

**NEW YORK UNIVERSITY  
ROBERT F. WAGNER GRADUATE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE**

**PDAM-GP 4152(001): ETHICS ISSUES IN PUBLIC SERVICE**

**COURSE SYLLABUS - JANUARY 2012**

<b>Faculty:</b>	Prof. John Donnellan <a href="mailto:john.donnellan@nyu.edu">john.donnellan@nyu.edu</a>  Prof. William Nelson <a href="mailto:william.a.nelson@dartmouth.edu">william.a.nelson@dartmouth.edu</a>
<b>Meeting Times:</b>	Winter Intersession 2012 January 3, 5, 10, 12, 19 Meeting Time: 400pm – 7:00pm
<b>Location:</b>	Room LC9, Tisch Building 40 West 4 <sup>th</sup> Street, NYC
<b>Credits:</b>	2 points
<b>Pre-requisite:</b>	P11.1021 – <i>Managing Public Service Organizations</i>

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Professionals working in Public Service are charged with serving the interests and protecting the rights of the community. They are obligated to act responsibly in using their position and resources entrusted to them, to address fairly the competing demands and needs of their constituents. The issues confronting public service professionals are frequently complex, involving conflicting values and strongly held preferences, incomplete and possibly unreliable information, and consequences that no one can foresee. Effectively serving the common good, then, requires that public officials to exercise sound moral judgment in performing their duties – that their actions be defensible ethically as well as legally. It requires an appreciation of ethical principles and an understanding of their application in the tangled domain of public affairs.

This highly interactive, inter-professional course is designed to give students an overview of ethical challenges in public service, including recognizing and responding to contemporary conflicts in the public service environment. This course is designed to enhance students' ability to think ethically about the means and ends of public service. Students will become familiar with the application of ethics principles to today's ethics challenges. Through the discussion of case studies, students will build practical ethical reasoning skills and strategies for dealing with frequently encountered issues, as well as

approaches for anticipating and decreasing the presence of ethics conflicts. Accordingly, we will examine normative concepts and principles that typically enter into moral reasoning and use these tools in analyzing actual cases. Through topic-based case discussions, students will learn to clarify the moral issues facing today's professional in the Public Service and explore how these issues might be resolved in ethically responsible ways.

### **RELATED MANAGEMENT COMPETENCIES ADDRESSED IN THE COURSE**

- The ability to understand and apply legal and ethical principles to management and policy decision-making in public and non-profit organizations

### **Learning Objectives:**

- At the completion of the course students will have acquired the ability to understand and apply legal and ethical principles to managerial decision-making in public and non-profit organizations. This will include:
  - An understanding of the basic ethics principles, concepts and standards that relate to today's public service environment
  - An understanding of the various ethical issues commonly encountered in public service, and the relationship between ethics and law
  - Competence in moral reasoning and the application of basic ethics concepts when identifying, analyzing, and resolving ethics conflicts. This will include the ability to make value characterizations when responding to specific ethics issues encountered in today's environment
  - A critical awareness of one's own values, and the underlying ethical issues
  - An opportunity for each student to reflect on, present and discuss in class a specific ethics topic
  - An awareness of practical ethics resources available to public and non-profit managers

### **LEARNING METHODS**

- Teaching methods include:
  - Knowledge transfer through assigned readings, lectures and in-class discussion
  - Work/career simulation exercises through case studies (reading, analysis, in-class discussion and faculty feedback) and student team presentations to class (to include application of ethical reasoning to evaluate and responding with recommendations to an ethical question or issue)
  - Skill development through reflective learning and completion of a paper which describes an ethical question or issue and offer a well-reasoned approach for anticipating, managing and potentially decreasing the occurrence of the ethical challenge in the future.

This highly interactive elective will consist of brief faculty presentations, case studies, group discussions and selected readings. The course will also feature guest presenters and participants. Students are expected to come to class prepared to participate in the discussion of major topics outlined for each course session. The course is of interest to all students pursuing a graduate degree and a career in public service.

### **REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS AND JOURNAL ARTICLES**

Students are expected to read the chapters and articles listed in the syllabus each week.

Required Texts:

- Cooper TL. *The responsible administrator: an approach to ethics for the administrative role*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. San Francisco CA: Jossey-Bass; 2006.
- Frederickson HG, Ghere RK (editors). *Ethics in Public Management*. Armonk NY: M.E. Sharpe; 2005. **An e-version of this text is available to students via Bobst Library – the text need not be purchased.**

Additional text for students interested in further reading on the subject:

- Lewis CW, Gilman SC. *The ethics challenge in public service: a problem solving guide*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. San Francisco CA: Jossey-Bass; 2005.

Other journal articles, book chapters and assigned readings are posted on the course Blackboard. *In addition to cases found in the required texts and/or posted on Blackboard, a large number of interesting cases in the subject area may also be found at the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, Santa Clara University (link below).*

<http://www.scu.edu/ethics/practicing/focusareas/cases.cfm>

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:**

The Mission of NYU Wagner is:

*... to be a path-breaking leadership school of public service, with a faculty of thought leaders who re-frame the way people understand and act on issues of public importance, and graduates who are bold, well-prepared change makers who expertly navigate real-world complexity and produce results that matter.*

Academic Integrity is vital to this mission, to education at NYU Wagner and membership in the Wagner community.

It is a core value. It forms the foundation of trust among students, and between students and teachers.<sup>1</sup> Cheating has no place in our community. Academic dishonesty or other offenses against the community are not individual acts affecting only the individuals involved. Cheating violates our communal trust in each other; it is an offense against our community of scholarship. If tolerated, it undermines all we stand for. Honesty matters at Wagner, just as it does in the broader world of public service.

It is a shared value. Administration, faculty and students each play a vital part in promoting, securing and nurturing it. I invite you to visit the NYU Wagner website and review our *Academic Code* and *Academic Oath* ([www.wagner.nyu.edu/current/policies](http://www.wagner.nyu.edu/current/policies)), as well as the Wagner Student Association's *Code of Professional Responsibility*. If at any time you have a question about Academic Integrity or suspect a violation of our code, seek guidance from any member of the faculty or administration.

It is a promoted value. It is incumbent on all members of the community to promote it, through scholarship, responsible participation in School events, assistance to other community members who are struggling with it, and by upholding the codes of the school and the Wagner Student Association.

Included below is a list of resources for understanding and avoiding plagiarism:

- "Plagiarism: What is It and How to Recognize and Avoid It," The Writing Center at Indiana University, [www.indiana.edu/~wts/wts/plagiarism.html](http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/wts/plagiarism.html)
- "Principles Regarding Academic Integrity," Northwestern University, [www.northwestern.edu/uacc/plagiar.html](http://www.northwestern.edu/uacc/plagiar.html)
- "Sources," Dartmouth College, [www.Dartmouth.edu/~sources/contents.html](http://www.Dartmouth.edu/~sources/contents.html), and [www.aug.edu/sociology/plagiarism.html](http://www.aug.edu/sociology/plagiarism.html)

#### REFERENCE CITATION:

- For research resources regarding appropriate citation of the many different sources you will use in your work, see [Writing](#) on the NYU/Wagner webpage, under "Current Students/Academic Services."
- The use of the AMA Manual of Style is recommended for reference citation. A quick reference guide to this style is posted on Blackboard.

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<sup>1</sup> McCabe DL, Trevino LK, Butterfield KD. Cheating in academic institutions: a decade of research. *Ethics & Behavior*, 2001: 11(3), 219-232.

## CLASS TOPICS AND READINGS

### Session I – January 3, 2012

- **Introduction – Course overview; the Ethical Responsibilities of Public Service; Ethical Standards and Reasoning for Taking Individual Responsibility in Public Service**
  - Course overview and requirements
  - Role of individuals in public service and organizations as a moral agents
  - Maintaining responsible behavior and practice in public service
  - Recognizing ethics conflicts
  - Ethical foundation for addressing ethics conflicts
  - The linkage between ethics, law, and public service responsibilities
  - Applying an ethics decision-making model
  - Case studies

#### Readings:

- Introduction (pages 1-9) and Chapters 2 and 3 in: Cooper TL. *The responsible administrator: an approach to ethics for the administrative role*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. San Francisco CA: Jossey-Bass; 2006.

### Session II – January 5, 2012

- **Ethics Challenges for Individuals in Public Service: Dual Nature of Public Service Responsibilities**
  - The nature of public service responsibilities
  - Recognizing and addressing conflicts of authority, role, and interest
  - Case Study – *To Obey or not to Obey*
  - Case Study – *Ethics and Technology in the Wake of September 11*

#### Readings:

- Chapters 4, 8 in Cooper TL. *The responsible administrator: an approach to ethics for the administrative role*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. San Francisco CA: Jossey-Bass; 2006.
- Freeman RE, Stewart L. Developing Ethical Leadership. *Business Roundtable for Corporate Ethics*. 2006.

### Session III – January 10, 2012

- **Ethics in Public Service Organizations: Effective Leadership**
- **Building an Ethical Organization: Integrating Ethics into the Organization Culture**
  - The role of ethical leadership in public service
  - Demonstrating ethical leadership
  - Characteristics of ethical organizations

- Guest presentation:

Clifford Kirsch, MPA  
District Court Executive (retired)  
US District Court, SDNY

- Case Studies - TBA

**Readings:**

- Chapters 5, 6, 7 in: Cooper TL. *The responsible administrator: an approach to ethics for the administrative role*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. San Francisco CA: Jossey-Bass; 2006.
- Nelson WA, Donnellan J. An Executive-Driven Ethical Culture. *Healthcare Executive*. 2009; 24(6):44-46.

**Session IV – January 12, 2012**

- **Public Service in a Multi-cultural and Global World**

- Guest presentation:

Alan Richter, PhD  
President, QED Consulting

- Case Study - TBA

**Readings:**

- Chapters 15 and 16 Frederickson HG, Ghere RK (editors). *Ethics in Public Management*. Armonk NY: M.E. Sharpe; 2005.

**Session V – January 19, 2012**

**Student Presentations**

**Readings:**

- Chapter 10 in Cooper TL. *The responsible administrator: an approach to ethics for the administrative role*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. San Francisco CA: Jossey-Bass; 2006

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**Team Presentation:** Students, working in teams of three, will prepare and deliver in class a 10-15 minute presentation on a particular public service ethics issue or conflict. The presentation should describe the ethical issue and the reasoning in response to the ethical challenge. The team's presentation should include a 1-2 page handout highlighting the presentation.

**Paper:** Each student will prepare a paper addressing a recurring ethical challenge in public service. The paper should describe the issue (either a general situation or a case), and offer an approach for anticipating, managing and potentially decreasing the occurrence of the ethical challenge in the future. The paper should be 4-6 pages (double-spaced) in length, excluding references and appendices.

**Course grades** will be calculated as follows:

	<u>% Final Grade</u>	<u>Date Due</u>
Class participation & discussion	20%	ongoing
Paper	40%	January 27
Team report & presentation	40%	January 19 - Session V

### **GRADING CRITERIA**

#### **Team presentation:**

- Assignment will be scored on each of the following elements:
  - The ethical issue or question is adequately described
  - A well-reasoned response to the issue or question is presented
  - The response is grounded in ethical literature and ethical principals
  - Adequacy of delivery

#### **Paper:**

- Assignment will be scored on each of the following elements:
  - The paper is well written, with an organized discussion and well-backed opinions
  - The ethical issue/challenge is clearly described
  - An approach for anticipating, managing and potentially decreasing re-occurrence of the situation is offered
  - The writer makes use of appropriate references

#### **Class Participation:**

- Outstanding Contributor: Contributions in class reflect exceptional preparation. Ideas offered are always substantive and provide one or more major insights as well as direction for the class. Arguments, when offered, are well substantiated and persuasively presented. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of the discussions would be diminished significantly.
- Good Contributor: Contributions in class reflect thorough preparation. Ideas offered are usually substantive and provide good insights and sometimes direction for the class. Arguments, when presented, generally are well substantiated and often are persuasive. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of the discussions would be diminished considerably.

- Adequate Contributor: Contributions in class reflect satisfactory preparation. Ideas offered are sometimes substantive and provide generally useful insights but seldom offer a major new direction for discussion. Arguments, which are presented sometimes, are fairly well substantiated and sometimes persuasive. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of the discussions would be diminished somewhat.
- Non-participant: This person has said little or nothing in class to date. Hence, there is inadequate basis for evaluation. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of the discussions would not be changed.
- Unsatisfactory Contributor: Contribution in class reflects inadequate preparation. Ideas offered are seldom substantive; provide few, if any, insights; and never offer a constructive direction for the class. Integrative comments and effective arguments are absent. Class contributions are, at best, “cherry-picking” efforts, making isolated, obvious, or confusing points. If this person were not a member of the class, valuable airtime would be saved.