Wagner Graduate School of Public Service  
New York University

Managing Public Service Organizations

P11.1020  
Spring 2010

Professor: Roger Kropf, PhD  
Teaching Colleagues: Nora Abramson and Erica Banyon

Contact Information:

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Time: Wednesdays, 6:45-8:25 p.m.

Teaching Colleagues

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Section: 005   Section: 006  
Location: 404 Silver   Location: 721 Silver  
Time: 8:35 – 9:35 p.m.   Time: 8:35 – 9:35 p.m.

Course Goals and Objectives

The goal of Managing Public Service Organizations (MPSO) is to enhance your leadership skills. The course provides you with the tools you need to diagnose and solve organizational problems, to influence the actions of individuals, groups, and organizations, and to lead high-performing, successful public service organizations.

A key leadership task is to assemble the skills, talents, and resources of individuals and groups into those combinations that best solve the organizational problems at hand. You must manage people, information, and processes to accomplish organizational goals; you must make things happen, and often not under conditions or time frames of your own choosing. The successful execution of these goals requires leaders to be able to understand what they bring to and need
from their organizations, formulate a mission and strategy, make effective decisions, influence and motivate diverse individuals, apply their own skills and abilities to their teams, optimize the structure of their organization, diagnose problems, and drive organizational change.

MPSO prepares you to achieve these objectives by providing you with fundamental tools developed from the behavioral and social sciences and tested by leaders in organizations representing all sectors.

**Course Format**

Each day we will focus on a particular set of leadership skills. Our goal will be to distinguish between effective and ineffective strategies. We will accomplish this by discussing key theoretical concepts, analyzing related cases, engaging in exercises, and completing team projects.

This course reflects a dual focus on practice and conceptual training. The course packet readings introduce key concepts and useful ways of thinking about common situations in complex organizations. Case studies and class exercises provide opportunities to apply theories, concepts, and research findings to particular situations, sectors, and fields of interest to Wagner students and to hone your skills in problem definition and problem solving. The written assignments, including the team project, ask you to consolidate your insights and to practice your analytic skills.

The discussion sections of the course will be led by two accomplished teaching colleagues and will focus specifically on building project management skills and supporting each team. The teaching colleagues work directly with Prof. Kropf as partners in this course.

**Preparing for Class**

It is important that you complete the reading for each session in advance. You and your classmates will not benefit as much from the class session if you come unprepared. For weeks with a case, you will not be able to contribute to class discussion of the case if you have not read it in advance.

Many of the principles and issues involved in MPSO are relatively timeless and not limited only to organizations of a public service nature. Consequently, you should not rely on the copyright dates or specific organizational applications of either the readings or the cases in evaluating their usefulness. “Classic” readings and cases are included because they speak to important issues in useful, interesting, and time-tested ways.

The articles in your course packet provide key ideas and theoretical insights into human behavior and its impact on productivity and performance. To be sure you have grasped the point of each piece, ask yourself:
• What is the author’s main argument?
• What are the key concepts and principles introduced?
• How does this matter for an organization?
• What are the implications for the kinds of challenges I face as a leader, a manager, a policy analyst, an urban planner, or a financial analyst?
• How can I apply this to my organization, my job, and/or my career?

The cases provide concrete situations to which you should apply the concepts introduced in articles. They provide an opportunity for you to practice diagnosing the nature and causes of organizational performance and to practice thinking through the potential consequences of action strategies.

A class like this requires careful attention to fairness and mutual respect for one another. It is especially important that if you do have an unavoidable conflict, you do not disturb your classmates by arriving late, leaving early, or otherwise causing interruptions. If you are familiar with a case or an exercise introduced in class, please do not discuss your prior knowledge with other students until after the class session, as this can ruin the learning experience for them. If you are concerned that your expertise might be an issue, please let me know before class.

Readings

1. The course packet containing required readings and cases is available for purchase at the Unique Copy Center, 252A Greene Street. The articles at Unique are also on reserve at Bobst Library.
2. The remaining required readings are available via links on the course Blackboard website.

Blackboard

You must have access to the class Blackboard site. Each of you should check it on Mondays (at least) each week. We will be posting announcements there that you need to read.

You can also go to your NYUHome Page (http://home.nyu.edu), then click Academics at the top. Click on “Managing Public Service Organizations (P11.1020004)”. If you haven’t created an NYUHome Page, you need to go to https://start.nyu.edu and follow the instructions.

We have been told that all students registered in the course have been added to the list of class Blackboard site users. If you don’t see our course listed on your NYUHome Page, send an email to Prof. Kropf (roger.kropf@nyu.edu)

Many announcements, class related documents (extra readings, discussion questions, class handouts, etc.), and surveys/exercises will be posted on our class Blackboard site. You will need Adobe Acrobat Reader in order to view and print the materials on Blackboard. If you do not already have this (free) software installed on your computer, go to http://www.adobe.com and
follow the download instructions.

If you have not activated your NYU net account or have forgotten your password, you can activate or change your password at http://start.nyu.edu. Your account must be activated to access Blackboard.

Some class announcements will also be distributed via e-mail. Thus, it is important that you actively use your NYU e-mail account, or have appropriate forwarding set up on NYUHome https://home.nyu.edu

**Grading**

Your grade for the course will be based on the following elements: (See more detail on each below.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graded Assignment</th>
<th>Date Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15% Individual assignments and reflections (5% each)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spiral of Sustainable Excellence Memo (Session 3)</td>
<td>February 10</td>
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<td>Team Role Reflection (Session 7)</td>
<td>March 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Implicit Association/Stereotyping Reflection (Session 9)</td>
<td>March 24</td>
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<tr>
<td>30% Midterm Exam</td>
<td>March 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>55% Team project (interim deliverables and final paper)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team Charter 5% (Session 5)</td>
<td>February 15   (Monday)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project Outline 5% (Session 7)</td>
<td>March 1       (Monday)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Progress Report 5% (Session 11)</td>
<td>March 29      (Monday)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final team role reflection and peer evaluation 5%</td>
<td>May 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final paper 35%</td>
<td>May 5</td>
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Please do not seek extensions or exceptions to deadlines except in cases of emergency. We know that all of you have complicated schedules, but it is not fair for us to accommodate some complications but not others. **Grades for late assignments will be reduced by 10% for every 24-hour period past the deadline.** If something both urgent and important has come up that will interfere with your ability to hand in an assignment on time, be in touch with Prof. Kropf immediately.
Midterm Exam

The midterm exam will be a take-home given out on March 3 and due March 10. It will be an individual assignment and focus on the assigned readings in the course. No additional research will be required.

Team Project

A major component of this course is the team project. The emphasis of the team project should be on how managers think, communicate or act in regard to an issue. It is not necessary for you to make recommendations on how to resolve any problems you observe. You are not conducting an evaluation of the organization’s efforts, but trying to learn from the experience of the organization and its managers. The objectives are to allow you to use the skills you are learning about how to work in teams and to explore an important management issue from a manager's point of view.

You will be assigned to teams of three to five students. Each team will focus on a specific topic covered by the course: strategy, performance measurement, structure, diversity, motivation and human resources, culture, and ethics. You will identify and read literature on this topic to identify important issues to discuss with managers. The team will develop a questionnaire that explore the organization’s experience and the viewpoints of managers.

Your team will identify an organization to approach to obtain permission to interview at least two senior managers. The organization you select can be in any sector that provides public service (government, nonprofit, or private) and can be one you previously worked for, one you would like to work for, or simply one that interests you. Your team will be required to make the initial connection yourself to begin or continue building your professional relationships.

Your team will be working on this project throughout the semester. Your team periodically will be asked to provide information about your progress. The project includes the following steps:

Tasks And Time-Line

**Weeks 1-6:** Choose your topic and form your team. As a team, discuss the initial individual and team tasks to be done in preparation for completing the steps outlined below. Divide and coordinate tasks among team members.

Read several articles or chapters on the chosen theme and begin to identify research or theory for the team's analysis. Begin writing down questions you want to ask the managers.

Explore opportunities for finding an organization to study.

Discuss members' expectations regarding teamwork, team decision making and leadership. Develop agreement regarding team roles, ground rules, and protocols and submit in the form of a
team charter by **February 15**. Email to Prof. Kropf and the TC you are working with.

**Weeks 7**: As a team, submit a project outline by **March 1**. Email to Prof. Kropf and TC.

**Week 8**: Submit a revised team project outline, if required, by **March 8**. Email to Prof. Kropf and TC.

**Week 9-11**: Interview managers and other appropriate individuals, and collect other relevant information. Questionnaires must be reviewed and approved by Prof. Kropf and the TC you are working with. Consult with them before scheduling any interviews.

Submit a progress report by **March 29**. Email to Prof. Kropf and TC.

Submit a team paper by **May 5**. The paper should be no more than 10 pages double spaced, excluding references and an optional appendix (e.g., containing information from or about the organization or the research you found). Submit a paper copy to Prof. Kropf and email a copy to both Prof. Kropf and the TC.

Submit peer evaluations for each of your team members and a one-page self-reflection on the team process by **May 5**.

Do not be concerned if you initially lack a comprehensive grasp of this assignment. The team project is an iterative process requiring the integration of class material, topic readings, field interviews and group formation. The assignment will become clearer as the semester progresses and the various pieces fall into place.

**Writing Resources**

The school provides a writing consultant (free) and a writing workshop (not free) for assistance with written work. More information is available at the URL below: [http://wagner.nyu.edu/current/services/writing.php](http://wagner.nyu.edu/current/services/writing.php)

**Statement of Academic Integrity**

As members of the NYU Wagner community, we are all expected to adhere to high standards of intellectual and academic integrity. You can view our Academic Code at: [http://wagner.nyu.edu/current/policies/](http://wagner.nyu.edu/current/policies/). This is a good resource for issues of academic integrity, especially regarding writing. For this particular course, there are some specific behaviors required to meet our standards of academic integrity:

*Team Project & Individual Assignments*: Team projects should be completed by teams working together. Individual written assignments should be the sole work of the individual student.
Exams: All exams must be the sole work of the individual student or team if permitted.

Violations of these standards will automatically result in all participating students failing the course and being remanded to the discipline committee for further action.

Course Outline and Session Schedule

[CP] = Coursepack   [BB] = Blackboard

Session 1: January 20  Developing A Public Service Mission

Objectives

● Learn the key features of an organizational strategy
● Understand the impact of the institutional environment on organizations

Read (before class)

1. Light, P. C. (2003). In Search of Public Service. [BB]
   http://ezproxy.library.nyu.edu:6305/lib/nyulibrary/Doc?id=10087165
3. Anya Kamenetz, “Cleaning Solution.” Fast Company (September 2008), pp. 120-125. Full text at :

Session 2: January 27  Team Formation, Process, and Decision Making

Objectives

● Understand the effects of team composition
● Understand the effects of team process and communication

Read (before class)

Session 3: February 3  
Understanding Yourself in Organizational Context

Objectives

- Understand how you see yourself and how others see you
- Think about how your concept of self affects how you choose to lead and manage

Guest faculty: David Schachter, Wagner’s Assistant Dean for Student Affairs

Before Class - Take Myers-Briggs Assessment


2. AFTER taking the inventory, read the materials distributed on February 4. Bring them to class.

Session 4: February 10  
Setting Strategy

Objectives

- Learn the key features of an organizational strategy
- Understand the impact of the institutional environment on organizations

Read (before class)

Optional:


http://ezproxy.library.nyu.edu:6305/lib/nyulibrary/Doc?id=10091854

Due (in class)

One-page single-spaced Spiral of Sustainable Excellence Memo addressed to Prof. Kropf applying one or two stages of development from the Light (2004) reading to an organization that you are familiar with (e.g., one that you have worked for, one that you would be interested in studying for your team project). Say what stage you believe the organization is in now and whether you believe that are trying to move into the next stage. Provide specific facts to support your conclusion. Comment on what obstacles they face in moving to the next phase or remaining in the one they are currently in. Memo writing guidelines can be found at the following URL:

http://wagner.nyu.edu/current/services/files/WritingMemos.pdf

Use the View/Complete Assignment function on Blackboard to submit the exam. Go to Assignments, Spiral of Excellence and click on >> View/Complete Assignment. Attach the file with your response. Be sure to SUBMIT the file. If you encounter any problems, you can just email it to Prof. Kropf.

Session 5: February 17 Managing and Measuring Organizational Performance

Objectives

- Develop an understanding of the reasons for measuring performance
- Learn how performance measurement translates into effective resource allocation

Read (before class)


Optional


Due Monday, February 15 at 9 a.m.

- One-two page(single spaced) project team charter (Email to Prof. Kropf and the TC you are working with.)

Session 6: February 24  

Designing Organizational Structure

Objectives

- Understand how structure can solve coordination problems
- Learn how to group organizational units

Read (before class)


In Class

CASE: Mercy Corps discussion

- What are the strengths and concerns of a highly entrepreneurial organization?
- How much of a challenge is it for Mercy Corps to achieve consistent quality across all of its sites? What are they doing well in this pursuit and what concerns you?
- How does Mercy Corps’ headquarters provide the needed support for each of its operating units? What are the variables they need to consider in designing and implementing this support?
How should Mercy Corps decide which functions should be performed at the operating unit and which functions should be the responsibility of headquarters?

How important is the regional program director for success? If you were a country director, what is the one thing you would want from your regional program director?

Session 7: March 3  Organizational Culture

Objectives

- Develop strategies for creating an effective culture
- Understand how culture provides an advantage for employee selection and retention

Read (before class)


In Class

Bring to class a symbol or story from an organization that represents its culture.

MIDTERM EXAM DISTRIBUTED - DUE MARCH 10

Before class

Team Role Reflection due [BB/Assignments for instructions]

Due (Monday, March 1 at 9 a.m.)

- One-page (single spaced) team project outline (Email to Prof. Kropf and TC)

Session 8: March 10  Power and Strategic Influence

Objectives

- Learn how to identify important political players and their sources of power
- Develop strategies for influencing up and down the hierarchy
Read (before class)


Before Class

Revised project outline if requested by **Monday, March 8** at 9 a.m. (Email to Prof. Kropf and TC)

**MIDTERM EXAM DUE MARCH 10**
Submit a paper copy in class and also submit on Blackboard in Assignments.

March 17 - No Class - Spring Break

Session 9: March 24  *Motivating Performance in Organizations*

Objectives

- Understand how to motivate people
- Understand how to set goals and incentives to induce productive behavior

Read (before class)

Optional


In Class

- Performance Pay for MGOA Physicians case overview

Session 10: March 31  
Social Entrepreneurship and Social Enterprise

Objectives

- Consider entrepreneurial activity with a social mission
- Understand the tradeoffs in managing a corporate social enterprise

Read (before class)


Due Monday, March 29

One-page (single spaced) team project progress report by Monday, March 29 at 9 a.m. (See Assignments in Blackboard for instructions.)

Session 11: April 7  
Managing Diversity

Objectives

- Understand stereotyping and diversity-related issues
- Develop strategies to address issues of diversity in organizations
Read (before class)


In Class

- Case discussion: Ellen Schall and the Department of Juvenile Justice

Due Before Class

- Complete one Implicit Association Exercise [BB/Assignments for link].
- Implicit Association and Stereotyping reflection [BB/Assignments for instructions]

Session 12: April 14  Decision Making and Ethics

Objectives

- Demonstrate the sources of systematic decision-making biases
- Understand the sources of and solutions for ethical dilemmas in organizations

Read (before class)

Session 13: April 21  
*Strategic Negotiation and Conflict Resolution*

**Objectives**

1. Assess your skills at negotiating
2. Prepare you with the core principles of negotiation

**Read (before class)**

3. CASE: Electronic Hallway, Clarkson Airport [BB]

**Optional**


Session 14: April 28  
*Leading Change*

**Objectives**

- Understand sources of resistance to change
- Provide strategies for championing and leading change

**Read (before class)**


**In Class**

- CASE: *Utah Symphony and Opera Merger* discussion
  1. Would you vote for the merger?
  2. What should Anne Ewars (CEO), Keith Lockhart (conductor), and the artists be concerned
with?
3. What would you do with the artists? Make them all full time employees?
4. How would you minimize culture clash?
5. How would you advise Ewars and Lockhart in dealing with each other?

May 5 - Due by 6 pm

Final team paper
Peer evaluations
Self-reflection on the team process