CORE-GP 1020: Managing Public Service Organizations
Wagner Graduate School of Public Service
New York University
Spring 2012

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Location: Rm #LC 9, Tisch
Time: Wednesday, 6:45-8:25 p.m.

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**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 prosperous 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 timeframes of your own choosing; and you must learn from the challenges you experience. The successful execution of these tasks requires leaders to understand what skills and abilities they bring to and need from their teams and organizations, to formulate a mission and strategy, to make effective and ethical decisions, to influence and motivate diverse individuals, to optimize the structure of their organization, to measure and improve performance, and to drive organizational change.

MPSO prepares you to achieve these objectives by providing you with fundamental frameworks and 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 concepts, analyzing related cases, engaging in role-play 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 two discussion sections of the course will be led by two accomplished teaching colleagues and will focus specifically on supporting and overseeing the project teams. The teaching colleagues work directly with me as partners in this course. You are free to talk with them about any questions or concerns about the course content or assignments but are also free to talk with me at any time.

**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 thinking through the potential consequences of decisions.

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
Required

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

Optional

The syllabus indicates a number of optional readings provided on Blackboard for students who would like to read more about a particular topic. For students who want to read a thorough, academic treatment of many of the topics we will cover in class, reviewing the literature in organizational theory and organizational behavior in public organizations, I would recommend the following textbook:


Blackboard

You must have access to the class Blackboard site at http://classes.nyu.edu/

- Many class related documents (extra readings, discussion questions, class handouts, etc.) and surveys/exercises will be posted here. If you have not activated your NYU 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:

- 20% Class participation (see guidelines below)
- 40% Team project (intermediate assignments and paper; team member evaluations)
- 15% Individual assignments (10% MGOA assignment / 5% Vision of Value memo)
- 25% Final exam

**Class Participation**
All class sessions will involve active discussion based on the readings and cases, with an emphasis both on theoretical questions and practical implications. You should be prepared to share your ideas and to listen to and interpret the issues presented by others. Please carefully read the readings and cases before class sessions. Most participation will be voluntary; however, to insure that everyone has the opportunity to be involved, individuals will occasionally be called upon at my discretion. Keep in mind that your goal should be to contribute high quality, rather than high quantity, discussion comments and questions. High quality comments and questions possess one or more of the following attributes:

- **Relevance**: How is your comment/question related to the current discussion?
- **Accuracy**: Do you use terms and concepts in ways that are consistent with definitions provided in readings and lectures?
- **Analysis**: Can you explain the reasoning behind your comment/question using careful analysis?
- **Integration**: Does your comment/question move the discussion forward by building on previous contributions with new insights?
- **Individuality**: Does your comment/question contribute a new perspective to the discussion, or does it simply repeat what others have already said?
- **Application**: Does your comment/question apply the theory and concepts to real-world situations?

Regular participation in discussions and class exercises is expected. If you must miss a class, it is essential that you notify me and your TC at least 24 hours in advance so I can make arrangements for any in-class exercises.

**Team Project**: The goals of the team project are (1) to practice using team concepts on a weekly basis, (2) to connect theory to practice by utilizing a conceptual framework to analyze an actual organization and (3) to develop your professional network with leaders of organizations that are engaged with topics that interest you.

You will be assigned to teams of three or four students. Each team will focus on one of the following areas covered by the course:

- Mission & Strategy
- Organizational Structure
- Employee/Client Diversity
- Employee Motivation & Incentives
- Performance Management & Measurement
- Organizational Culture

Your team will select an organization in **New York City** in which to study one of these topics. The organization you select can be in any sector that provides public service (government, nonprofit, or for-profit) and can be one you previously worked for, one you would
like to work for, or simply one that interests you. Your team will make contact with the organization and approach and interview two senior managers to learn about the topic you have selected in the context of that organization. Your final deliverable is a theoretically grounded and applied analytical paper that discusses the topic as applied to the organization in the following ways:

- **Theory/Prior Evidence**: What does the management/organizations literature we have covered in class say about the topic in conceptual/theoretical terms, and what is the evidence regarding organizational performance?
- **Data/Evidence**: What do the senior managers say about how the topic you are studying affects the day-to-day work in the organization and the organization’s performance? What is the history behind why things work as they do? What is working well? What could be improved? What would they change? Are there any constraints that prevent feasibly improving the organization with respect to your topic?
- **Analysis**: Based on the theory/prior evidence, explain what has happened/is happening at the organization. Can you illuminate what the leaders have told you? Can you reconcile anything that the managers told you that seem inconsistent with theory/prior evidence?
- **Recommendations**: What would your team recommend, with respect to your topic, to increase organizational performance?

Your team will be working on this project throughout the semester and periodically will be asked to provide information about your progress. The project includes the following steps (although the tasks in bold are required in the order presented, the remainder is only a recommended order in which to proceed):

1. Discuss members’ expectations regarding teamwork, team decision making and leadership. Develop agreement regarding team roles, ground rules, and protocols in the form of a **team charter**.
2. As a team, find a government, nonprofit, or for-profit organization to serve as the case study for the team's theme. Identify two senior managers who are willing and available to be interviewed. Submit a **team project brief**.
3. 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.
4. Develop interview questions and conduct your first interview. Identify a theoretical framework, model, or set of concepts with which you can analyze your chosen topic at the organization you are studying. Submit a **team project status report memo**. Conduct your second interview.
5. Prepare a **final paper** according to the criteria for all written assignments (below) and the following:
   - The paper should be no more than 10 pages double spaced, excluding references and an optional appendix.
   - Your paper should include a list of references at the end. An appendix may follow with a figure or table.
   - Use the Example Final Paper Table of Contents (Blackboard/Assignments/Team Project Materials) as a guideline for how you might structure your paper. Use the
format for the readings in this syllabus as a guide for how to format the References section. To cite a work in the body of the text, list the author(s) and year of publication in parentheses as follows: (Phillips, 2004).

• **Due May 2 in class.**

**Assignments and Outside-of-Class Exercises:** To facilitate application of the class concepts and your project team development, you will be asked to complete some individual and team exercises, reflections, and assignments, outside of class in addition to the team paper. Most of these are very brief; the exceptions are the MGOA Physicians Analysis and the Team Final Paper. The exercises, reflections, and assignments and their due dates are listed below:

- Vision of Value Memo / due February 1 / 1 page double spaced
- Team Charter / due February 9 / 1 page single spaced
- Team Project Brief / due February 22
- MGOA Physician Analysis / due March 5 / 3 pages double spaced
- Team Project Status Report / due March 8 / 1 page single spaced
- Implicit Association Exercise and Stereotyping Reflection / due March 20 / 1 page double spaced
- Decision Making / Ethical Dilemma Exercise / due April 3
- Team Final Paper / due May 2

All written work will be evaluated using the following criteria (in order of importance):

- **Theory:** How well can you apply the conceptual material offered in readings and lectures?
- **Data:** How well do you utilize descriptive data to support your argument?
- **Analysis:** How well do you integrate theory and data to create a coherent and logical argument?
- **Organization:** How clear and well-organized is your presentation?
- **Writing:** How well do you reflect professional quality in spelling, grammar, and writing style? (see section "Writing Resources“ for writing assistance)
- **Formatting:** Written assignments, including the team paper, should be submitted in 12-point font, left justified, with 1-inch margins, numbered pages, and no longer than the page limit specified for the assignment.

One general guideline to consider is to favor depth over breadth. That is, papers and memos covering fewer topics tend to also display more thorough analysis than assignments trying to cover more topics. 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. Late assignments will be deducted by 10% for every 24-hour period past the deadline. The teaching colleagues may take a preliminary read on all course assignments, but I will assign all final grades.

**Final Exam:** The final exam will be held on **May 9** during normal lecture hours in our normal lecture room. It will contain a series of short answer and essay questions. You may bring to the exam one 8.5” x 11” sheet of paper with notes on the front and back. I cannot give advice that guarantees success on the exam, but I have three tips that are designed to provide you with the level and kind of knowledge I would want heading into my own exam.
1. Distribute your study time according to the following rule: the exam will *emphasize* material covered in class over material that was not covered in class, but anything from the syllabus or class is fair game (*all* slides, readings, cases, videos, and DVDs).
2. Think about the connections between slides, readings, cases, and videos.
3. Think about how one framework might apply to something we analyzed from a different framework in class.

**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://www.nyu.edu/wagner/current/services/writing.php](http://www.nyu.edu/wagner/current/services/writing.php)

Memo writing guidelines can be found at the URL below:
[http://wagner.nyu.edu/current/services/files/WritingMemos.pdf](http://wagner.nyu.edu/current/services/files/WritingMemos.pdf)

**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 the following URL: [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.

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 25  Developing A Public Service Mission

Objectives
• Explore the meaning of social and public value
• Understand the logic behind mission

Read
before class

after class

In Class
• CASE: Blast in Centralia No. 5 discussion
  1. What does this case study tell us about the central problems and issues facing public administrators in their work? Why is governmental administration such a complex and difficult task, according to this study?
  2. What does the case say about any special public obligations of public administrators compared to the obligations of those engaged in private administration?
  3. If you had actually been one of the leading administrative officials in the case—Driscoll O. Scanlan, Dwight Green, or Robert Medill--what would have been your view of public administration, and how might such a perspective on administration have helped shape the outcome of the story?
• Review syllabus
Session 2: February 1  
**Team Formation and Team Process**

**Objectives**
- Explore the concepts of division of labor and coordination in teamwork
- Introduction to your team members for the team project

**Read**
**before class**

**after class**

**In Class**
- **EXERCISE:** Legoperson

**Due (in class)**
- Vision of Value Memo: One-page double-spaced memo addressed to the instructor articulating your vision of public or social value. See Assignments/Blackboard for detailed instructions. Bring three copies to class; one for the instructor, one for your TC, and one to share with your newly assigned project team members in discussion section. Memo writing guidelines can be found at the following URL: [http://wagner.nyu.edu/current/services/files/WritingMemos.pdf](http://wagner.nyu.edu/current/services/files/WritingMemos.pdf).

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**MODEL OF TEAM PERFORMANCE**

**Input**
- **Personal Characteristics**
  - Attitudes
  - Ability
  - Performance
  - Background
- **Situational Characteristics**
  - Space
  - Task type
  - Group size
  - Rewards

**Dynamics**
- **Group Structure**
  - Roles, Division of Labor
  - Equality vs. Hierarchy
  - Homogeneity vs. Heterogeneity

**Output**
- **Effects on Individuals**
  - Attitudes (job satisfaction)
  - Knowledge
- **Effects on Group**
  - Cohesion
  - Productivity
  - Quality
  - Creativity
  - Efficiency
- **Effects on Organization**
  - Sustainability
  - Growth

McGrath,
Session 3: February 8  

Strategic Analysis

Objectives

• Learn the key features of an organizational strategy
• Learn how to perform a strategic analysis of an organization

Read (before class)


In Class

• CASE: *Rubicon* DVD

Due (Thursday, February 9 at midnight)

• Project team charter (1 page single spaced; email to TC)
Session 4: February 15  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)

In Class
• CASE: Harlem Children’s Zone discussion
  1. What are the crucial success factors for Rheedlin before the strategic planning process?
  2. What are HCZ’s goals? Are there any conflicting goals?
  3. What is HCZ’s theory of the problem? Does the focus on neighborhood and concentration make sense?
  4. What outcomes does HCZ emphasize? Is there more emphasis on process or impact?
  5. What do you think of HCZ’s evaluation strategy?
  6. What impact has the business plan and the focus on measurement had on the staff?

HARLEM CHILDREN’S ZONE

THE BABY COLLEGE

The Baby College, an innovative parent series on infant development, was designed by Dr. T. Barry Brazelton, a foremost expert in early child development. The Baby College provides parenting workshops, child development clinics, and access to community resources for parents with children ages 0-3. In FY 2007, The Baby College offered five 1-hour workshops in which 300 parents with 400 children participated.

- 80% of parents improved the frequency of reading to their children
- 95.6% of parents had health insurance for their children upon graduation
- 95.2% of parents had up-to-date or scheduled immunizations for their children upon graduation

Due Wednesday, February 22 in class (1 page single spaced; email to TC)
• Team Project Brief: a) name of organization, b) name of one leader who you have contacted, and c) one-paragraph description of the organization
Session 5: February 22  
*Designing Organizational Structure*

**Objectives**
- Understand how structure can solve coordination problems
- Discuss the impact of structure on other aspects of the organization

**Read (before class)**


**In Class**
- **CASE: Mercy Corps discussion**
  1. What are the strengths and concerns of a highly entrepreneurial organization?
  2. 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?
  3. 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?
  4. How should Mercy Corps decide which functions should be performed at the operating unit and which functions should be the responsibility of headquarters?
  5. 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 6: February 29  

Motivating Performance

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

Read (before class)

In Class
- Lecture on concepts that are essential for your Performance Pay for MGOA Physicians case analysis

Due (Monday, March 5 at midnight)
- Three-page double spaced analysis of Performance Pay for MGOA Physicians
  [BB/Assignments for instructions] (email to TC)

**EXPECTANCY THEORY**

\[
\text{Incentive level to follow management directives} = \text{Effort} \times \text{Performance} \times \text{Rewards}
\]

Nadler & Lawler, 1977
Session 7: March 7  Communicating Effectively

Objectives
- Provide strategies for communicating feedback up and down the hierarchy
- Learn how to structure meetings effectively

Read
before class

after class

In Class
- EXERCISE: Performance Appraisal

Due
Tuesday, March 8, midnight
- Team project status report memos (1 page single spaced; email to Professor Kurs and TC)
Friday, March 20, 12 p.m.
- Complete one Implicit Association Exercise [BB/Assignments for link]. Note: You may have to take the assessment several times as it occasionally times out, leave yourself ample time to complete the exercise.
- Implicit Association and Stereotyping Reflection [BB/Assignments for instructions] (email to Professor Kurs and TC)

“The complaints against you are as follows: You don’t return calls, you don’t encourage your staff, and you’re nobody’s best friend.”
Session 8: March 21  Managing Diversity

Objectives
• Understand stereotyping and diversity-related issues
• Develop strategies to address issues of diversity in organizations

Read (before class)

In Class
• Implicit Association Exercise discussion
• CASE: *Seattle Community Association* discussion
  1. What do you like about what SCA is trying to do? What are the problems with, and unintended effects of, the anti-racism initiative?
  2. What is the SCA leadership trying to achieve in the short-term? In the long-term? Which diversity paradigm (from Thomas & Ely’s article) is motivating the anti-racism initiative?
  3. Do you feel that there is a problem with diversity at SCA? How could you collect and use evidence to determine whether SCA’s hiring process could be called institutionally racist?
  4. What does the leadership’s thinking reveal about which constituents they feel most accountable to?
  5. Why did the anti-racism initiative and the new hiring policy adopted in 2003 meet so much resistance?

In Section
• Team project status reports with Professor Kurs
Session 9: March 28  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
- CASE: The Royal Treatment (SAS) video

In Section
- Team project status reports with Professor Kurs

Due (Tuesday, April 3, 12 p.m.)
- Complete Decision Making/ Ethical Dilemma Exercises [A link will be emailed to your NYU address].
Session 10: April 4  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)
   **Required: Introduction, Biases 1, 2, 3, 9, 11. Recommended: entire chapter.**

In Class
- CASE: How a City Slowly Drowned? discussion
  1. When were the seminal decisions made and why? What were the main motivations of individuals and groups involved with the critical decisions? Why were they never able to adequately prepare for the eventual disaster?
  2. In retrospect, how should the community and its leaders have planned well ahead of time to prevent Katrina devastation?
  3. What are the central implications that you could draw from this case study that may apply to practicing public administration, particularly in regards to how they ought to go about their day-to-day roles in making appropriate choices to promote the public interest?
Session 11: April 11  
*Values and Justice in the Allocation of Resources*

**Objectives**
- Explore decision-making in resource-constrained environments
- Understand the role of values in ethical dilemmas in organizations

**Read**

before class

after class

**In Class**
- Kidney Allocation Exercise

### Procedures

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<tr>
<td>Unfair</td>
<td>Displeasure</td>
<td>Moral outrage</td>
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Session 12: April 18  Negotiation and Conflict Resolution

Objectives
• Assess your skills at negotiating
• Comprehend the core principles of negotiation

Read (before class)

Model of the Negotiation Bargaining Zone

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Session 13: April 25  

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)


In Class

- CASE: Job Corps discussion
  1. Who do you think is most powerful in the case?
  2. Which of Kelly’s influence tactics do you like? Which could he have developed better?
  3. How does Kelly use reciprocity and consistency?
  4. What strategies are most appropriate for Kelly to use to save Job Corps going forward?
Session 14: May 2  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 Ewers (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 Ewers and Lockhart in dealing with each other?
- Wrap-up

Due (in class)
- Team paper
- Team Member Evaluations

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT FRAMEWORK

![Strategic Alignment Framework Diagram](Nadler & Tushman, 1992)