. New York: Times Books.

Grading Breakdown:

Exam 1: 20%

Exam 2: 20%

Exam 3: 20% (cumulative)

Failure Analysis Project: 25%

Proposal Paragraph: 1%

Peer Review: 4%

Final Draft: 20%

Participation: 12%

Discussion Posts: 3%

Grading Scale

100-94 A	89-87 B+	79-77 C+	69-67 D+	59-0 F
93-90 A-	86-83 B	76-73 C	66-63 D	
	82-80 B-	72-70 C-	62-60 D-	

Classroom Discussion and Dialogue

While I will periodically lecture throughout the semester, maintaining an open and vigorous class discussion is essential to the success of this seminar. Students are expected to make frequent and informed contributions to classroom discussions and dialogue. Participation grades will be assigned on the basis of knowledge of the readings, before class preparation, in-class discussion, and activities the instructor may define. To come prepared for class you should have done the reading, be able to synthesize the main arguments or findings, and form an opinion about whether it is correct or incorrect. *Is it true? Why or why not? How do you know? How does it relate to other readings or materials from the class? Why is it important?* Although I prefer volunteers, the instructor will call on students to contribute to classroom discussion. I highly recommend that students read national new outlets regularly.

To ensure that students are keeping up with each reading, the instructor may administer “pop” quizzes or short in-class writing assignments. The assignments will count as part of the participation grade.

Participation Grade Scale

A	Repeated excellent comments, demonstrated engagement with the literature
B	Good, solid participation
C	Some comments but shows lack of preparation
D	Attends but does not participate

Attendance

Students are granted four free absences. No explanation is required for use of free absences; however, I recommend notifying the instructor in advance if possible. Unexcused absences will reduce your overall participation grade by a 1/3 of a letter grade. Excused absences include doctor’s visit, religious observance, death in the family, etc. Students are also expected to arrive to class on time. Tardiness will also negatively affect your overall course grade. **A 3rd tardy (and subsequent tardies) will count as an unexcused absence.**

Classroom Decorum

My goal as the instructor is to cultivate an active and respectful learning environment where participants feel that their presence and input are valued. With this mind, I ask that we “treat others how we want to be treated” as we discuss and share our perspectives in class. Also to reduce distractions, I ask that students minimize travel in and out of room during class time. In addition, please use technology responsibly during class. Ensure that your cell phones are on silent before coming to class. Students are expected to refrain from texting and/or

surfing the internet on their phones while in class. Students can use laptops to take notes and are expected to remain attentive and active participants in class.

Academic Honesty

You are responsible for knowing and complying with the policy and procedures relating to academic honesty. I expect all students to abide by the University of Georgia Academic Honesty policy. Academic dishonesty can include plagiarism, unauthorized assistance on assignments, and falsifying academic work. For more detail about what constitutes academic honesty, and consequences for engaging in dishonest conduct be sure to revisit [Academic Honesty Policy | Home \(uga.edu\)](#).

Recording

Prohibition on Class Recordings and Distribution of Course Materials: Please do not take audio or video recordings of course lectures or discussions (live or Zoom) or repost any course materials (recorded, links, written) without my express permission. Doing so violates my and the University of Georgia's intellectual property and the privacy of your fellow classmates as protected under federal and state law.

Student Accommodations

If you plan to request accommodations for a disability, please register with the Disability Resource Center. They can be reached by visiting Clark Howell Hall, calling 706-542-8719 (voice) or 706-542-8778 (TTY), or by visiting <http://drc.uga.edu>.

Mental Health and Wellness Resources:

- If you or someone you know needs assistance, you are encouraged to contact Student Care and Outreach in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-7774 or visit <https://sco.uga.edu/>. They will help you navigate any difficult circumstances you may be facing by connecting you with the appropriate resources or services.
- UGA has several resources for a student seeking mental health services (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) or crisis support (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/info/emergencies>).
- If you need help managing stress anxiety, relationships, etc., please visit BeWellUGA (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) for a list of FREE workshops, classes, mentoring, and health coaching led by licensed clinicians and health educators in the University Health Center.
- Additional resources can be accessed through the UGA App

COURSE SCHEDULE

Date		Topic	Readings
Thursday	08/17/2023	Introduction	
Tuesday (Week 1)	08/22/2023	Understanding Government Failure	Light, Paul C. 2014. "A Cascade of Failures: Why Government Fails, and How to Stop It." <i>Fast and Furious (Obama) and NOAA (Trump)</i> (articles on eLC)
Thursday	08/24/2023	Understanding the Federal Executive Branch: Structure and Personnel	Carpenter, Dan. 2005. "The Evolution of the National Bureaucracy in the United States," pg. 41-66 (excerpt on eLC)
Tuesday (Week 2)	08/29/2023	Understanding the Federal Executive Branch: Structure and Personnel	Lewis, David E. 2008. <i>The Politics of Presidential Appointments</i> . Chapter 1-2(pages 1-43)
Thursday	08/31/2023	Presidents and Bureaucracy	Lewis, David E., and Terry M. Moe. 2010. "Struggling Over Bureaucracy: The Levers of Control," (on eLC) (excerpt) Attorney Firing Scandal (Bush II), Bureaucratic Management Challenges (Obama) (readings on eLC)
Tuesday (Week 3)	09/05/2023	Presidents and Bureaucracy	Potter, Rudalevige, Thrower, and Warber. 2022. "Not by the Numbers: Evaluating Trump's Administrative Presidency" (article on eLC)
Thursday	09/07/2023	Bureaucracy and Efficiency	Wilson, James Q. 1989. <i>Bureaucracy</i> . Ch 2. (p.25-26), Ch. 7(p. 112-122), Ch. 19 (346-353) (excerpts on eLC)
Tuesday (Week 4)	09/12/2023	Bureaucracy and Burden	Herd, Pamela and Moynihan. 2018. <i>Administrative Burden: "Understanding Administration Burden"</i> (excerpt on eLC)
Thursday	09/14/2023	Class Cancelled	Class Cancelled (assignment on eLC)
Tuesday (Week 5)	09/19/2023	Catch up and Review	Catch up and Review
Thursday	09/21/2023	EXAM 1	EXAM 1
Tuesday (Week 6)	09/26/2023	Bureaucratic Incoherence Case: 9/11	National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States. 2004. <i>9/11 Commission Report</i> . Chapter 1 Documentary: On Native Soil excerpt
Thursday	09/28/2023	Bureaucratic Incoherence Case: 9/11	National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States. 2004. <i>9/11 Commission Report</i> . Chapter 3 (p. 71-93), Chapter 8 Documentary: On Native Soil excerpt
Tuesday (Week 7)	10/03/2023	Red Tape and Standard Operating Procedures Case Study: Veterans Affairs	Wilson, James Q. 1989. <i>Bureaucracy</i> . Ch.7 (p.129-136) (excerpt on eLC) VA Articles (on eLC)
Thursday	10/05/2023	Red Tape and Standard Operating Procedures Case Study: Veterans Affairs	Hatte, Hensel, Kalcuza. 2019. "Emotional Responses to Bureaucratic Red Tape." (on eLC)
Friday	10/06/2023	Assignment Due	Research Proposal Due by 11:59pm
Tuesday (Week 8)	10/10/2023	Agency Environment and Adaptation Case Study: Benghazi	Wilson, James. 1989. <i>Bureaucracy</i> . Ch. 3 (excerpt on eLC) Benghazi Report (on eLC)
Thursday	10/12/2023	Agency Environment and Adaptation Case Study: Benghazi	Benghazi Report (on eLC)
Tuesday (Week 6)	10/17/2023	Bureaucracy and Emergency Response	Cooper, Christopher and Robert Block. 2007. <i>Disaster: Hurricane Katrina and the Failure of Homeland Security</i> . Documentary: The Storm
Thursday	10/19/2023	Bureaucracy and Emergency Response	Cooper, Christopher and Robert Block. 2007. <i>Disaster: Hurricane Katrina and the Failure of Homeland Security</i> . Documentary: The Storm
Tuesday (Week 10)	10/24/2023	Catch up and Review	Catch up and Review
Thursday	10/26/2023	EXAM 2	EXAM 2

Tuesday (Week 11)	10/31/2023	Congress and the Bureaucracy	Congress and Executive Branch Appointments (articles on eLC)
Thursday	11/02/2023	Congress and the Bureaucracy Case Study: The USPS	Wilson, James. 1989. Bureaucracy. Ch. 7 (p. 122-131) (excerpt on eLC) Congress, the Postal Service, and Privatization (articles on eLC)
Tuesday (Week 12)	11/07/2023	Political Conflict and Government Performance	Understanding Government Shutdowns (articles on eLC) Documentary and Discussion: Cliffhanger
Thursday	11/09/2023	Presidential & Bureaucratic Transitions	Articles on eLC
Tuesday (Week 13)	11/14/2023	Federal-State Oversight and Government Responsibility Case Study: Flint Michigan Water Crisis	Clark, Anna. 2018. <i>The Poisoned City</i> (excerpts on eLC)
Thursday	11/16/2023	Federal-State Oversight and Government Responsibility Case Study: Flint Michigan Water Crisis	Clark, Anna. 2018. <i>The Poisoned City</i> (excerpts on eLC)
Monday	11/20/2023	Assignment Due	Peer Review Draft by 11:59pm
Tuesday (Week 14)	11/21/2023	Research Day	Research Day
Thursday	11/23/2023	Thanksgiving (no class)	Thanksgiving (no class)
Tuesday (Week 15)	11/28/2023	In-class Peer Review	In-class Peer Review
Thursday (Final Class)	11/30/2023	The Way Forward? Semester Wrap-Up and Review	Light, Paul. 2009. A Government Ill-Executed (excerpt on eLC)
Tuesday	12/05/2023	Assignment Due	Final Failure Analysis Draft
FINAL EXAM	12/12/2023	FINAL EXAM	FINAL EXAM

This Schedule is TENTATIVE and subject to change with notice

ASSIGNMENTS

Notes on Assignments

Writing Format

I prefer that students use Chicago Style or MLA citations. IMPORTANT: I will not grade papers with missing or improper citations. Students should also use Times New Roman or Garamond 12-point font. All writing assignments should have 1-inch margins. All writing assignments must be submitted via Word Document. **Please do not submit papers as PDFs.**

Late Assignments and Exams

Late papers and assignments will be penalized by 1/3 of a letter grade for every 12-hour period that they are late (i.e. a B becomes a B-). You are expected to take exams on the day/time they are assigned. Make-up exams will be considered in cases of jury duty and emergency.

Assignment Authorship

Unauthorized use of artificial intelligence software, such as ChatGPT or word mixing software to write your paper or disguise plagiarized work is considered unauthorized assistance in this course.

Exams

The course will include 3 in-class exams. The exams are closed book; however, students are allowed a note sheet for each exam.

Discussion Posts

Twice during the semester students will post a detailed question and critique of the weekly reading. Each question and critique will be scored on a scale of 0 to 3. 0=missing, 1=unsatisfactory, 2=satisfactory, 3=excellent.

Failure Analysis Paper

Students will complete a 8 to 10 page research paper (excluding citations) that examines one of the instances of government failure described by Paul Light in his article “A Cascade of Failures: Why Government Fails, and How to Stop It.” The broad question that each student will explore is “How do we understand why failure X occurred and what policies can prevent such occurrence in the future?” With their project, students will examine one of Light’s cases based upon 2 of the 5 contributors to failure (page 11). In addition to analyzing a specific instance of failure, students will provide policy recommendations to prevent or reduce the occurrence of future failures (similar to their specific case). For example, if I am interested in examining the Postal Service Financial crisis, I could explore how policies and resources contributed to the financial difficulties experienced by the USPS. In their paper, students should have a clear thesis that provides their proposed policy recommendations. For example, with the USPS example, my policy recommendation could stipulate changes to the way in which the USPS is funded. With their project, Students are expected to use existing facts, data, and evidence for this project. Students are also expected to draw from course materials, scholarly sources, and if necessary, journalistic sources. Below is in an example structure for the final paper.

I. An **INTRODUCTION**

- a. What is my case?
- b. Which contributors to failure am I exploring?
- c. How did these contributors contribute to the specific failure in this case?
- d. What are my policy recommendations for these specific contributors? (Thesis)
- e. Roadmap of my paper

II. **AGENCY BACKGROUND** where the authors provides background on the creation, structure and mission of agency. The author can also briefly note controversies involving the agency not related to their specific failure analysis.

III. An **ANALYSIS/RECOMMENDATIONS** section where the author provides an in-depth examination of their case using 2 contributors specified by Light. Students must also provide policy recommendations in response to their analysis of their failure case.

IV. A **CONCLUSION** that summarizes the findings, and explains the implications of your work.

Additional components of the Failure Analysis Project

Research Paragraph Proposal

Approximately two paragraph statement of proposed failure case and 2 contributors. If possible, an example policy recommendation.

Peer Review Assignment

Students will read, review, and assess a draft paper of one of their peers. In order to receive full credit, each student must submit a draft of their paper that follows the specifications of the final paper assignment

(i.e. page length, format). In addition to discussion their comments and feedback in class. Students will provide a review memo to their reviewee.