PAD 550: Foundations of Government Information Strategy and Management

Fall 2013
Monday 2:45 – 5:35 PM
Husted 017

Instructor
Prof. Sharon Dawes
Milne 300
Rockefeller College
Center for Technology in Government.
187 Wolf Rd.

voice (518) 442-3892
fax (518) 442-3886
e-mail sdawes@ctg.albany.edu

Office hours in Milne: Mondays 1:00 – 2:30 and by appointment

Course Overview

This course focuses on the ways that information strategies and management approaches affect governmental functions, democratic processes, and public programs. It introduces students to the interaction of policy, management, data, and technology in the design, operation, and evaluation of government operations, citizen engagement, and public services. The course draws from the literature and experiences of both public and private sector management to explore organizational, government-wide, societal, and global topics. Case studies illustrate policy, management, data, and technology at work in single organizations and in different kinds of cross-boundary settings.

Course Objectives

By the end of the semester, students will:

1. Be familiar with current and emerging issues and opportunities inherent in the public sector information environment.
2. Understand the four domains of knowledge that constitute the public sector information environment: policy, management, data, and technology
3. Demonstrate, through analysis and discussion of case studies and practical problems, how these domains interact to shape the challenges, options, and actions available to government managers in single organizations and in multi-organizational and cross-sector settings.
4. Synthesize and present original work on these themes through a student-selected project.
Readings

Most required course readings are found on Blackboard or provided as handouts. These include selected news stories, articles from scholarly and trade publications, material from professional associations, and case studies. Several additional required readings are available for purchase from www.Xanedu.com.

Course Blog

In addition to the specific assignments listed below, each student will maintain a blog on Blackboard to explore ideas and get feedback from your peers. Each student will post at least 3 original blogs and post at least 5 comments on other students’ blogs. You can do these at any time but I strongly advise you to spread them out over the semester. Choose any topics that interest you from the readings, class discussion, current events, personal experiences, etc. There are only four rules for your blog posts: (1) the topic must pertain to the course, (2) the blog is long enough (at least several paragraphs) to make sense on its own, (3) you give it an informative title, and (4) you are responsive to comments. You can include text, images, videos, and links to make your point. Your comments on others’ blog posts need to be substantive and professional in order to count toward the required 5 comments. This blog is internal to the course so if you have never blogged before, remember you are among colleagues, so don’t be intimidated. You can find advice and examples of good (and not so good) blogs on the web.

Course Content

August 26 – Introduction to the course
Introductions
Review of syllabus
Instructions for Blackboard, blog, and readings
Opening exercise

September 2 – No Class – Labor Day

September 9 – The public sector information environment
A look at the historical development of government in the digital age, including promises, accomplishments, and disappointments

Assignments due:
Discussion Board: Introduce yourself and your interest in this course

September 16 – Multi-dimensional thinking
Overview of six interacting themes of government information strategy and management: strategy, policy, data, skills, costs, and technology.
Application of the themes to a major public policy initiative – open data
September 23 – Information policy overview

Assignments due:
Find 3-5 recent news items with information policy implications, categorize them according the Galvin Model, bring them to class.

September 30 – Information policy in action
Case: “A Concerned Citizen”
Class discussion: information policy implications of the Toxics Release Inventory

Assignments due:
1. Submit written case analysis of “A Concerned Citizen” in or before class. (Full case assignment on Blackboard)
2. Explore the TRI website to prepare for class discussion.

October 7 – Information, technology and organizational effectiveness
Evaluating information systems for organizational effectiveness
Roles, responsibilities, and competencies
Using a business case to connect information strategy with organizational mission

October 14 – No Class – Columbus Day

October 21 – Reality Check: a conversation with experts
This class meeting will focus on a panel of leaders and managers from the public, private, and civil sectors to discuss their views and experiences in managing, using, and evaluating information and technology policies, strategies, and initiatives

Assignment due:
Post at least two questions for the panel on the class discussion board.

October 28 – Information systems in organizations
Case: “Electronic Medical Records System Implementation at Stanford Hospital and Clinics”

Assignments due:
Submit written case analysis in or before class. (Full case assignment on Blackboard)
November 4 – Using information and technology to implement public policy
Cases:
- “Inciting a Computer Revolution in Health Care: Weighing the Merits of the Health Information Technology Act”
- “Inciting a Computer Revolution in Health Care: Implementing the Health Information Technology Act”

Assignement due:
Prepare for class discussion by considering the two cases using the public value framework

November 11 – Using information and technology for strategic change
Information and technology as assets for shaping and guiding strategic policy initiatives
Incentives for and barriers to using information strategically
Case: “A policy maker’s database”

Assignement due:
Submit written case analysis in or before class. (Full case assignment on Blackboard)

November 18 – Government and society: impact of open government and social media
A look at transparency, open government initiatives, social networking and other Web 2.0 tools and their potential for changing the way government organizations acquire, manage, and use information internally as well as their potential for changing relationships among government, the market, and society.

Assignement due:
Two-page paper: What are the 2-3 most important benefits and risks of the open government movement from different perspectives? (Full assignment on Blackboard)

November 25 – Global perspectives
Issues associated with information and technology across national and cultural boundaries. Cultural differences in the concepts and application of e-government and e-governance.

Assignement due:
Compare selected developed and developing countries (Full assignment on Blackboard)

December 2 – Future prospects for digital age government
From government to governance, ‘e’ or not, prospects for future evolution

December 9 – To be announced
**Student evaluation and grading**

This course has no tests or final exam. Instead, your work will be evaluated throughout the semester on a variety of assignments. You will receive feedback often, so you will know how well you are doing. Three short written assignments are required in which students will analyze cases (Concerned Citizen, Stanford Hospital EMR System, Policy Maker’s Database). These three analyses should be **4-5 double-spaced pages**. The three papers together are worth 40% of your final grade. Several short assignments will represent 20% of your final grade. The frequency and quality of your contributions to the class learning environment represent 15% of your final grade. I will evaluate your contribution as a combination of engagement with the topics and engagement with the ideas of your fellow students and guest speakers, including your interactions in class and on your blog Your blog posts and your comments on other blogs will make up the final 25% of your grade.

Your final grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

- Frequency and quality of contributions to class discussions and the overall learning environment of the course (15%).
- Three case analyses (40%)
- Short assignments (20%)
- Your blog posts and comments (25%)

**Course policies**

This course requires that you work both individually and collaboratively with your fellow students. The interaction of the case discussions and group exercises is a form of learning by collaboration and represents a significant fraction of your final grade. Case discussions, classroom exercises, activity on the electronic discussion board and/or wiki, and interaction with guest experts are **active learning methods**. They require that you actively engage with one another, with our guests, and with me during each class session. These discussions are your opportunity to test your own ideas, and to question and clarify what you’ve heard or read. These discussions contribute to 15% of your final grade so they really matter. Here are some guidelines and suggestions:

- Read the assignments and think critically about them. Ask yourself: What are the big lessons or principles? What are alternative models or choices for action? What are the advantages and disadvantages?
- Use the readings to enrich your understanding of the cases and bring them into our discussions.
- Be a good listener – this is more than being polite and quiet while others speak – it means really hearing what they are saying and actively comparing their ideas to your own.
- Make points that are relevant to the discussion and link them to the comments of others. Ask other people what they think about your ideas and why they think the way they do.
- Test your ideas – don’t limit yourself to making statements that simply restate facts without offering analysis or conclusions – go out on a limb and say what you think and why.
- Use some of your comments in our discussions to clarify, summarize, and make associations across the various cases, concepts, and readings and opinions.
• Share additional readings, resources, or other material relevant to the class. You can do this in class or by using the discussion board or wiki.
• Use class meetings and the discussion board and wiki to engage in discussion and share your ideas.

Written assignments can be submitted in class or via e-mail as an attached file, in Microsoft Word format. E-mail submissions must be made before the class meeting time on the day they are due. My email address is sdawes@ctg.albany.edu.

Text in papers should be double-spaced with one-inch page margins. Please observe the page limits for each assignment. When the assignment calls for 4-5 pages, you won’t get more credit for writing 7-8 – in fact, you’ll get less. These short writing assignments require you to select and focus on important factors, and to present them in a well-organized way. By the way, spelling and grammar DO count because they affect the quality of your communication, so review your work carefully (or ask someone else to review it) before handing it in. If you need help with your writing, see the writing guide on Blackboard, or contact the writing center. If your first language is not English, you may want to recruit a native English-speaker to review your assignments before you hand them in.

I run the course on an honor system and therefore consider any case of plagiarism to be a most serious ethical issue. An incident of plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the course with the possibility of further action being pursued at the university level. I feel very strongly about this issue, so if you have any question about this topic, I encourage you to discuss it with me as soon as it comes up.

The due dates for assignments are absolute. I regard these as professional obligations and expect you to observe them scrupulously, except under extreme extenuating circumstances. Written assignments submitted after the due dates will be accepted only at my discretion and may result in an “incomplete.” If accepted, late submissions will be reflected in a lower grade for the assignment.

NOTE on pre-requisites:

The course content presumes that you are familiar with the principles, structures, and processes of American government and administration. Students who do not have the pre-requisites for this course (PAD 500 or PAD 506) must also choose one of the following books (or a similar one) to gain the needed background knowledge:

