

Introduction to Public Administration
Executive Branch Politics
PLAP 3610
University of Virginia
Department of Politics
Tu Th 5:00 – 6:15 p.m.
Gibson Hall 341
Fall 2015

Professor: Rachel A. Potter

Email: rapotter@virginia.edu

Office: Gibson Hall 384

Office hours: Wednesdays 1:30-3:30 and by appointment

Overview

Modern government is bureaucratic government. Nearly 15% of the U.S. workforce is employed by a government agency. These unelected bureaucrats make innumerable decisions that affect our daily lives, ranging from setting an acceptable level of pollutants for the air we breathe to deciding whether the Plan B “morning after” pill will be sold at the local pharmacy. The focus of this course will be on understanding and analyzing the political behavior of this so-called “Fourth branch of government.”

The course is divided into three parts. We will begin by discussing the internal workings of bureaucratic agencies. What exactly do bureaucrats do? And how do things like culture, expertise, and mission shape their behavior? In Part II, we will turn to an investigation of how outside pressure – from Congress, the President, and interest groups – influences bureaucratic actors. Finally, in Part III, we will put the previous two components together and look at bureaucratic performance on the whole. Why do some bureaucratic agencies fail and others succeed? What kinds of efforts to “reform” the bureaucracy have been implemented and have they succeeded? When is accountability desirable and when is it not?

In considering these questions, we will discuss a wide range of cases, from the Department of Interior’s role in the Deepwater Horizon oil spill to the Food and Drug Administration’s ongoing efforts to regulate tobacco use. The focus of the course will be the U.S. federal bureaucracy, although some of the topics we will discuss apply to bureaucratic organizations in other contexts.

Policies

I hold weekly office hours. You should think of this as a time to come talk with me about your assignments, this week’s readings, the classroom environment, political science, public administration, your academic life, professional development, plans for the future, etc. In other words, I am available to enrich your experience in this course and at this university, but it is up to you to avail yourself of this opportunity.

A reminder regarding plagiarism, cheating, and other activities of a dubious nature: you've pledged not to do these things, so don't. You are responsible for reading and understanding what is and is not acceptable (<http://www.academicintegrity.org/icai/integrity-1.php>). Confirmed cases of misconduct will result in failure on the assignment (and possibly the course), as well as referral to the Honor Committee.

Use technology responsibly.

Finally, please let me know as soon as possible if you require a special accommodation for any reason (disability, religious practices, extracurricular obligations, etc.).

Course Grade

Your course grade will be determined according to the following formula:

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| Short Paper | 20% |
| Short assignments (4 x 5% each) | 20% |
| Participation | 10% |
| Midterm exam | 25% |
| Final exam | 25% |

You will complete several short assignments during the course of the semester. I will grade these on a three-point scale: 3 for an excellent, insightful submission that exceeds expectations; 2 for a solid submission; 1 for a submission that falls short in some real way; 0 for essays that are not turned in or that do not give evidence of any real effort. Most grades will be 2s.

The midterm exam will be administered in class on the date indicated on the syllabus. The final exam will be administered on a date TBD.

Required Readings

There are two required texts for this course. The primary text we will rely on is:

Wilson, James Q. 1989. *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why they Do It*. New York: Basic Books.

This text is available at the UVA Bookstore, as well as any number of online booksellers. Together as a class, we will select a second book to read during the last two sessions of the course. We will choose **one** of these books:

Bovenzi, John F. 2015. *Inside the FDIC: Thirty Years of Bank Failures, Bailouts, and Regulatory Battles*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Press.

Derthick, Martha. 2012. *Up in Smoke: From Legislation to Litigation to Tobacco Politics*. 3rd edition, Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

Mahler, Julianne G. 2009. *Organizational Learning at NASA: The Challenger and Columbia Accidents*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

After we make our decision, I will order this text from the bookstore or you can order it online. All other readings for the course will be made available to students via Collab.

Course Outline and Readings

Tuesday, August 25 **Course Introduction**
• No readings.

Part I. Bureaucratic Structure & Organization

Thursday, August 27 **What do bureaucracies do?**
• Wilson, Chapter 1 “Armies, Prisons, Schools”
• Wilson, Chapter 2 “Organization Matters”

Tuesday, September 1 **Historical development and growth of the bureaucracy**
• Knott, Jack H. and Gary Miller. 1987. “The Quest for Neutral Competence” in *Reforming Bureaucracy*. Chapter 12 (Collab).

Thursday, September 3 **APSA CONFERENCE, NO CLASS**

Tuesday, September 8 **Bureaucratic motivation**
• Wilson, Chapter 4 “Beliefs”
• Goodsell, Charles T. 1994. “Bureaucrats as Ordinary People,” in *The Case for Bureaucracy*. Chapter 5 (Collab).

Thursday, September 10 **The Role of Management**
• Rumsfeld, Donald. 2013 “Battling Bureaucracy,” in *Rumsfeld’s Rules*. (Collab)
• Maranto, Robert. 2005 “Why we Fight: The Causes of Conflicts Between Career and Political Officials” (Collab)

Tuesday, September 15 **Bureaucratic culture**
• Wilson, Chapter 6 “Culture”
• Kaufman, Herb. 1960. *The Forest Ranger*, Chapter 6 (Collab)

Thursday, September 17 **Reputation: the FDA and Thalidomide**
• Carpenter, Daniel P. 2010. *Reputation and Power*, Chapter 4 (Collab)

Part II. Political Accountability

Tuesday, September 22 **Principal-Agent Theory**

- Wood, B. Dan. 2010. "Agency Theory and the Bureaucracy." In *Oxford Handbook of American Politics*. Pp. 181-206. (Collab)

Short Paper due to Collab before class

Thursday, September 24 **The Chief Executive**

- Wilson, Chapter 14 "Presidents"
- Moe, Terry. 1985. "The Politicized Presidency." (Collab)

Tuesday, September 29 **Federal Executive Institute Campus Visit**

Note: This class will run from 5:00 p.m. to approximately 7:30 p.m. Transportation and dinner will be provided. Please plan your schedule to accommodate this special opportunity.

Thursday, October 1 **Presidential Control in Practice**

- Hudak, John. 2014. "Aiding and Abetting the President: The Role of Federal Agencies" in *Presidential Pork*. Chapter 4. (Collab)

Tuesday, October 6 **READING DAY, NO CLASS**

Thursday, October 8 **MIDTERM EXAM**

Tuesday, October 13 **Organizational Structure**

- Arel-Bundock et al. 2015. "The Limits of Foreign Aid Diplomacy: How Bureaucratic Design Shapes Aid Distribution" *International Studies Quarterly* (Collab)

Thursday, October 15 **Congress and the bureaucracy**

- Wilson, Chapter 13 "Congress"

Tuesday, October 20 **Congressional oversight**

- McCubbins, Mathew D., & Schwartz, Thomas. 1984. "Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols versus Fire Alarms." *American Journal of Political Science*, 165-179. (Collab)

Thursday, October 22 **Judicial oversight**

- Wilson, Chapter 15 "Courts"
- *Massachusetts v. EPA* 549 U.S. 497 (2007) (Collab, skim)

Congressional report assignment due to Collab before class!

- Tuesday, October 27 **Interest groups and capture**
- Wilson, Chapter 5 “Interests”
 - Posner, Richard A. 2013 "The Concept of Regulatory Capture: A Short, Inglorious History." (Collab)
- Thursday, October 29 **Bureaucratic autonomy**
- Terry M. Moe, 2006. “Political Control and the Power of the Agent,” *Journal of Law, Economics and Organization*. (Collab)
- Tuesday, November 3 **Rulemaking**
- Chapter 1 (pp. 1-9) from “Regulation: a Primer” (Dudley and Brito): http://mercatus.org/sites/default/files/RegulatoryPrimer_DudleyBrito_0.pdf
 - “Rulemaking Process” section from the DOT website: <http://www.dot.gov/regulations/rulemaking-process>
 - *Chevron U.S.A., Inc. v. Natural Resources Defense Council, Inc.*, 467 U.S. 837 (1984) (Collab)
- Thursday, November 5 **Regulations.gov Exercise**
- Reading assigned in class

Part III. Bureaucratic Performance

- Tuesday, November 10 **Bureaucratic Efficiency**
- Fiorina, Morris. 1977. *Congress Keystone of the Washington Establishment*, Chapter 5 (Collab)
 - Moe, Terry. 1989. “The Politics of Bureaucratic Structure.” (Collab)
- Public Comment short assignment due before class*
- Thursday, November 12 **Case: Pipeline Safety**
- Schor, Elana and Andrew Restuccia. 2015. “Pipelines Blow up and People Die” *Politico*. April 21. (Collab)
 - Other PHMSA readings
- Tuesday, November 17 **Reform and its discontents #1**
- Osborne, David and Ted Gaebler. 1993. *Reinventing Government*, Chapter 1. (Collab)
 - Wilson, Chapter 20 “Bureaucracy and the Public Interest”
- Thursday, November 19 **Reform and its discontents #2**
- Sunstein, Cass. 2013. “Eliminating Red Tape,” from *Simpler: The Future of Government*. Chapters 4 and 8 (Collab)

Tuesday, November 24 **Bureaucratic politics in a comparative context #1**
• Wilson, Chapter 16 “National Differences”

Thursday November 26 **THANKSGIVING, NO CLASS**

Tuesday, December 1 **Bureaucratic politics in a comparative context #2**
• Thomas, Janice L. 2005. “Public Administration of Occupational Safety and Health: The Soviet Union and United States” (Collab)

Outside event short assignment due to Collab before class

Thursday, December 3 **Politics and democratic accountability I**
• Read book selected by the class

Book short assignment due to Collab before class

Tuesday, December 8 **Politics and democratic accountability II**
• Read book selected by the class

FINAL EXAM

Date and time to be arranged