INTRODUCTION TO MANAGING PUBLIC SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

WAGNER GRADUATE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE
NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
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Class meets Tuesday & Thursday 2:00 pm – 3:15 pm
Location: Goddard B-02

Course Overview:
The goal of Introduction to Managing Public Service Organizations (MPSO) is to enhance your understanding of management and leadership in government agencies and nonprofit organizations. The course provides you with an understanding of the tools you need to diagnose and solve organizational problems, to influence the actions of individuals, groups, teams and organizations, and to lead high performing, effective 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 require 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.

We will examine the key variables in an organization that must be considered and managed, including power relationships, culture, communication, leadership and ethics. We will use case studies to enhance your understanding of the practical realities that drive managerial effectiveness.

Course Format
Each week we will focus on a particular type of management skill. 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 readings introduce core 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 and 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.

**Preparing for Class**

It is important that you complete the readings for each class in advance. This is a discussion-based class. You and your classmates will not benefit as much from the class session if you come unprepared. Analyzing cases is impossible without reading them before discussing them.

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 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 readings 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 might face as a leader, a manager, a policy analyst, an urban planner, or a financial analyst?
- How would 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 assigned 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. We all live busy lives so class will begin and end on time. 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.
Class Participation

All Class sessions will involve active discussion based on readings and cases, with an emphasis both on theoretical questions and practical limitations. You should be prepared to share your ideas in class and listen to and interpret the issues presented by classmates. One of the challenges and interesting aspects of management in the public sector is that often there is more than one right answer, amidst a complex set of facts and unknowns, addressing multiple audiences with different agendas. Diverse employees, subcontractors, politicians, lobbyists and media all require attention. So share freely, adopt an open-minded stance, entertain new ideas from classmates and consider how your recommendations might change in light of new insights.

Your **class participation is crucial** to understanding the complexity of decision-making and the success of the class session. Most participation will be voluntary; however, to ensure everyone has the opportunity to be involved, individuals will occasionally be called upon at my discretion. Keep in mind that contributions should focus on quality or inquiry rather than quantity. Comments are encouraged that: are relevant to the current discussion; move the discussion forward; contribute new insights; offer different perspectives; or bring in related real world experiences of your own or in the news.

*Phones should be turned off during class.*

Readings

1. The required textbook is available at the bookstore, or digitally from the publisher online or through the bookstore. As we will be reading nine cases and articles from the text, sharing is acceptable if you can make arrangements successfully with each other. Successfully means all readings are done before class, by everyone, with sufficient time to reflect on the material.

   **Public Administration Concepts and Cases**  
   By Richard J. Stillman II  
   Wadsworth Cengage Learning

2. The remaining readings are available on the course Blackboard website.

**Blackboard**  
You must have access to the Blackboard site at [http://classes.nyu.edu/](http://classes.nyu.edu/)

Many class related documents (assigned readings, extra readings, discussion questions, etc.) and surveys/exercises will be posted here. If you have not activated your NYU account or have forgotten your password, you can activate it or change your password at [http://start.nyu.edu](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/.

You will need Adobe Acrobat Reader 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/products/acrobat/readstep2.html and follow the download instructions.

**Grading**

Your grade for the course will be based on the following elements:

- 30% Class Participation
- 25% Team Project (intermediate assignments and paper; team member evaluations)
- 20% Individual Assignments (2 writing assignments)
- 25% Final Exam

**Team Project**

The goals of the team project are (1) to practice using team concepts (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. Weekly, some class time will be made available for team meetings, but teams will have to meet outside of class hours to successfully complete the team project.

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/organization literature covered in assigned readings 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 3 in class.**
Assignments

Due dates for planned assignments are as follows:

- Vision of Value Memo, due February 2, (1 page double spaced)
- Team Charter, due February 16, (1 page single spaced)
- Team Project Brief, due March 1
- Team Project Status Report Memo, due March 8, (1 page single spaced)
- Implicit Association and Stereotyping Reflection, due March 16, (1 page double spaced)
- Writing Assignment, due March 28, (maximum 3 pages double spaced)
- Team Final Paper, May 3, (10 page maximum double spaced)

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.

**Final Exam:** The final exam will be held on **May 10** during normal lecture hours in our normal lecture room. It will contain a series of short answer/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 readings, cases, videos, and DVDs).
2. Think about the connections between 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

Statement of Academic Integrity
As members of the NYU 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
COURSE OUTLINE AND SESSION SCHEDULE

Assigned readings are in the textbook or on Blackboard (BB)

Week 1: January 24 & 26  Developing A Public Service Mission

Objectives:
- Introduction to Class & Reading Cases Effectively
- Explore the Meaning of Social & Public Value
- Understand the Logic Behind Mission

Read (before class)


In Class

- Introduce ourselves
- Review syllabus, team project and reading cases
- Discuss role of public administration
- Discuss mission & public value as reflected in the reading and case

Week 2: January 31, February 2  Team Formation & Process

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

Read


In Class

- EXERCISE: Legoperson

Due February 2 (in class)

- Vision of Value Memo: One-page double spaced memo addressed to the professor articulating your vision of public or social value. Consult Blackboard/Assignments for detailed instructions. Bring two copies to class; one for the professor and one to
share with your newly assigned project team members. Memo writing guidelines can be found at the following URL: http://wagner.nyu.edu/current/services/files/WritingMemos.pdf

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**Week 3: February 7 & 9  Strategic Analysis**

**Objectives**

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

**Read**


**In Class**

- CASE: RUBICON DVD

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**Week 4: February 14 & 16  The General Environment for Public Administration**

**Objectives**

- Learn how ecological factors shape public administration
- Discuss how public administrators can use/shape their organizations environment

**Read**


**In Class**

- Discuss why knowledge of the general environment is critical to public managers
- Discuss how modern environmental factors effect managerial action
- Compare and contrast how environmental factors that drove administrative decisions in Robertson and Centralia

**Due February 16 (at midnight)**

- Project Team Charter (1 page single spaced: email to Professor)
### Week 5: **February 21 & 23**  *The Political Environment of Public Administration*

#### Objectives
- Learn why administrative power is essential to effective leadership
- Learn how administrative power is accrued, retained and lost

#### Read

#### In Class
- Discuss political and administrative power
- Understand impact of external power sources
- Discuss the responsible and irresponsible use of power
- Discuss the power of persuasion

### Week 6: **February 28 & March 1**  *Motivating Performance*

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

#### Read

#### In Class
- Lecture and discussion on motivation and what makes for stellar employees

#### Due March 1 (in class)
- Team Project Brief: a) name of organization, b) name of one leader who you have contacted, and c) one-paragraph description of the organization (one page single spaced)
Week 7: March 6 & 8  Communicating Effectively

Objectives

- Learn the roadblocks and criticality of effective communication
- Learn the essential elements of good communication

Read


In Class

- Discuss how inadequate communication can create problems in organizations, from interpersonal communications to communications between departments and on to communications external to organization
- Discuss how to ensure communications are effective

Due Thursday, March 8, by midnight

- Team Project Status Report Individual Memos (1 page single spaced; email to Professor Kurs)

Due Friday, March 16, 12 noon

- Complete one Implicit Association Exercise (A link will be provided. Note: You may have to take the assessment more than once as it occasionally times out, so leave adequate time to complete the assignment.)
- Complete Association and Stereotyping Reflection (See BB/Assignments for instructions) (email to Professor Kurs)

Spring Break March 12 – 17
Week 8: March 20 & 22  Diversity

Objectives

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

Read


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 initiative?
  3. Do you feel 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 leaderships 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?

Due March 28, midnight

- Writing Assignment. To be Announced March 20 in Class (Maximum 3 page double spaced analysis; email to Professor Kurs)
Week 9: March 27 & 29  Organizational Culture

Objectives

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

Read


In Class

- CASE: *The Royal Treatment* (SAS) video

Week 10: April 3 & 5  Decision Making, Incremental Choice & Ethics

Objectives

- Learn how biases can interfere with good decision making
- Understand why public administrators often make incremental decisions

Read


In Class

- Lecture on the sources of systemic decision-making biases
- Discuss ethics as revealed in the case, and as they relate to decisions made and not made regarding the levees in New Orleans
- Examine the pressure inherent in some public decision making and how it may result in incremental decisions and ethical challenges
Week 11 April 10 & 12  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


In Class

- Kidney Allocation Exercise

Week 12 April 17 & 19  Negotiation and Conflict Resolution

Objectives

- Comprehend the core principles of negotiation
- Assess your skill at negotiating

Read


In Class

- Discuss why negotiating skills are so important
- Discuss concepts in negotiation
- Explore gender differences in negotiating

Week 13 April 24 & 26  Public Administration and Ethics

Objectives

- Demonstrate how competing obligations complicate ethical behavior in public administration
- Understand how to avoid easily made ethical mistakes
Read

In Class
- Discuss how to see and evaluate ethical obligations
- Consider the ethical obligations on public officials and whether they differ from other managers
- Discuss how you would have responded to Tenet’s ethical challenges and the implications of other courses of action

Week 14  May 1 & 3  Leading Change

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

Read

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 May 3 (in class)
- Final Team paper