Course Description

People are an asset critical to the functions of government. Effective personnel management requires investing in these assets in a manner that helps an agency accomplish its mission. In the public sector, personnel management requires working within the confines of the law to provide a diverse workforce that is effective and fair. In addition to civil servants being a strategic asset, public personnel management is a key tool for holding civil servants accountable for serving the public. This occurs in a politicized environment and requires managing the tension between merit and patronage.

This semester will include an overview of the context in which public personnel management is administered and an exploration of core functions and activities. Case studies and exercises will be used to highlight the tensions, responsibilities, and tasks of personnel management. Students will complete the course with an understanding of the political context of public personnel management, its strategic importance to mission accomplishment, and the interrelatedness of the core functions.

Text Books

- Required Book

- Recommended

Additional readings will be made available through the course web page on Blackboard, which can be accessed from MyUAlbany.
Communication

Students are invited to ask questions in class and during office hours. 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. Emails and assignments should be written 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, 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 or family 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:

\[(100 \times 0.1) + (90 \times 0.7) + (70 \times 0.2) = 87 - 5 = 82\] (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. 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 the assigned readings and/or lectures that would indicate your original answer 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, 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 would 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 electronic devices during class. If there is an emergency which requires you to leave the electronic device on during class, notify your instructor before class begins.

Course Schedule

1/28  Introduction to Public Personnel Management

2/4  Core Values of the Civil Service
    2. Pendleton Act

2/11  The Law of Public Personnel Management
    1. NNK Chapter 8
    3. Case of students’ choice
2/18 Fostering Inclusiveness and Confronting Discrimination
1. NNK Chapter 9
2. Pynes Chapter 4
5. Case: Decisionmaking in the Academy
6. Topic of student’s choice

2/25 No Class

3/4 **Essay #1 Due**

Strategic Workforce Planning
1. Pynes Chapter 2
5. Case: Valley Technology

3/11 NYS Civil Service

Guest Speakers: Blaine Ryan-Lynch, Director of the Staffing Services Division, and Nancy Kiyonaga, the Director of the Office of Commission Operations and Municipal Assistance, New York State Department of Civil Service

3/18 No class. Enjoy your spring break!
3/25 Labor Relations
2. NNK Chapter 7 (208-228)
5. Case: Labor Management Cooperation at the Los Angeles Bureau of Sanitation, parts A and B.

4/1 Recruiting and Testing
1. Pynes, Chapter 7

4/8 Essay #2 Due

Job Analysis and Classification
1. NNK Chapter 5 (read only pgs. 123-146)
2. Pynes Chapter 6 (read only pgs. 164-178)
4/15  Compensation
1. Pynes Chapters 9 and 10
2. NNK Chapter 5 (146-158) and Chapter 6 (182-193)
4. Readings on public pensions systems

Guest Speaker: Nick Vagianelis, Retired Director, Division of Classification and Compensation, New York State Department of Civil Service (tentative)

4/22  Employee Performance Appraisal I
1. Pynes Chapter 8
2. Grote, Chapter 1-4

4/29  Employee Performance Appraisal II
1. Grote Chapter 5-7

5/6  Essay #3 Due

Employee Performance Appraisal III
1. Grote Chapters 8-10
Appendix I: Short Essays

Essay #1 due March 4
Essay #2 due April 8
Essay #3 due May 6

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. Each essay will require students to use coursework to understand different personnel management dilemmas. The essays will require students to conduct independent research. Additional details about the exact questions and formatting will be distributed separately.

Grading. Each essay will be weighted equally in calculating the grade at the end of the semester. Students must complete all three essays. Rubrics will be provided for each essay and posted on the course Blackboard page. In general, submissions will be assessed according to 1) the degree to which the student answered the question in a sophisticated manner, 2) the degree to which the student illustrates a complete understanding of the course material, 3) overall organization and professionalism of the paper, and 4) the degree to which formatting and citation guidelines are followed.

Submission of papers. Each essay is due at the beginning of class on the designated date. Electronic versions of the paper are to be submitted via the SafeAssign function in Blackboard before class. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure the electronic file is readable and not corrupted. Paper copies are to be submitted at the beginning of class. 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. Papers (electronic or hard copy) submitted 10 minutes after the beginning of class will be considered late and will be automatically reduced by half a letter grade. Papers submitted one day after the due date will be automatically reduced by one full letter grade; papers submitted two days after the assigned date will be reduced by one and a half letter grades, etc. Exceptions will be made for extreme health and family emergencies. It is better to submit your paper early rather than late, so please plan ahead if you know you will be missing a class session in which a paper is due.

Formatting. The length of each assignment will be specified when the details are distributed separately. Papers are to use 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.
**Citations.** Include a bibliography when necessary. 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://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/
http://www.library.cornell.edu/resrch/citmanage/mla

When citing government documents, follow the formatting guidelines in *Rubin’s Modified MLA Formatting for Government Documents*, posted on Blackboard.

The following academic journals may be helpful in your research:


Note: Wikipedia and blogs are *not* acceptable sources.
Appendix II: Weekly Reading Commentaries

Weekly commentaries constitute 15% of the student’s semester grade. 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 or current events. 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 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 6pm Monday evenings, and are to be submitted through the Assignments area in 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.

Grading. Each week’s commentaries are worth a possible 10 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.
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. According to Martha Maznevski (1996) at the University of Virginia,\(^1\) 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).