PBPL-860/URST-860 Public Management
Fall Semester 2020

Time: Thursdays, 6:15-8:45 pm
Instructor: Sean Fitzpatrick
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(860) 970-4360 (c)
Zoom Office Link: https://trincoll.zoom.us/j/5192366278

Classroom: [The Building Formerly Known as] Seabury N215
Office: 70 Vernon St. 307
Office hours: Tues., 1:00-3:00 pm or by appt.

Syllabus

Course Description:

This course will survey the core principles and practices of management in the public sector. Many modern commentators have argued that a public institution must be “run like a business” to achieve its mission in an efficient and accountable way. Is this argument valid and, if not, how must the management of public institutions adapt or depart from basic business principles? Course readings will focus on the key elements of successful management in the public sphere, including goal setting and accountability, financial stewardship, cooperation with stakeholders, public transparency and inclusion, and workforce management. Students will engage with the course material through a series of short memoranda, as well as an independent research project analyzing the management of an individual public institution or agency and making recommendations for enhancements to its management structure and practices.

Course Textbooks:¹


¹ Available at the Trinity College bookstore, unless otherwise noted.
² Although there are more recent (and expensive) editions of this book, the 5th Edition will be sufficient for this class and is available used on Amazon.com for under $10.

9.08.20. ed.
Additional readings may be posted on Moodle—please check each week for assigned readings.

Class Ground Rules:

Intellectual honesty is the obligation of all students to their classmates and the entire Trinity College community. The Student Handbook lays out the College’s policy on cheating and plagiarism. You are responsible for knowing and following all College policies, including the nine rules of intellectual honesty found on pages 13-14 of the Handbook.

In addition, to encourage a classroom environment that supports respectful, critical inquiry through the free exchange of ideas, the following principles will guide our work:

- Treat every member of the class with respect, even if you disagree with their opinion;
- Reasonable minds can differ on any number of perspectives, opinions, and conclusions;
- Because constructive disagreement sharpens thinking, deepens understanding, and reveals novel insights, it is not just encouraged, it is expected;
- All viewpoints are welcome;
- No ideas are immune from scrutiny and debate; and
- You will not be graded on your opinions.

Writing Assignments:

The format for the short writing assignments, which we will call “public policy memoranda” (PPMs) for purposes of this class, is attached as Appendix 1; the requirements for the independent research project are provided in Appendix 2. Assigned PPMs are due by 5:00 p.m. on the Wednesday preceding the following week’s class Thursday class, as indicated in Moodle; the independent research project is due on Friday, December 18, 2020, at 5:00 p.m.

For any assistance you may require with these assignments, you are encouraged to use the College’s Writing Center, staffed by specially trained Writing Associates, to improve your writing, no matter your skill level. To make an appointment using the online scheduling system, use https://trincoll.mywconline.com.

Grading:

Course grades will be based 30% on class participation; 40% on the short writing assignments; and 30% on the independent research project.

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3 In addition to accessing readings, students should submit all written assignments, including the final research paper, via Moodle, in Microsoft Word format.

4 The grading scale is based on the 100 total points possible from the above percentages:

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Class Schedule & Readings

Class 1 (Sept. 10, 2020)—What are we all doing here?


Writing assignment (PPM 1): Please write a 700-900 word PPM outlining your definition of the discipline of Public Management. Is it the same thing as the academic study of Public Administration? What should be the key goals of Public Management and how should they be prioritized?

Class 2 (Sept. 17, 2020)—Goals and Essential Elements of Public Management

Americans did not begin to examine the appropriate goals and operational essentials of Public Management in depth for almost a century after the ratification of the U.S Constitution. Why? How did the governing philosophy and sometime contradictory political principles of the Constitution’s Framers influence the development of Public Management in this country? How has Public Management evolved in the United States toward its current state, and what academic and scientific theories have influenced that evolution? Reading: Stillman, Ch. 2 and 3, pp. 18-69; Rainey, Ch. 2, pp. 16-52.

Writing assignment (PPM 2): Revise and expand your PPM 1 in an additional 350-500 words, adding a section discussing the key competencies you believe an effective public manager should master.

Class 3 (Sept. 24, 2020)—Professionalism and Public Management


Writing Assignment (PPM 3): Please write an 700-900 word PPM stating your views on the appropriate role of professionals in public management. What are the tradeoffs involved in an increasing dependence on professional specialists in Public Management?

Assignments turned in late will be subject to a 5-point deduction in grade for each day late, absent special permission from the Instructor obtained prior to the due date.

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Class 4 (Oct. 1, 2020)—Public vs. Private Management


Writing assignment (PPM 4): Please write a 700-900 word PPM stating your views on the applicability of private-sector management approaches to the public sector. Are Osborne and Gaebler’s and Gunn’s suggestions of a “third way” still viable, or has more recent experience undermined their validity?

Class 5 (Oct. 8, 2020)—Policy Development & Politics


Class 6 (Oct. 15, 2020)—Power, Policy & Organizational Structure

In theory, the organizational structure of a public agency should reflect the policy priorities it is charged with pursuing. Given the barriers to change observed in the public sector, however, public managers face a particular challenge in adapting their organizational structures and work environments to evolving policy needs. Reading: Rainey, Ch. 4, pp. 86-108, and Ch. 8, pp. 208-250; Shafritz, pp. 446-457 (D. Rosenbloom, “Public Administrative Theory and the Separation of Powers,” 1983). Additional Reading: J. Madison, The Federalist No. 51 (1788); Special Panel on the Future of the Port Authority, Keeping the Region Moving (2014), pp. 1-22; D. Rubenstein and R. Hutchins, “Murphy To Reinstate Scandal-Tarred Port Authority Position,” Politico.com (May 15, 2018); P. Berger, “Governors Headed for Showdown Over Port Authority,” Wall St. Journal (May 16, 2018).

Writing Assignment (PPM 5): Please write a 700-900 PPM critiquing the recommendations of the Special Panel report. Is New Jersey Governor Murphy correct to attempt to reinstate the pre-Bridgegate management structure at the Port Authority? What structure would be optimal for a bi-state agency like the Port Authority, considering the competing policy interests of the two states?
Class 7 (Oct. 22, 2020)—Goal-Setting and Accountability

While public managers face special challenges in maintaining clear and consistent performance goals, and in driving and demonstrating accountability for results, public managers must work to overcome these challenges while recognizing the inevitably “reactive” nature of day-to-day work government. Reading: Rainey, Ch. 6, pp. 147-172, and Ch. 11, pp. 335-381; Shafritz, pp. 556-563 (National Performance Review, “From Red Tape to Results: Creating a Government That Works Better and Costs Less,” 1993). Additional reading: Mayor Luke Bronin’s Transition Working Group on Blight, Preliminary Recommendations (December 2015).

Class 8 (Oct. 29, 2019)—Communication and Public Management

Effective communication with stakeholders is crucial to effective public management. The explosion of social media and other non-traditional sources of news and information in recent years has both empowered and challenged public managers in this area. What are the keys to a successful social media strategy for public managers? Reading: Rainey, Ch. 8, pp. 251-56 Additional Reading: E. Gordon, J. Baldwin-Philippi & M. Balestra, “Why We Engage” (2013); Rutgers University, “How Social Media is Changing Public Administration” (2018); I. Mergel & S. Bretschneider, “A Three-Stage Adoption Process for Social Media Use in Government, 73 Public Admin. Rev. 390 (2013); Hootsuite, “The 8 Elements of a Successful Government Social Media Strategy.”

Class 9 (Nov. 5, 2020)—It’s the People, Stupid: Personnel Management in the Public Sector

While managers of all organizations must effectively motivate, mentor, and manage their personnel, public managers have both unique challenges and valuable advantages in this sphere. Reading: Rainey, Ch. 9, pp. 257-296, and Ch. 10, pp. 297-334.


Class 10 (Nov. 12, 2020)—The Legislator’s Perspective

Public managers must increasingly rely on intergovernmental cooperation for funding and implementation support of policy initiatives, and public-private partnerships (including partnerships with the not-for-profit sector) have become ubiquitous in public management. Reading: Rainey, Ch. 12, pp. 382-405; Shafritz, pp. 517-532 (D. Wright, “Federalism, Intergovernmental Relations, and Intergovernmental Management: Historical Reflections and Conceptual Comparisons,” 1990). Additional reading: Capital Region Development Authority, 2019-20 Annual Report, excerpts.

Public managers must increasingly obtain funding for important projects through grants from other levels of government as well as private and not-for-profit grant funding organizations. What are the basics that public managers need to know? Reading: U.S. Dept. of Education, “Grant Writing 101” (2018), available at https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osdfs/grantwrite101.pdf. Additional reading: B. Browning, Grant Writing for Dummies (5th ed. 2014), pp. 7-20, 47-58, 73-85.

As our examination of public management theory and practice comes to a close, what are the key success factors for public managers we have identified? Returning to our Class 2 writing assignment, how could the professional education of public managers better reflect the “real world” challenges they will face?

Reading: Stillman, Ch. 7 and 8, pp. 162-214; Rainey, Ch. 13, pp. 409-448.

Independent Research Papers are due by Friday, Dec. 18, 2020, at 5:00 pm.

See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9eWqdLTii-I (1972).