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 (ICT) and dramatic changes in the nature, amount, and availability of information in government and society.

This course focuses on the ways that information strategies and management approaches affect governmental functions, democratic processes, and public programs across different countries and cultures. It draws from literature and case studies to understand cultural differences in the conceptualization of digital government but, also, in the planning and implementation processes of digital government projects around the world. 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 taking into account the role of context and culture.
Course Objectives

By the end of the semester, students will:

1. Understand the interaction of policy, management, data, and technology in the design, operation and evaluation of government information strategies in global contexts.
2. Describe and explain, through case study analysis and discussion, how the interaction of the above four factors is shaped and conditioned by national and cultural differences.
3. Summarize and represent basic knowledge on the effect of cultural differences in the planning, implementation, management, and evaluation processes of government information strategies.
4. Effectively use knowledge to identify and understand current and emerging issues related to information and technology in government in different contexts.

Readings

All required course readings are available on Blackboard. These include selected news stories, articles from scholarly and trade publications, material from professional associations, and case studies.

Course process

The course content is divided into five modules of study, with each module focusing on a common thematic element pertaining to government information strategy and management in international and comparative perspectives. You will the processing and analysis of course elements individually and in teams into which you will be placed on the first day of class and will stay in for the entire length of the course. Your interactions and performance in your team will be crucial to your success in the course.

This is a 4-credit course. Hence, you should plan on spending between 9 and 12 hours per week doing the readings, preparing the final projects, and engaging in online assignments and discussions. Work load will be expected to be less during those weeks with national and/or religious holidays.

For each module of study, we will go through a similar set of steps:

1. To start with, I will make a short presentation of the module and the topics involved. I will present the online activities related to that specific module.
2. During the module, you will do a substantial amount of work, both individually and as a team. As the module progresses, you will continue reading through the assigned texts and will engage in online activities, both on your own and as a member of your team.
3. As you work through the readings and activity sequence, there will be mini-lectures to help fill in gaps in your understanding.
4. We will finalize the module with a brief summary of the topic and a presentation of learned lessons.
Course activities

Throughout the course you will engage in the following activities each week.

Readings: This course is designed to be “experiential-reflective” for students rather than “content-receptive”. This means that the readings are not an end in themselves, but rather the material that will be used for analysis, discussion and writing. The readings are not long, but sometimes they are difficult and complex, and require persistence on your part. In order for you to be able to be productive in the activities and assignments, you will need to prepare each reading carefully. This means reading (and re-reading) for understanding, taking notes in the margins, and being able to explain in your own words the stream of ideas in each reading.

Assignments: You will have three individual assignments over the length of the course. The kinds of thinking required in this course work well in a team-driven environment. Thus, three additional assignments will also involve online collaboration with other students. Some of these individual/team assignments will include individual/team quizzes and/or test questions and assorted online “think” tasks. Specific instructions and due dates will be given for each assignment.

Discussions: There will be two types of discussions each week, namely: individual and team discussion. For individual discussion, you are required to submit your own opinion or analysis regarding a particular topic, reading or case assigned for that week. You will post your opinion or analysis in the discussion thread for the week. For team discussion, you are required to engage in internal team discussions in which you will contribute by expressing your analysis to your team member/s and by actively involving in both forming the summary of analysis of your team for the modules’ assignments and in elaborating the team final project report. The objective of this “internal” discussion is to work collaboratively in deciding your team strategy to analyze an assigned case and to complete the team assignments and final project. The discussion threads and team workplace will be open one week prior to the topic. Specific instructions for each discussion will also be provided.

Final projects: There are two types of final projects: the individual and the team project. The objective of the individual project is to evaluate the processes and challenges of implementing similar initiatives/projects in different settings. For the individual project, the student will have to pick one of the topics addressed during the course as well as two or more cases for that specific topic and prepare a 5-10 minute video that will summarize the analysis conducted. Selection of topics and cases can be done with the instructor and/or teaching assistant. In any case, it will have to be done on or before September 25, 2017. A document with specific instructions regarding the individual final project will be uploaded on Blackboard during week 1.

The objective of the team project is two-fold. On one hand, to be part of a collective discussion that will result in a team agreement regarding the analysis of a specific topic and/or case. The goal is to be part of a process that requires consideration of different cultural and educational backgrounds and, therefore, that will help the student to understand the importance of context in the planning, implementation, management, and evaluation processes of government information strategies. On the other hand, to study the assessment of the digital government development status of different countries across the world. To achieve these two goals, each team will read and analyze the 2016 United Nations E-Government Survey and will prepare an analysis (maximum 10 pages, Times New Roman 12, double-spaced) based on a set of questions that will be provided during week 1 (along with further instructions about the team assignment).
Both projects will be due by **December 11, 2017 at 11:59 pm**. When submitting, consider the following:

- Missing an assignment due date will earn a 0. An extension request to the assignment due date will be accepted only in the case of medical or family emergency, or when mandated by University policy. Missing any activities that happened at the beginning of class before you arrive or at the end of class after you leave early will also earn a 0, and there will be no make-up opportunities.
- Assignments must be submitted through Blackboard. If you have trouble with the submission system in Blackboard, e-mail me your assignment before the deadline.
- You may submit as often as you like before the due date and time. I will grade the last version of each file that you submit.
- Once you have submitted a file, you do not need to resubmit it unless it has changed.
- If the deadline is approaching, submit! It is much better to submit an incomplete assignment for partial credit than no assignment for zero credit.

**Grading**

I believe (and research shows) that people learn best from concrete experience, interacting with texts and with other learners/readers, engaging in challenging reading and writing tasks, being held accountable for their work, and receiving frequent feedback on their progress. As a result, this course has no tests or final exam. Further, I have designed the grading system for this course to provide all of the above dimensions. What will this look like?

- Individual discussions: 10%
- Team discussions: 10%
- Individual assignments: 15%
- Team assignments: 15%
- Individual final project: 25%
- Team final project: 25%

When grading, I will take into consideration the level of the student (i.e., undergraduate, master level or PhD level).

**Course Policies**

**Team Work**

You will do much of the processing and analysis of the readings in teams into which you will be placed on the first week of class and will stay in for the entire semester. Your interactions and performance in your team will be crucial to your success in the course. Together, you will do several activities. All of them will provide good chances to test your ideas, learn new knowledge, and build online communication skills, and thus help you learn through knowledge sharing and collaboration. To achieve the learning goal together, I strongly urge you to actively participate in the online activities, and cooperate, rather than compete, with your colleagues. Many empirical studies in diverse areas have demonstrated that people become more creative and productive in a harmonious and trustful environment. Given that, many prestigious government agencies and private companies are looking for values, such as collaboration and teamwork, from their current and future employees. By doing the activities you will be able to learn how to share knowledge and collaborate with others who may have very different (educational and cultural) backgrounds,
points of view, and interests. Here are some tips for effective online knowledge sharing and collaboration:

- Be well prepared for the discussions by thoroughly going over all the materials, carefully reading the assignments, and organizing your ideas and opinions on them before coming to class. By asking some questions, you can think critically and deepen your understanding of the course topics: “what is the main argument (lesson) of the paper?”; “how does the author develop her argument?” (what is her reasoning?); if applicable, “what model and principle does the author apply to the context?”; if applicable, “what solution does the author suggest?”; and “what are the advantages and disadvantages of the solution?”
- Be a good online listener. This is more than being polite; it means really “hearing” what they are saying and actively responding to their ideas and arguments.
- Make points that are relevant to the discussion and link them to the comments of others.
- Test your ideas. Don’t simply restate what others said or mention facts without saying anything about what you think and why.
- Use the class discussion to clarify and confirm your understanding course concepts and topics.
- Above all, respect your colleagues and their ideas. Show how you are intelligent and elegant by being polite to each other.

I expect teams to perform "in the open". I will therefore create "team rooms" for the group workplace in Blackboard Groups, to which I and the teaching assistant will have access, so we can "witness" your team in action. I do not allow teams to conduct their activities solely through e-mail. Unless I have "evidence" of the collaboration or conflict, I will assume the entire team is at fault for the dysfunction and grade accordingly. I also expect every student to create evidence of participation by being active in the “team room”. Participation includes meaningful exchange of information with team members which will enhance and/or correct another member’s contribution. Participation is not merely being present and/or agreeing with contributions.

Course Communication

To reach me or my teaching assistant, use our e-mail addresses. All announcements will be made through the Blackboard e-mail system. Also, I will use this Blackboard e-mail for sharing common concerns and issues. Hence, you should make sure that your Blackboard e-mail is forwarded to your regular e-mail (so that you do not have to frequently check another e-mail account).

Plagiarism and Cheating

I run the course on an honor system and therefore consider any case of academic misbehavior to be a most serious ethical issue. An incident of plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the course. I may pursue further disciplinary actions, including suspension and/or expulsion. For the purposes of this course, the following are taken as evidence of plagiarism or cheating:

- Material reproduced from another source without adequate citation.
- Identical answers being turned in by two or more students.
- A pattern of unusually similar answers being turned in by two or more students.
- Copying a computer file created by someone else (.xls, .mdl, .doc, etc) as a basis for an assignment that you claim as your own.
• Other evidence of collaboration between students on an in-class or take-home assignment that was intended to reflect individual effort.

Your work may be subject to computerized analysis to discover whether materials have been taken from on-line sources or to determine statistically whether answers are more similar than random chance would allow. Since this is such an important matter, if you have any questions about this course policy, you should ask me for any clarification that you may need.

Further, it is every student’s responsibility to become familiar with the standards of academic integrity at the University. Claims of ignorance, of unintentional error, or of academic or personal pressures are not sufficient reasons for violations of academic integrity. You can find more information at http://www.albany.edu/eltl/academic_integrity.php.

Responsible Use of Information Technology at UAльbany

Students are encouraged to read the University at Albany Policy for the Responsible Use of Information Technology available at the ITS Web Site: https://wiki.albany.edu/display/public/askit/Responsible+Use+of+Information+Technology+Policy

Course Prerequisites

The course content presumes that you are familiar with the principles, structures, and processes of American government and administration and have some understanding of public administration in other countries. Students who do not have the prerequisites for this course are suggested to choose one of the following books (or a similar one) to gain the needed background knowledge:

Detailed Listing of Course Schedule

Overview and Introduction to the Course (week of August 28)

Course overview
Syllabus, nuts & bolts
Meet your classmates
Getting connected to Blackboard and using online tools
Revisiting basic concepts and assumptions that we take for granted

Module 1: Knowing the Environment, Useful Framework and Concepts

1. The public sector information environments (week of September 4)

Readings:


Case: “Estonia: Lessons from the world's most tech-savvy government”


Reading:

• Center for Technology in Government. Insider’s guide to using information in government. Available online at http://ctg.albany.edu/static/usinginfo/index.htm

Cases: Cases from the “Insider’s guide to using information in government”

3. The Role of Culture in Government Information Strategy and Management (week of September 18)

Readings:

Module 2: Information Policy in Global Settings

1. An Overview of Information Policy (week of September 25)

Readings:


2. Information Security and Privacy (week of October 2)

Readings:


3. Regulating Access and Use (week of October 9)

Readings:


Case: Transparency and Silence: An Overview

Module 3: Digital Government

1. Comparative Digital Government (week of October 16)

Readings:


*Case*: Implementing E-Government in OECD Countries

2. **Information Sharing (week of October 23)**

*Readings*:


*Case*: The New European Interoperability Framework

**Module 4: Open Government**

1. **Definitions, concepts, and international developments (week of October 30)**

*Readings*:


*Case*: Open Government Partnership

2. **Open Data (week of November 6)**

*Readings*:

Case: Open Data Barometer

3. Social media (week of November 13)

Readings:


Case: Transformation of Citizenship and Governance in Asia: The Challenges of Social and Mobile Media

Module 5: Emerging Issues

1. Smart disclosure (week of November 20)

Readings:


2. Smart Governments and Cities (week of November 27)

Readings:


Case: IESE Cities in Motion Index 2016

3. Open Innovation (week of December 4)

Readings:

Course Wrap Up (December 11)

Reflection
Submission of individual and team final projects
Course survey