PS 541 - Public Personnel Administration

Western Kentucky University
Department of Political Science
Master of Public Administration Program

Fall 2010 Course Syllabus

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Time: Tues. 6:30 - 9:15 EDT (check location of class)
Office Hours (EDT): Tues. 5:00-6:00; Thurs. 10:00-11:30am;
Thurs. 5:00-6:00; and by appointment

Course Description

This course is a systematic survey of public personnel administration in the United States at the national, state, and local levels. In this course, we will discuss the organization of modern personnel systems in the public sector. The material covered in this graduate-level course will be both theoretical and applied. A wealth of academic research exists that tests theories of public organizations and personnel management, all of which are based upon observations and data from the field. Therefore, a major portion of the course deals with theories of organizations and organizational/employee-employer interactions. Another major portion of the course is more applied in nature. Building off of interdisciplinary theories from political science, public administration, psychology, economics, etc., we will also delve into the “how-to’s” of public personnel management in an attempt to better understand how to effectively and efficiently manage these organizations.

You are working towards receiving an advanced degree that should signal to employers that you have a greater skill-set than individuals with only a Bachelor’s Degree. This course is a graduate-level course at the Master’s level, and therefore, reflects the typical workload for a Master’s in Public Administration program. It is reading and writing intensive and incorporates theories and models across several disciplines. Some of the material involves economic and mathematical models to explain organizational and individual behavior. I do not expect students to have formal training in economics and/or mathematics, but do expect them to take the time to better understand the basic models presented in class.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students should have a working knowledge of the existing theories regarding public personnel management in the U.S. system. They will also be able to understand current, applied issues in public personnel management that build off of these theories.
By the end of the course, students should have also further developed their analytical and critical thinking skills to better prepare themselves to solve problems in any organization (public or private) in which they may have current and/or future employment.

**Required Texts**


All readings, exams, and assignments will be based upon the indicated editions of these texts. There is no guarantee that older editions will contain the same information.

*Other readings will be located online.*

**Course Requirements**

1. **Online Discussion (100 pts.):** Throughout the semester, I will ask you to respond to a prompt in the Berman et al. textbook in a discussion forum on Blackboard. Each prompt is worth 10 points, and you will be graded on an initial response to the prompt and then on a rebuttal or refutation. You are not limited to only writing 2 responses per prompt, but you are required to write an initial response to the prompt (about 1-2 paragraphs), and then are responsible for critiquing another respondent’s claim or providing a rebuttal to a critique of your own initial response. This is a simple discussion forum and should be fairly conducive to eliciting reactions. All responses are due by 11:59 pm (Eastern) on the night before the class for which the prompt is listed. At that time, the discussion board will be locked for comments.

2. **Midterm:** The midterm (150 points) will cover the first half of the semester’s material and will be essay-format. One week prior to the date listed as the midterm on the syllabus, I will give you the essay prompts. You will be given 3 prompts with which you should respond to each in a well-thought, critical essay. The syllabus indicates the time and date that the midterm is due. You must turn it in using the Turnitin.com feature on Blackboard. The midterm is a take-home midterm and is therefore open-book and open-note. You may utilize any resources to help you answer the questions, with the exception of other human beings. Any consultation with other students, co-workers, and/or professors is prohibited and will be considered cheating.

3. **Final (200 points total):** The final will be essay-format. One week prior to the date listed by the university as the date of the final, I will give you 2 essay prompts to answer each in a well-thought, critical essay. These prompts will cover material discussed since the midterm. It will be due by 11:59 PM the evening of the final exam as indicated by the university. You must turn it in using the Turnitin.com feature on Blackboard. This portion of the final is take-home and is there-
fore open-book and open-note. You may utilize any resources to help you answer the questions, with the exception of other human beings. Any consultation with other students, co-workers, and/or professors is prohibited and will be considered cheating. The remaining 100 points of the final will involve a cumulative question to be administered on the date and time of the final as determined by the university. The purpose of this portion of the final is to mirror your comprehensive exams. You will have 1 question to answer in a given period of time. It will be closed-book and closed-notes.

4. Term Paper (250 pts. total): You will be asked to write a critical essay of your place of employment or a critique of a public agency. A more specific prompt and description of the assignment will be given on the second week of the course. You will be required to submit a topic paragraph by September 28th (worth 50 points). The paper will be worth 200 points, and you will turn it in through Turnitin.com on Blackboard.

Grade Components

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Term Paper</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Discussion</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic Paragraph</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>700</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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Grading Scale

- A = >90% (630-700)
- B = ≥80% & <90% (560-629)
- C = ≥70% & <80% (490-559)
- D = ≥60% & <70% (420-489)
- F = <60% (<420)

Course Expectations & Policies

**Attendance**
I do not require attendance in any of my courses. It is your prerogative whether or not you attend this course. Attending class and coming prepared and ready to discuss the readings will contribute to your success in the course.

**Courtesy**
The instructor and students are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner. Students are expected to arrive to class on time and to stay for the entire class period as indicated on the syllabus in order to prevent any unnecessary distractions. Please make sure that your schedule allows you to arrive on time and stay for the allotted period.
Cellular phones in the classroom are a major distraction to yourself, other students, and the instructor. If you have a cell phone on your person during the class period, it must be silenced (not on vibrate). I do not tolerate text-messaging during the class period. While it may appear to be an innocuous and quiet activity, it is disrespectful, and I will ask you to leave if I become aware of any cellular phone activity.

**Late Work Policy & Make-Up Exams and Assignments**

Most of the exams for this course are take-home exams and you will have a week to complete them. Exams submitted after the time indicated on the due date will not be graded and the student will earn a 0 for the exam. Requests for additional time to complete exams will only be given at the instructor’s discretion and are limited to family and medical emergencies (weddings and birthday parties are not emergencies), official university business, and jury duty. Any requests for additional time to complete the exam must be made to the instructor with documentation and within 24 hours of knowledge of the conflict. Incomplete grades will only be given for extreme, extenuating circumstances and will be granted at the instructor’s discretion and subject to university policies. Failure to follow the above protocol for requesting additional time to complete an exam will result in the exam not being graded and the student receiving a 0 for the exam.

For the cumulative question on the final, it is expected that you will be able to sit for it on the date and time indicated by the university. Requests to take this exam at another time and date than dictated by the university will only be given at the instructor’s discretion and are limited to family and medical emergencies (weddings and birthday parties are not emergencies), official university business, and jury duty. Any requests to take the exam on a different date than scheduled by the university must be made to the instructor with documentation and within 24 hours of knowledge of the conflict. Failure to follow the above protocol will result in the student receiving a 0 for this portion of the exam.

Due to the fact that this course involves instructing students at several different campuses, no late assignments will be accepted. Assignments turned in after the time indicated on the due date will not be graded and the student will receive a 0 for the assignment. This same policy applies for the term paper and the topic paragraph grade components. Power outages, printer errors, server outages, etc. will not be acceptable excuses for not meeting assignment and examination deadlines.

**Additional Information**

**Instructional Availability and Assistance**

Office hours are indicated on the first page of this syllabus. Unless otherwise noted in class or through email, office hours will be conducted at the Radcliff center. Several occasions during the semester, I will be on the main campus and will instruct the course from that location. Office hours on those days will be conducted on main campus at the time indicated on the syllabus (please note that main campus is on Central time.). I will inform the class ASAP if I will be on the main campus and will also indicate the location of the office hours. If you are not located near either campus and still need assistance, we may need to work out a time and medium through which to
communicate (e.g. email, telephone, or Skype).

Utilization of Library and Outside Sources
This course requires a term paper in which you will likely need to access library materials. If you are not located near the main campus library, you will need to familiarize yourself with the interlibrary loan procedures if you anticipate needing to use materials that are not located online.

Academic Integrity
These excerpts are taken from the WKU Faculty Handbook:

The maintenance of academic integrity is of fundamental importance to the University. Thus it should be clearly understood that acts of plagiarism or any other form of cheating will not be tolerated and that anyone committing such acts risks punishment of a serious nature.

Plagiarism - To represent ideas or interpretations taken from another source as one’s own is plagiarism. Plagiarism is a serious offense. The academic work of students must be their own. Students must give the author(s) credit for any source material used. To lift content directly from a source without giving credit is a flagrant act. To present a borrowed passage after having changed a few words, even if the source is cited, is also plagiarism.

Cheating - No student shall receive or give assistance not authorized by the instructor in taking an examination or in the preparation of an essay, laboratory report, problem assignment, or other project that is submitted for purposes of grade determination.

Disposition of Offenses - Students who commit any act of academic dishonesty may receive from the instructor a failing grade in that portion of the course work in which the act is detected or a failing grade in the course without possibility of withdrawal. The faculty member may also present the case to the University Disciplinary Committee through the Office of the Dean of Student Life for disciplinary sanctions. Students who believe a faculty member has dealt unfairly with them in a situation involving alleged academic dishonesty may seek relief through the Student Complaint Procedure.

Students should familiarize themselves with these policies as outlined in their student handbook.

Double Submission of Academic Work
Students may not submit a paper for the term paper assignment that was used or is being used for an assignment in another course without obtaining the permission of both instructors.

Student Disability Services
In compliance with university policy, students with disabilities who require accommodations (academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids or services) for this course must contact the Office for Student Disability Services in Downing University Center A-200. The phone number is 745-5004; TTY is 745-3030. Per university policy, please DO NOT request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without at letter of accommodation from the OFSDS.
Syllabus Change Policy
The contents of this course syllabus are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances.

Course Schedule

Aug. 31: Introduction to Public Administration and Course

Sep. 7: Introduction to Public Personnel Administration
- Berman et al. Introduction - Ch. 1, pp. xiii-42.
- Cohen et al. Introduction - Ch. 2, pp. ix-44.

Sep. 14: The Bureaucracy

Online Discussion: p. 37, #1; p. 38, #10.
Sep. 21: The Bureaucracy, contd.

Sep. 28: Recruitment and Selection
-Crumpacker, Martha, and Jill M. Crumpacker. 2007. “Succession Planning and Generational Stereotypes: Should HR Consider Age-Based Values and Attitudes a Relevant Factor or Passing Fad?” Public Personnel Management. 36.4: 349-369.

Research Paper Topic Paragraph Due

Oct. 5: Recruitment and Selection, contd.
-Cohen et al. Ch. 3, pp. 45-68.
-Berman et al. Ch. 4, pp. 110-148.

Online Discussion: p. 75, #8.; p. 106, #1.

Oct. 12: Position Management
-Berman et al. Ch. 5, pp. 149-179.
-Cohen et al. Ch. 4-6, pp. 89-170.

Online Discussion: p. 141, #5.

Oct. 19: Midterm Exam Due by 11:59 PM (EDT)
Oct. 26: Position Management and Strategies  

Nov. 2: Motivation  
-Berman et al. Ch. 6, pp. 180-198.  

Nov. 9: Compensation & Unionization  
-Berman et al. Ch. 7, pp. 199-234.  
-Berman et al. Ch. 11, pp. 335-380.  
Online Discussion: p. 197 #3; p. 197 #5; p. 197 #7.

Nov. 16: Workplace Policies & Employee Appraisal  
-Berman et al. Ch. 8, pp. 235-274.  
-Berman et al. Ch. 10, pp. 301-334.  
Online Discussion: p. 227 #4; p. 227 #12.

Nov. 23: Managerial Dilemmas  

Nov. 30: Managerial Dilemmas  
-Miller, Ch. 5-11, pp. 102-233.
Dec. 7: Term Paper Due by 11:59 pm (EDT)
Legal Issues

Student Signature
Please read, sign, and date the following statement:

“I have a copy of the PS 541 course syllabus and understand and accept its contents. I also understand that work in this course must be my work, and all required assignments, projects, and tests must be completed to receive a passing grade for this course.”

Printed Name: ____________________________________________
Signature: _________________________________________________
Date: ______________________________________________________

Discussing Grades via Email
You will be able to check your grades in an online grade book. You can ask me about grades via email, but I am not allowed by law to reply in any detail using email, unless I have your written signature (This is to protect your privacy as email is not a private form of communication.). Read, circle one, and sign:

“I give my consent to the instructor to discuss my course grades with me via email.”

Or

“I prefer the following method for discussing course grades (e.g., phone call, wait for registrar’s notice at the end of the term). Choice is subject to a negotiation of a mutually acceptable method.”

Printed Name: ____________________________________________
Signature: _________________________________________________
Date: ______________________________________________________