P11.0029: The Intersection of Politics and Public Service  
Waverly Building (24 Waverly Place), Rm. 367  
Wednesdays, 4:55 PM - 7:25 PM  
Professor Douglas Band  
Spring 2011

Contact Information

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Course Description and Objectives

Description:  This course is designed to explore the vital intersection of politics—primarily in the U.S. system—and public service. Each class will cover a general topic area, with a focus on the practical work of politics, ideas about public service, and the interplay of the two. Substantive policy topics will be integrated into the course across the semester. Several classes will feature invited speakers who are or were involved with policy issues or public-service ideas under study (speakers are, of course, subject to change).

Objectives:  Through this course you will develop a nuanced understanding of public service and an appreciation for its many forms. Ideally your inclination to include service in your life’s aspirations will also be further inspired.

Expectations

Behavior:  Be engaged. Respect our guests. Respect one another.

Writing:  Your writing should be clear, concise, precise and grammatically correct.  
*If you are interested in writing support I encourage you to take advantage of the free services NYU’s writing center. To learn more visit their website at:  
http://www.nyu.edu/cas/ewp/html/writing_center.html*
Readings (and various other texts such as videos etc...)

About: There will be no required textbook for this course. Most readings are available to the public for free online. When otherwise we will arrange for access to course materials on blackboard or in hard copy.

Note: Additional readings may be added on an ad hoc basis as the semester progresses. When such readings are added you will receive an email with instructions on access.

Assignments | Percent of Final Grade
---|---
Memos (400-500 words each): | 30%
5 memos; 6% each (individual)
or 4 memos and participation in a voluntary class service project (details to be announced in class)

Team Project (1 per semester): | 55%
1-2 page project overview memo 5% (team)
15-Minute Presentation, 20% (team)
10-page Proposal, 20% (team)
4-5 page Reflection, 10% (individual)

Class Participation: | 15% (includes Pre-term memo)

Memos

About: Memos are designed to help you think actively about the course content, readings, and the forms of public service. Please make sure that your memos include an attempt to tie the specific topic to the larger theme of the course: the Intersection of Politics and Public Service (ie what are some of your takeaways). We encourage you to write these memos regularly but you are only required to write 5 memos (or 4 with a service project); there will be flexibility about which weeks to write them. Some specific memos will be required; most weeks you will choose one of the following three options:

1. A critique of the readings for that day's class
2. A reflective memo on the previous week's class
3. A reflective memo about service you performed the previous week

Format: Regardless of whether you have written memos before you should follow the guidelines posted on Blackboard for memo writing.
Team Project

About: This class project will be your opportunity to gain a working understanding of the role that NGOs play in the sphere of politics and public service. You will work in teams, with the support of your teaching staff, to prepare a proposal for a) a new NGO or b) a new effort at an existing NGO. You will then present this work to the class and write a short reflective paper.

Note: Teams will be based on topical preferences; you will select those from a list to be provided in class, and we will form teams of 4-5 students accordingly.

Presentation: In one of the last two weeks of class, each team will present your proposal to the class and a panel of invited experts, in no more than 15 minutes. Guest experts will provide constructive critiques after each team presents, in a ‘design review’ format. You will have ample opportunities to rehearse your presentation before this critique session.

Note: On the day of your presentation, you will email PowerPoint slides accompanying your presentation to the course TA (at tds263@nyu.edu) at least 3 hours before the beginning of class.

Proposal: Each team will submit a 10-page proposal on the last day of class.

Reflection: 4-5 page reflections should include but not necessarily be limited to:
- A brief summary of your proposal
- A summary of your team’s work process
- ‘Plus-delta’ review: your assessment of the team and presentation’s strengths (plus), as well as what you would change (delta) to improve the process and presentation.
- The main lessons and takeaways that you learned from the presentation project and process overall

Service Project

About: Details to be announced in class
Class Participation

About: Attendance at all classes, given our limited time together, is essential: if you must be absent, *let me or the TA know in advance*. Please arrive in class prepared to discuss central themes for each week, as outlined in course readings.

Late Assignment Policy

About: All assignment due dates are made clear in this syllabus. Extensions will be granted only in case of emergency, out of respect to those who abide by deadlines despite equally hectic schedules. Late submissions without extensions will be penalized 1/2 letter grade per day (e.g., B+ to B).

Students with Disabilities

About: Any students requiring accommodations should be in contact with me to make proper arrangements. Please be prepared to submit your documentation from the NYU disabilities office regarding appropriate accommodations.
Week by Week

Pre-term: Assignments

Memo: Why are you taking this class? How do you define public service? What have been your most memorable experiences with providing public service? What has prevented you from serving more? What role do you expect service to play in your future?
Week 1: Introduction, Personal Story & Course Overview
February 2, 2011 [No Class January 26; DB out of the country]

Objectives: In this class we will get to know one another, cover philosophy behind this class and provide you with a birds eye view of what to expect.

Topics:
- Prof. Band on where politics, post-presidency, non-profit world meet
- John Podesta on his experience in public service (government and think-tank sectors)
- How diligence, loyalty, principles, and ethics pay off
- Overview of the semester
- Course framework, assignments and expectations

Guest: John Podesta

Memo Due: Pre-Term Memo

Project Step: Think about which areas of public service you care about most.

Readings:
Week 2: The Idea of Public Service

February 9, 2011

Objectives: Consider what Public Service looks like today.

Topics:
- How does democracy, fair institutions, enforcement of laws, and transparency create confidence in our system?
- How is public service defined in founding documents?
- Service today vs. intentions of framers
- American exceptionalism – is the U.S. commitment to public service different than other nations?
- Immigration, “The American Dream” and public service

Memo Due: Option 1, 2 or 3

Project Step: Figure out teams. Assess the environment around that problem. Map existing efforts to address it. Identify a gap or need.

Readings:
- Paul Light, A Government Ill-Executed (2009), introductory section
- Alexander Hamilton, The Federalist No. 1: General Introduction (1787)
- James Madison, The Federalist No. 51: The Structure of the Government Must Furnish the Proper Checks and Balances Between the Different Departments (1788)
- Bill Whittle, What We Believe, Part 7: American Exceptionalism (Nov. 2010) [Video ~12 minutes]
- Fred Riggs, “Public Administration in America: The Exceptionalism of a Hybrid Bureaucracy.”
- Michael Scherer and Michael Duffy, "The Role Model" (Time, February 7, 2011)
Week 3: Practicing Public Service

February 16, 2011

Objectives: Explore what we each mean when we think of public service.

Topics:
- Why serve, and who are you serving?
- What is public service? Who is a public servant?
- Political service vs. military service vs. community service
- Service vs. policy vs. aid
- Volunteer vs. compensation and the tradeoffs of foregoing the private sector

Guest: Paul Farmer

Memo Due: Option 1, 2 and 3

Project Step: Identify the core problem you want to address and why

Readings:
- Jeffrey Sachs, “Why Must the Poor Be Sick? Paul Farmer Legacy” (Natural History, 2004).
- Paul Farmer, “Challenging Orthodoxies: The Road Ahead for Health and Human Rights” (Health and Human rights, v10, no. 1)
Week 4: Getting to Washington: Campaigning and Governance
February 23, 2011

Objectives: Help you understand what it takes to get elected to office

Topics:
- Conscience, Constituents and Constitution
- How to create a successful campaign?
- How is good campaign structured?
- How does one rebound?
- How to build the right team? Successful staffing?

Guest: Congressman Anthony Weiner

Memo Due: Option 1, 2, or 3

Project Step: Vision/Mission (what the ideal world would look like/ how you plan to move us towards that)

Readings:
- Jeremy Jacobs, “The Curious Case of Scott Brown” (Campaigns & Elections, April 2010)
- Edward-Issac Dovere, "Spin Doctor" (City Hall, Nov. 17, 2009)
- Marc Jacobson, "Anthony and the Giant" (New York Magazine; May 3, 2009)
Week 5: Government: Navigating Washington I

March 2, 2011

Objectives: Help you understand the policymaking process and the players beyond elected officials

Topics:
- An insider’s view of the White House and how decisions get made
- Congress and legislatures, federal and local
- How do governments at all levels communicate, legislate, and service people effectively?

Guest: Douglas E. Schoen

Memo Due: Option 1, 2 or 3

Project Step: Strategy -- Assess your resources (or strengths) and your obstacles (weaknesses) [both personal and potential partner based]. And your Opportunity and Threats. Include whether you would be independent or work with existing NGO, government agencies, or for-profit companies and why.

Readings:
Week 6: Government: Navigating Washington II

March 9, 2011

Objectives: Help you understand the policymaking process and the players beyond elected officials

Topics:
- Career politicians and strategists
- The price of bureaucracy: do elected officials and aides get lost in machine?
- Is the physical size of government too large to function properly?

Memo Due: Project overview memo & Midterm feedback memo.

Project Step: Meet with Todd. Iterate your strategy.

Readings:
- Paul Light, A Government Ill-Executed, Chapter 1: For the Public Benefit
- David Cameron, “A New Politics: The Post-Bureaucratic Age” (The Guardian, 2009)

Week Off: Spring Break

NYU Closed March 14 - 19th
Week 7: Government & Public Service Delivery

March 23, 2011 [DB out of the country]

Objectives: Helping you explore how and whether your government is performing well

Topics:
- How do different levels of government work together to deliver “public service”
- Teach for America, Peace Corps, Americorps, etc.
- Do the costs outweigh the benefits?

Memo Due: Option 1, 2, or 3

Project Step: Draft your Program Theory (with a Logic Model) : connect inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts. Name your assumptions.

Readings:
- Mark C. Taylor, End the University as We Know It (New York Times, April 26, 2009)
Week 8: Limitations of Government Service
March 30, 2011 [DB out of the country]

Objectives: Helping you consider the boundaries of what government can and should do

Topics:
- Does the bureaucratic machine hamper and slow service?
- Haiti, Katrina, child poverty, the tsunami
- Growth of entitlements and how to pay for them
- Is a government job a “job created”?
- Privatization of government responsibilities and programs – impact of outsourcing
- Devolution started by Reagan continued by WJC: successful until economic crisis, now being reversed by Obama
- Should government be responsible for public service?

Memo Due: Option 1, 2 or 3

Project Step: Iterate program logic model

Readings:
- Kevin Hassett, Bury Keynesian Voodoo Before It Can Bury Us All: Kevin Hassett (Bloomberg, Aug. 22, 2010)
- Amy Liu, A Disaster Worse than Katrina (Brookings – Up Front Blog, Jan 23, 2011)
Week 9: Relationship between Government and the Private Sector
April 6, 2011

Objectives: Exploring the intersection of government and business

Topics:
- Public-private partnerships
- Private dollars financing campaigns
- Influence of private sector and demands on public servants
- Government-sponsored enterprises: what role to Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac play? What about the postal service?
- Have recent government takeovers changed relationship between politics and public service?

Guest: Dina Powell

Memo Due: Option 1, 2 or 3

Project Step: Work on project

Readings:
- Caroline Baum, Obama Goes Postal, Lands in Dead-Letter Office: Caroline Baum (Bloomberg, August 17, 2009)
Week 10: Philanthropy and Public Service

April 13, 2011 [Date may shift; class will meet at Clinton Foundation]

Objectives: Exploring the nature of philanthropy, especially in the distinctive US context
Contrasting philanthropic approaches to public problems with other forms of public service

Topics:
- What is Philanthropy?
- Major companies and philanthropic aims
- Do all corporations have a responsibility to be philanthropic?
- Is CSR meaningful or just PR?
- Private sector innovations: “triple bottom line” businesses and social entrepreneurship

Guest: President Bill Clinton

Memo Due: Option 1, 2 or 3

Project Step: Consider -- How will you measure impact? What is your growth plan?

Readings:
- Matthew Bishop, Philanthrocapitalism
- Annie Leonard, The Story of Stuff [Video ~20 minutes]
Week 11: ‘Outside’ Actors: Interest Groups, Think Tanks and Public Opinion
April 20, 2011

Objectives: Exploring the role that interest groups, think tanks, media, and the public’s view play in the policymaking process and in framing public service

Topics:
- How do these actors shape policy?
- How are these organizations perceived outside of the beltway?
- The importance and necessity of unions?
- How does the public shape (and fail to shape) policy?
- What is the role of the media? The internet?
- Technology and social media: how has Twitter, Facebook, etc. changed public service and politics? How do they assist with and inhibit?
- How has access to information changed the way political campaigns and NGOs are run?

Memo Due: Option 1, 2 or 3

Project Step: Work on Presentations

Readings:
- Harvard University Leadership Speaker Series: Geoffrey Canada [Video ~ 90 minutes]
  - Dan Pallotta – Harvard Business Review
- Enterprising Nonprofits: Chapter 1: Social Entrepreneurship J. Gregory Dees, Miriam Haas, and Peter Haas

Special: Service Project
TBD
Week 12: The US & Global Public Service

April 27, 2011 – Project Presentations Day

Objectives: Helping you to think about what service looks like around the world and to consider the many forms of aid.

Topics:
- Humanitarian aid – does it work? Does money go into the right hands?
- Modern development initiatives (USAID, etc.)
- Shaping international institutions and governments
- What is the global view of service? (Values other nations place on it).
- Global expansion of NGO sector

Memo Due: Option 1, 2 or 3

Project Step: Presentations! Work on written proposal.

Readings:
- Daniel Pipes, Palestinians Don't Deserve Additional Aid (The New York Sun, Dec. 21, 2004) [Case Study]
- Gideon Rachman: “Think Again: American Decline, This Time It’s For Real” (Foreign Policy, Jan./Feb. 2011)
- Richard Battistoni et. al., “Acting Locally in a Flat World” (Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement Vol 13(2), June 2009)
Week 13: Looking Ahead
May 4, 2011

Objectives: Explore the possibility of reforming the U.S. (and global) systems of public policy and service. Wrap up the course and identify major takeaways.

Topics:
- The modern version of public service and its role in our future
- Public salaries vs. median private compensation
- The CGI model: non-partisan, cross-sector, innovative solutions to world’s most pressing challenges
- The financial crisis: has the world changed forever or is it a temporary alteration to politics and public service?
- Exposure and optics
- Doing well and doing good

Memo Due: Option 1, 2 (is a public service academy a good or bad idea), or 3

Project Step: Submit written proposal. Work on your reflective paper.

Readings:
- Website: Proposal for a U.S. Public Service Academy

Post-Term: Reflections
May 11, 2011 by 5PM

Project Step: Submit individual reflection papers

Memo Due: Option 2 or 3