Course Overview

US News and World Report ranks Rockefeller College third (3rd) in the nation in Information Technology and Management among Graduate Schools of Public Affairs. Our Government Information Strategy and Management (GISM) specialization addresses public policy and management innovations that are the consequence of rapidly changing information and communication technologies (ICTs) and dramatic changes in the nature, amount, and availability of information in government and society. More information about the concentration could be found at http://www.albany.edu/rockefeller/nationally_ranked_mpa_program_concentration_information_management.shtml

This course focuses on the ways that information strategies and technology management 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 programs, citizen engagement, and public services, considering their specific context. The course draws from the literature and experiences of public, non-for-profit, and private sector management to explore organizational, government-wide, societal, and global topics in the digital era. 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 and the technology choices available.
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 student assignments.

Readings

Most required course readings are found in Blackboard. These include selected news stories, articles from scholarly and trade publications, materials from professional associations, and case studies. Two required cases are available for purchase from www.Xanedu.com (see instructions in Blackboard) and one case has to be purchased directly from Harvard Business Publishing: Electronic Medical Records System Implementation at Stanford Hospital and Clinics. Mendelson, Haim; Zenios, Stefanos; Denend, Lyn. Case No. OIT103. Published 12/14/2010, Graduate School of Business Stanford University, (31 pages).

Student Blogs

In addition to the specific assignments listed below, each student will maintain a blog to explore ideas and get feedback from your peers. Your blogs are meant to be thoughtful ongoing conversations throughout the semester. Each student will post at least 3 original blogs and post at least 12 comments on other students’ blogs. You can choose when to post your blogs and comments within several windows of time throughout the semester: Your first blog is due no later than February 19, second blog is due no later than March 19, and third blog is due no later than April 9. This schedule allows enough time for others to read and comment and for you to respond without an end-of-semester crush of work.

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 your original work and 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 from your fellow students. 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 12 comments. This blog is hosted on Blackboard and 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

January 29 – Introduction to the course
   Introductions
   Review of syllabus
   Instructions for Blackboard, blog, and readings
   Opening exercise

February 5 – 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

February 12 – 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.

February 19 – Information policy overview
   Concepts, definitions, analytical models for understanding information policy.
   Federal, state, and local government information policy principles and roles.
   Applying principles of information stewardship and usefulness.

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

   Last date to post blog #1

February 26 – 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” before class. (Full case assignment on Blackboard)
   2. Explore the TRI website to prepare for class discussion.
March 5 – 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

March 12 – No Class – Spring Break

March 19 – Information systems in organizations
   Case: “Electronic Medical Records System Implementation at Stanford Hospital and Clinics”

   **Assignments due:**
   Submit written case analysis before class. (Full case assignment on Blackboard)

   **Last date to post blog #2**

March 26 – Using information and technology to implement public policy
   Two Cases (buy from Xanedu; see instructions in Blackboard):
   - “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”

   **Assignments due:**
   Prepare for class discussion by considering the two cases using the public value framework.

April 2 – 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”

   **Assignment due:**
   Submit written case analysis before class. (Full case assignment on Blackboard)

April 9 – Government and society: impact of open government
   A look at transparency, open government initiatives, social media 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.

   **Assignment 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)
Last date for blog post #3 and at least 7 comments on others’ blogs, catch up on responding to comments on your own blogs

April 16 – Reality Check: a conversation with experts
This class meeting will focus on a panel of leaders and managers from the public, private, and/or 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 no later than Wednesday, April 11 so the panelists have time to read them before class.

April 23 – 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.

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

April 30 – Future prospects for digital age governance
From government to governance, ‘e’ or not, prospects for future evolution

May 7 – No Class
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 class blog, 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 your blog and responding to your fellow students’ blog posts.
• Use class meetings and your blogs to engage in discussion and share your ideas.

**Formal written assignments (the three case analyses) must be submitted via Blackboard**
as a Microsoft Word file, before the class meeting time on the day they are due. All other assignments can be sent via email or given to the instructor at the end of the respective session. Please, follow carefully the specific instructions for each assignment.

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 at the University at Albany. 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.

The course is run 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, bring them up as soon as possible.

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

**NOTE on pre-requisites:**

There are no pre-requisites for this course, but the course content presumes that you are familiar with the principles, structures, and processes of American government and administration. Students who have not taken PAD 500 or PAD 506 are encouraged to review one of the following books (or a similar one) to gain the needed background knowledge:

