INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

For generations, University of Michigan MPP and MPA candidates have made public management one of the cornerstones of their studies. A quick glance at the experience of Ford alums reveals that many are immersed in fundamental challenges of public management. This course is intended to introduce students to the basic issues and challenges involved in public management. It will focus largely on American examples, cutting across all levels of American government and drawing heavily from the discipline of political science. This version of the course builds directly on MPP core curriculum offerings in political science and American politics, placing a major emphasis on “bureaucratic politics”; completion of that course is the best preparation given its intensive focus on U.S. politics and governance.

This section of 587 will involve extensive examination of the role of public managers (bureaucrats) and the institutions that they serve (bureaucracies). It will be divided into four distinct units. First, we will examine the evolution of public management in the United States and introduce competing theories that explain why, in many circles, public management is derided as highly dysfunctional. This will then be applied to a current case of controversy surrounding bureaucratic capability, namely the performance of the Transportation Security Administration. This will follow last year’s exploration of the performance of the Federal Reserve Board (and chair Ben Bernanke) during the Great Recession. Second, we will consider the wide range of reform initiatives attempted in the U.S. and other Western democracies under the broad umbrella of the so-called New Public Management, looking at a number of alternative approaches to public management challenges. This will place particular emphasis on the question of whether or not it is feasible to measure the performance of individual agencies and staff and use those
measures to improve government performance. Third, we will consider the issue of selecting management strategies and determining the roles of respective governmental levels when faced with a new policy challenge. Both the second and third sections will consider issues of performance and intergovernmental management in the case of Medicaid, a long-standing program jointly operated by state and federal governments that assumes new salience as the implementation of the Affordable Care Act accelerates this year. Finally, we will explore the extent to which fundamental decisions related to land use should be driven by experts, such as well-trained agency staff, or public sentiment. This section will consider issues of civic engagement and public participation in shaping policy related to the question of siting facilities that may convey a broad public benefit but concentrate a significant burden on host communities. This portion of the course will examine the case of siting facilities to manage waste from nuclear power plants.

ASSIGNMENTS AND POLICIES

Students will have a variety of opportunities to analyze and express their views on major issues concerning public management. This will include a series of take-home assignments that respond to a specific set of questions provided by the instructor. Most of these do not require external research but rather active engagement in all aspects of the class and interpretation of those experiences to the questions that are posed. These assignments will generally require between six to eight pages of writing, following a format somewhat consistent with what is required of staff at the National Academy of Public Administration when working on public management panels convened by Congress. In some instances, all students will address exactly the same issue or institution; in other instances, students will be given latitude to select a case study of their choosing.

These take-home exams will be assigned at the end of each quadrant of the course, usually allowing one week for completion. At the point of completion, we will have class debates over your findings. All dates for anticipated distribution of the assignment and submission of completed assignments are specified in the syllabus. Any late submission will be penalized 10 percent of the total available points per day, unless alternate arrangements are made in advance with the instructor. In turn, students are expected to come to class prepared and to engage meaningfully in all discussions; class participation will be weighed formally in establishing a final grade. In addition, there will be a pair of opportunities for formal oral presentations, which will be evaluated and tape-recorded. These will coincide with the completion of the second and third papers. The final grade will be determined on the basis of total points acquired through the various opportunities noted below:

Major take-home essay exams: 400 points (100 per exam)
Class participation: 50 points
Formal oral presentations: 50 points

Total:  500 points

**REQUIRED READINGS**

Required readings should be completed, preferably in the order listed below, before each designated class session. The bulk of the readings will involve four scintillating books that explore different dimensions of public management. There will be no core text book, as the many options in this area are extremely expensive and extremely boring. All of these were ordered well in advance of the beginning of the term and so should be available from university-affiliated bookstores. Two of these books are very recent releases and so it may be difficult to secure used copies. Additional readings will be posted on the class e-tools site.

The required books include the following:


**SCHEDULE OF SESSIONS**

**SECTION I: WHY PUBLIC MANAGEMENT IS SO TROUBLED**
January 9—Welcome and Introduction

January 14—Issues and Trends in Public Management


Schumpeter, “Lincoln and Leadership: Outsiders can make the best leaders—and also the worst,” The Economist (December 1, 2012): 75.


January 16—The Capture of Public Management


January 21: No Class. Martin Luther King, Jr. National Holiday
January 23—Political Control of Public Management: The Principal-Agency Issue


Hawley and Means, Permanent Emergency, chs. 2-3.

January 28—The Bounds on Rationality in Public Management—Toward Satisficing (Receive first take-home essay question)


Hawley and Means, Permanent Emergency, chs. 4-5.

January 30—Bureaucratic Ambition, Policy Entrepreneurship, and the Case of the Transportation Security Administration


Hawley and Means, chs. 6-9, 11-17.

February 4 & 6—Submit first take-home essay (on February 4) and debate findings

SECTION II: WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS FOR IMPROVING PUBLIC MANAGEMENT?

February 11 & 13—Measuring Performance and Improving Outcomes (Receive second take-home exam on February 13)


Frank Thompson, Medicaid Politics: Federalism, Policy Durability, and Health Reform, ch. 1.

February 18—Guest lecture by Professor Frank Thompson on the Politics of Medicaid

Frank Thompson, Medicaid Politics: Federalism, Policy Durability, and Health Reform, chs. 2-3.

February 20—Medical Policy, Education Policy, and the Question of Performance Management

Chapter to be assigned from forthcoming book on Educational Policy Governance by Paul Manna and Pat McGuinn, discussing implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act.

**February 25 & 27: Submit second take-home essay (on February 25) and debate findings (on both days)**

Winter Term Break, March 4 & 6—Go to a very warm locale for a week and carefully observe the behavior of public managers in your midst.

**SECTION III: DECENTRALIZING MANAGEMENT: UNLEASHING INNOVATION OR PASSING THE BUCK?**

March 11 & 13: Pushing Stuff Below the National Level: Decentralization as a Public Management Strategy (Receive third take-home assignment on March 13)


**March 18: Public Management Via Dashboard: The Case of Michigan**

Lecture by Sarah Himes.


**March 20: State and Local Implementation of Medical Care: The Role of Waivers**

Thompson, Medicaid Politics, chs. 4-7.

**March 25 & 27: Submit third take-home exam (on March 25) and debate findings (on both days)**

**SECTION IV: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN PUBLIC MANAGEMENT**

**April 1: Guest Lecture by Mark Funkhouser, President of Governing Institute:**
“Civic Engagement and Performance Management”


**April 3: Guest Lecture by Debra Horner, Ford School Center for Local, State and Urban Policy:**
“Civic Engagement and Performance Management: Findings from the Michigan Public Policy Survey”
April 8: Options for Public Involvement and Public Participation


April 10: Top-down or Bottom-up? Competing Views on Facility Siting (Receive final take-home exam)


Daniel Sherman, Not Here, Not There, Not Anywhere, chs. 1-2.

April 15 & 17: Strategies for Siting Energy-Generation and Waste Facilities

Sherman, Not Here, Not There, Not Anywhere, chs. 3-4, 6-7.

Final case materials to be distributed.

April 21: Submit Final Take-Home Exam and Debate Findings