BUREAUCRACY AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Politics, Expertise, and Democracy

John Dearborn
Political Science

OVERVIEW

“Bureaucracy” is a term often used negatively in U.S. political culture – associated with images of delay and government waste – but what is bureaucracy and what do bureaucrats actually do? This course aims to address the concept of public administration from a number of perspectives. First, it surveys some of the basic functions of government and bureaucracy. Second, it compares a number of theories of public administration. Third, it considers how bureaucratic organization is envisioned in theory versus how it works in practice. Fourth, it contrasts two perspectives on administration (neutral versus responsive competence) and considers the historical development of the civil service. Fifth, it examines how ideas and bureaucratic culture can influence public administration reform and organizational behavior. Sixth, it looks at how policies are implemented and the discretion agencies may or may not have in rulemaking. Finally, it asks how bureaucracy and public administration are reconciled with democratic control through oversight and representation.

More broadly, the lectures, discussions, primary source readings, and scholarly readings will help us achieve a few course goals. First, we will gain an improved ability to make sense of how the public administration works (or doesn’t work!) and how bureaucratic institutions have changed over time. Second, we will critically discuss arguments and theories offered by various authors. Third, we will frequently place the ideas from the readings into the context of current political events. Finally, as a more general goal for the course, I hope that we all can take a step forward toward becoming more politically critical, informed, and engaged citizens. Politics can be maddening, but it becomes more interesting and fun when you can make some sense of what is going on.

Our activities in class may take a number of formats. While we will often have lectures, depending on the topic there may also be discussions, debates, and/or small group work. Political concepts and topics often may reveal differences of opinion – this is particular true around election years! So even as some of us may have strong views and potentially disagree, I ask that we listen to each other’s viewpoints while working to ensure that civility and respect for each other are always present in our conversations.

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING

* In drafting this syllabus, I have partly drawn upon Ian Turner’s “Bureaucracy & Democracy” syllabus at Yale (Fall 2017) and David Houston’s “Introduction to Public Administration and Public Policy” syllabus at the University of Tennessee (Fall 2012).
Students are expected to complete the readings, come to lecture, and participate in class. Once during the semester, students will be expected to complete two short papers critically analyzing one or more weeks of readings, and they will present them to the class. The papers should be 5 pages double-spaced. There will also be a final exam for the course. The grade breakdown is as follows:

- Participation – 15%
- Short Response Papers – 40%
- Final Assessment
  - Final Exam – 45%

COURSE OUTLINE

I. WHAT DOES GOVERNMENT AND BUREAUCRACY DO?

Week 1: Functions
Donald F. Kettl, Politics of the Administrative Process, 7th ed. (Los Angeles: CQ Press, 2018), Ch. 2

II. THE CONCEPT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Week 2: What is Public Administration?
Donald F. Kettl, Politics of the Administrative Process, 7th ed. (Los Angeles: CQ Press, 2018), Ch. 3
Woodrow Wilson, “The Study of Administration,” Political Science Quarterly 2, no. 2 (June 1887): 197-222
Frank J. Goodnow, Politics and Administration: A Study in Government (New York: Macmillan, 1900), Ch. 2, 4
Herbert A. Simon, Administrative Behavior (New York: Free Press, 1976), Ch. 1-2

III. ORGANIZATION

Week 3: Organization of Bureaucracy: Theory
Donald F. Kettl, *Politics of the Administrative Process, 7th ed.* (Los Angeles: CQ Press, 2018), Ch. 4


**Week 4: Organization of Bureaucracy: Practice**


Amy B. Zegart, *Flawed by Design: The Evolution of the CIA, JCS, and NSC* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), Ch. 1

**IV. PATRONAGE, CIVIL SERVICE, AND NEUTRAL VERSUS RESPONSIVE COMPETENCE**

**Week 5: Neutral versus Responsive Competence**


**Week 6: What is the Civil Service?**

Donald F. Kettl, *Politics of the Administrative Process, 7th ed.* (Los Angeles: CQ Press, 2018), Ch. 8
Week 7: Interests and Bureaucratic State Building: The Civil Service


Week 8: Reputation and Bureaucratic State Building


Sean Gailmard and John W. Patty, *Learning While Governing: Expertise and Accountability in the Executive Branch* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), Ch. 2-3

IV. IDEAS AND CULTURE

Week 9-10: Ideas & Administrative Landmarks: BAA of 1921 and Reorganization Act of 1939


Sean Gailmard and John W. Patty, *Learning While Governing: Expertise and Accountability in the Executive Branch* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), Ch. 6


Primary Sources:

Week 10: *Bureaucratic Culture*

Herbert Kaufman, *The Forest Ranger: A Study in Administrative Behavior* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1960), Ch. 6


**VI. IMPLEMENTATION AND RULEMAKING**

**Week 11: Policy Implementation**


Sean Gailmard and John W. Patty, *Learning While Governing: Expertise and Accountability in the Executive Branch* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), Ch. 7 “Information, Regulated Interests, and Administrative Policymaking”

**Week 12: Rulemaking: The Administrative Procedures Act of 1946 and OIRA**

Joanna L. Grisinger, *The Unwieldy American State: Administrative Politics since the New Deal* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), Ch. 2


**VI. OVERSIGHT AND REPRESENTATION**

**Week 13: Issues of Democratic Control**


**FINAL EXAM**

- Identifications – Choose 10 of 15 – 40%
- Long Essays – Choice two of three questions – 60%