Foundations of Public Administration
RPAD 500 – Fall 2016
Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy, SUNY Albany
Department of Public Administration and Policy

Dr. Ellen V. Rubin
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Class time: Wednesday, 5:45 to 9:25
Class location: Husted 210
Office location: Milne Hall 314B
Office phone: 442-5261
Office Hours: Tuesdays 4:00-5:00, and by appointment

Course Description

This course is designed to provide students an introduction to the field of public administration, including its practice, themes and values, and contemporary challenges. Public administration is government in action, as broadly defined by Woodrow Wilson in 1887. Public administration includes activities taken directly by government, or indirectly by its partners, to meet the democratically expressed needs of the public. These activities include policy design, implementation, evaluation of outcomes, and re-design or re-direction.

By the end of the course, students should be able to analyze and evaluate the 1) relationship and tensions between politics and administration, 2) various means for assuring administrative accountability and responsiveness, and 3) challenges associated with implementing public programs through both governmental and non-governmental actors. It is intended that students will leave the course with a substantive, applied understanding of the values and practice of public administration.

Text Books

• Required

• Recommended

• Additional readings will be made available through the course Blackboard site, which can be accessed through MyUAlbany.

• I also recommended you frequently read a major American newspaper (online editions are fine), such as the *New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, Chicago Tribune*, etc.
Communication

Communication outside of scheduled class meetings and office hours will occur primarily over email. Students are expected to check their email every day. The best way to contact me outside of class is by email. Meetings outside of class and office hours should be scheduled by appointment. All class-related activities, including class and group discussions, emails and assignments should be conducted in business standard English.

Grading

Student performance in the course will be determined by 3 components:

- Three Short Essays, 75% (see appendix I),
- Weekly Commentaries and News Briefs, 15% (see appendix II), and
- Participation, 10% (see appendix III).

Attendance. Attendance is required and necessary for your success in the course. Any student with 3 unexcused absences will lose 5% from their final grade. A student with more than 3 unexcused absences will have a notation placed on the transcript indicating you stopped attending class. The instructor reserves the right to drop you from the class if you have more than three absences. Absences will only be excused under certain circumstances, such as an unplanned health emergency, in case of religious observance, or for an authorized intercollegiate event. Documentation is required to have an absence excused.

Grading Scale. Each student’s final grade will be determined by a weighted average of the points earned. For example, assume a student earned the following grades: 100 for participation, an average of 90 on the short essays, and 70 for the weekly commentaries. She also missed 3 classes. The student’s grade would be calculated as follows:

\[(100 \times .1) + (90 \times .7) + (70 \times .2) = 87 - 5 = 82 \text{ (B-)}\]

Note that she would have earned a B+ if she attended class more frequently.

A: 93 percent and above
A-: 90 to 92 percent
B+: 87-89 percent
B: 83-86 percent
B-: 80-82 percent
C+: 77-79 percent
C: 73-76 percent
C-: 70-72 percent
D+: 67-69 percent
D: 63-66 percent
D-: 62-60 percent
E: below 60 percent

Grade Appeals. Students may appeal a grade on a specific assignment within two weeks of the assignment being returned. To submit an appeal, the student should return the original graded assignment and a letter/memo outlining why you think the grade should be changed. Appeals must be submitted on paper, typed-written. In the appeal, students must identify 1) the specific issue you believe should be reconsidered and 2) evidence from assignment instructions, assigned readings, lectures, or other materials that would indicate your original submission is worthy of a higher grade. Be aware that your grade may go up, down, or remain the same as a result of your appeal.
**Academic Honesty.** Academic honesty is something your professor takes very seriously. Cheating in any form will not be tolerated. Students are required to be familiar with the university’s academic honesty policies; ignorance is not an excuse for dishonest behavior. In all cases of cheating, a Violation of Academic Integrity Report will be submitted to the Dean of Graduate Studies to be placed in your university file, with copies provided to you, the department head, and the Dean of Rockefeller College. Additional penalties may include some combination of the following: revision and re-submission of the assignment, reduction of the grade or failure of the assignment, reduction of the course grade or failure of the course, filing of a case with the Office of Conflict Resolution and Civic Responsibility, suspension, or expulsion.

**Other Course Policies**

- It is your instructor’s goal to conduct class in an environment that is welcoming to all perspectives. Please treat your fellow students with the respect you want to receive.
- Students with needs consistent with the Americans with Disability Act should inform the instructor during the first week of class so that reasonable accommodations can be made.
- This syllabus serves as a general outline. The instructor reserves the right to deviate from the plan if necessary. Students will be notified promptly of any modifications.
- Arrive to class on time. Arriving late is disruptive to both the instructor and your classmates.
- Turn off all cell phones, iPods/MP3 players, and anything that beeps and/or vibrates during class. If there is an emergency which requires you to leave your cell phone on during class, notify your instructor before class begins.

**Course Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>August 31</th>
<th>Topic: Introduction to Course</th>
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| September 7        | **Topic:** The Foundations of Public Administration  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings and Notes</th>
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</table>
| September 21 | Strategic Management                       | - Moore, chapters 1, 2, and 3  
- Case: Managing Cutbacks at the Department of Social and Health Services |
- Case: Elusive Community in South Park, Parts A & B |
| ESSAY#1 DUE |                                             |                                                                                     |
| October 5   | Decisionmaking in a Political Environment   | - Moore, Chapter 4 and pages 135-151  
- Please skim the Cutbacks case from September 21 again.  
- Case: Puget Sound Water Quality Authority. |
| October 12  |                                             | University closed for Yom Kippur – Class canceled                                   |
| October 19 | **Topic:** Equity and Fairness  
- Case |

| October 26 | **Topic:** Direct Government: Street-Level Bureaucrats  
- Case: Prosecutorial discretion in the Immigration Customs Enforcement Agency (ICE) |

| November 2 | **Topic:** Direct Government: Managing and Motivating Public Employees  
- Case: Recruitment at Southwood School |

ESSAY#2 DUE
| November 9 | **Topic:** Government by Proxy: Contracting  
- Case: Hurricane Katrina and Housing Contracts:  
  - Collection of news articles on the “toxic trailers”  
*** Read only the highlights page, and pgs 1-11 |
| November 16 | **Topic:** Government by Proxy: Service Networks  
| November 23 | No Class – Happy Thanksgiving! |
### November 30

**Topic:** Government by Proxy: Cross-Sector Networks

  - NOTE: This model is covered in the Simo & Beis reading below in a shorter format. If you have to make choices about what you read, you may begin with the Simo & Beis reading and refer back to this one if you need greater clarification of the model.
- Case: Commute Partnerships

### December 7

**Topic:** Government by Proxy: Meta-Governance


### December 14

**ESSAY #3 DUE**

No class
Appendix I: Short Essays

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essay</th>
<th>One Page Summary Due (Blackboard Only)</th>
<th>Final Paper Due (Blackboard and hard copy)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essay 1</td>
<td>Wed Sept 21 before class</td>
<td>Wed Sept 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay 2</td>
<td>Wed Oct 26 before class</td>
<td>Wed Nov 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay 3</td>
<td>Wed Dec 7 before class</td>
<td>Wed Dec 14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overview. To assess your understanding of the course material and your ability to apply concepts to real life cases of government action, students will write three essays during the semester. The essays will require students to conduct independent research and analysis. Additional details about the exact questions and formatting will be distributed separately. Together, the essays constitute 75% of the student’s grade for the course.

Pre-Writing Tasks. To improve the quality of essays, students will have two opportunities for feedback before each essay is submitted, in addition to the detailed feedback provided on graded essays.

First, one week before each essay is due, students should submit a one-page summary of the major arguments of your essay and receive feedback from Dr. Rubin. Summaries are to be submitted electronically only, through Blackboard. The summaries are to be written in complete sentences and paragraphs and no longer than one page, including citations. You may choose to structure the summary in the PAD 507 memo format. Dr. Rubin will provide feedback on the summaries within 72 hours of the deadline, via Blackboard.

Second, students will engage in peer feedback using the grading rubrics for each essay. Students are to meet in their groups before the essay is due, read each other’s essays, and complete a rubric for each member of your team. You are strongly encouraged to provide additional constructive suggestions beyond the marking of the rubrics. When submitting each final essay, students are to staple the completed rubrics to the back of the paper copy of the final essay as evidence of the peer review.

Grading. Rubrics will be provided for each essay and posted on the course Blackboard page. In general, submissions will be assessed according to the degree to which the student 1) answers the question in a sophisticated manner, 2) illustrates a complete understanding of the course material, 3) uses evidence to support arguments, 4) presents a well-organized and professional paper, and 5) follows formatting and citation guidelines.

Each individual essay will be weighted equally in calculating the grade at the end of the semester. For example, student X earns grades of 89, 92, and 95 on the three essays and completed all pre-writing activities. This student’s grade for the essays would be calculated as \((89+92+95)/3 = 92\).
The two pre-writing exercises are intended to improve the quality of student essays. Students may choose to not complete these activities due to time constraints or other reasons. However, failure to engage in the pre-writing tasks will negatively impact your essay grade. For example, a student earns a B+ on a paper overall. Normally, this is recorded in the grade book as an 89. Let’s say he only completed one of the two pre-writing tasks on the essay. As a result, the grade would be recorded as an 87; this is still a B+, but it is now a low B+.

*Formatting.* The length of each assignment will be specified when the details are distributed separately. Papers are to be double-spaced, 12 point font, and pages are to be numbered. Pages are to be stapled together. Please do not use plastic report covers. Neither cover pages nor the bibliography counts towards page length. Tables and figures can be provided if necessary to support your arguments; they should be placed at the end of the paper.

*Submission of papers.* Each final essay is due at the beginning of class on the designated date. Electronic versions of the paper are to be submitted via the SafeAssign link in Blackboard before class. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure the electronic file is readable and not corrupted. Please note: once you hit the submit button in SafeAssign, you cannot go back and submit a different version.

*Late Assignments.* An assignment is considered late if the paper copy is not submitted at the beginning of class, if the electronic file is not submitted before class, and/or if the electronic file is not readable. Assignments (electronic or hard copy) submitted 10 minutes after the beginning of class will be considered late and will be automatically reduced by 10%. Papers submitted one day after the due date will be automatically reduced by 20%; essays submitted two days after the assigned date will be reduced by 30%, etc. Exceptions will be made for extreme health and family emergencies. It is better to submit essays early rather than late, so please plan ahead if you know you will be missing a class session in which an essay is due.

*Citations.* Include a bibliography in each essay. Students are to cite sources in a manner consistent with academic honesty policies. Your professor would rather you include many citations rather than too few. As a general rule of thumb, provide a citation for something you did not know before you began your research. In-text citations and the bibliography should be formatted in MLA style. See the recommended *MLA Handbook* for assistance in using MLA style or other on-line help sheets such as:

- [http://library.albany.edu/cfox?type=mla](http://library.albany.edu/cfox?type=mla)
- [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/)

When citing government documents, follow the formatting guidelines in *Rubin’s Modified MLA Formatting for Government Documents*, posted on Blackboard.
Acceptable Sources. Generally, your research should use primary sources more than secondary sources. Primary sources include, but are not limited to: government reports, legislative hearings and testimonies, court decisions, and government auditor reports. Secondary sources are summaries and interpretations of primary sources. Secondary sources include, but are not limited to, articles from major newspapers and news magazines, network and cable news programs, and academic research. Blogs and Wikipedia are not acceptable sources. Be an intelligent consumer of information by evaluating secondary sources for potential political bias. If it is well known that a particular source is liberal or conservative, you must compensate for this in the paper. Acknowledge its bias and balance the information with something from a source on the other side of the political spectrum. Here are some places to start with your research, but feel free to consult other sources:

- Congressional testimony (available through Lexis/Nexis via the library) and reports completed by Congressional committee staff
- Agency Inspector General reports
- Congressional Research Service reports (opencrs.com and scattered elsewhere around the internet)

Appendix II: Weekly Reading Commentaries and News Briefs

Commentaries and news briefs will constitute 15% of the student’s semester grade.

Commentaries

There are two primary purposes for the weekly commentaries: 1) to hold students accountable for completing the assigned reading, and 2) to provide information to your instructor which will influence the content of class discussions.

Students are required to submit 2 comments or questions illustrating comprehension of the assigned material each week. Students can choose to submit 2 questions, 2 comments, or one of each. Comments can focus on something you find interesting, surprising, disagree with, etc. Additionally, comments may “connect the dots” between assigned readings and the various cases we will discuss during the semester. Importantly, the commentaries should not be summaries of the reading. Instead they should reflect your thoughts and analysis on the week’s topic and cases. For example, why do you find a particular topic interesting? How does the reading help you reflect on something in the news recently? How does the reading help you understand the case more effectively? Is there something you disagree with and why? Etc. Questions can also indicate a topic you find confusing and why you are unclear on the matter.
Submission. Commentaries are due the day before class. They are to be submitted no later than 24 hours before the scheduled class time, and are to be submitted through Blackboard, in electronic form only. Of the 12 weeks of assigned reading, students are to submit commentaries for 10 of the 12 weeks. Each comment/question should be 4-10 sentences in length. Late commentaries will not be accepted, except in extreme cases of a health or family emergency.

Grading. Each week’s commentaries are worth 10 possible points, with 5 points possible for each comment/question submitted. Submissions will be graded according to the following criteria: 1) did the student submit two comments/questions, 2) to what degree do the comments/questions represent independent analysis, and 3) to what degree do the comments/questions reflect the content of the assigned reading.

News Briefs

Students are required to write and present one news brief during the semester with another student. The news brief must draw on a real-life example that is currently in the news and that relates to the readings for that day. Depending on the number of students in the class, some sessions may have two news briefs presented.

Your news brief should summarize the key points of a current news story, and make two points or raise two questions about the story based on the reading. For example, if the day’s reading is about public participation, you could bring in a news story about participatory budgeting and discuss how well it is designed. We will assign students to topics and dates during the first class of the semester.

Presentation. The news brief will be delivered orally in class in a presentation lasting no longer than 10 minutes. Both students should participate in the delivery of the presentation. Students are expected to practice their presentations with their partners ahead of time and deliver the material in a profession and poised manner. All news briefs should be created in Power Point with no more than one title slide and five additional slides. At the conclusion of the formal presentation, the student team should have 2-4 discussion questions linking the case to the readings. These should be open-ended questions that encourage debate, reflection, analysis and/or application, not yes/no types of questions.

Submission. Students must get the instructor’s permission to use a specific news story for the news brief. Students should submit the topic and one representative news story the week before you are scheduled to present. This should be emailed to Dr. Rubin before class.

The final news brief is due 24 hours before the scheduled class. The final brief should be emailed to Dr. Rubin. The Power Point slides and a brief discussion outline (1 page single-spaced or added as notes to the slides) will serve as the submitted news brief.

Grading. News briefs will be counted as equivalent to two additional commentaries (20 points). I will assess the news briefs based on four criteria: 1) you clearly explain the news story, 2) you clearly relate the story to course readings, 3) you raise relevant questions about the course readings, and 4) the presentation is delivered professionally.
Appendix III: Participation

Participation in the course constitutes 10% of the student’s semester grade. This will be based on substantive contributions to class discussions and small group exercises.

According to Martha Maznevski (1996) at the University of Virginia, the ultimate goal of class participation is for students to learn from each other:

Active involvement in learning increases what is remembered, how well it is assimilated, and how the learning is used in new situations. In making statements to peers about their own thoughts on a class topic, students must articulate those thoughts and also submit them to examination by others. In listening to their peers, students hear many different ways of interpreting and applying class material, and thus are able to integrate many examples of how to use the information (p. 1).

Maznevski (1996) suggests that high-quality participation is characterized by the following:

- Demonstrates good preparation: knows case or reading facts well, has thought through implications of them;
- Contributes well to discussions: responds to other students' points, thinks through own points, questions others in a constructive way, offers and supports suggestions that may be counter to the majority opinion; and
- Offers analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of case material, e.g., puts together pieces of the discussion to develop new approaches that take the class further (p. 3).

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Appendix IV MPA Core Competencies

On the first day of Welcome Week and at the beginning of PAD 507, students are introduced to the five competencies identified by the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA). The competencies and their supporting descriptions are posted on Blackboard. Overall, the competencies are intended to ensure MPA students are well-rounded academically and professionally in the core subject areas important to the field.

What are competencies?
- Competencies are integrative. Competencies are a bundle of knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviors that, when fully integrated, define successful performance. Competencies are broader than knowing how to use Excel or being able to define what marginal cost means.
- Competencies describe the characteristics of the person who does the job best. In this way, competencies describe the whole person and their total performance. Competencies are broader than job tasks.

The five NASPAA competencies are:
#1 The ability to lead and manage in public governance
#2: To participate in and contribute to the policy process
#3 To analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make decisions
#4 To articulate and apply a public service perspective
#5 To communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry

This course is designed to build student competency in all five areas. For example:
- Competency #1: In this course we will discuss the importance of defining organizational strategy and using that strategy to make decisions. We will spend a great deal of time discussing accountability and different means for achieving it. A number of weeks will be spent discussing third-party government and how to manage in this type of delegated environment.
- Competency #2: In multiple class sessions we will discuss the importance of identifying and evaluating stakeholders, and developing strategies for different types of involvement in the decisionmaking process.
- Competency #3: Through extensive use of case studies, we will analyze public management and policy problems by discussing the mistakes and successes of others. Students will be asked to divide problems into different parts, analyze the problems from the perspectives of different stakeholders, and develop proposed solutions.
- Competency #4: Students will explore questions of equity and inclusiveness through the use of cases and debates regarding the appropriate use of discretion by public servants. In various assignments throughout the course, students will analyze the competing values in public administration in specific cases and how different emphases may generate different results.
- Competency #5: Writing assignments will require students to evaluate cases, use evidence to support arguments, and to communicate analyses in a highly-organized manner. Work in small-groups will develop skills in working with diverse groups and providing constructive feedback.