COURSE OUTLINE

Please read this document carefully before the start of the course. It is a contract between you and me. It tells you what I expect from you and what you can expect from me, and what you must do to earn the grade you desire.

OVERVIEW

This course is designed to give new MPA students an overview of the public sector – its institutions, people and culture. Obviously, it covers a lot of ground. Of necessity, its breadth comes at the expense of depth. There is no need for alarm: the depth will come in all of the specialized courses that comprise the MPA program. I also teach two of those in my specialties, Intergovernmental Relations and Grant Writing and Management.

All courses are a blend of theory and practice, and this one is no exception. Unlike my Grant Writing and Management course, which is skewed toward the practical, this one is well-balanced. A survey course inevitably reflects the interests of the teacher. My graduate education was in a political science department; as a result, I view PA as an integral part of the political process. If you took the same course with a specialist in financial management, it would be a somewhat different (but equally valid) experience. And if you had taken it with me last year, it would also be somewhat different. I practice continuous improvement. Probably 10% of the content and the pedagogy of this course are different from last year’s version and 90% are different from when I first taught this course 39 years ago. I don’t let the grass grow under my feet.

WHO AM I?

Public administration is my lifelong commitment. This is my 40th year as a professor of PA, but that’s not all I have done. For my first decade out of college, while I was in graduate school, I covered government in North Jersey and New York City as a reporter for daily newspapers. I have held administrative positions in three public agencies, and I have been a consultant to numerous public and non-profit organizations. I have served three terms on the National Council of the American Society of Public Administration, our major professional association, and I have been president of the Metropolitan New York and Iowa Chapters. I have published two books and numerous articles. After all these years, I remain enthusiastic about public administration. At a time when many people say they want the smallest and cheapest government, the kind of government I want is one that offers good value. I enjoy teaching, and I hope that you will enjoy the class. I want you to work hard, learn a lot, and have fun. You have chosen a career in public service; it should be a pleasure, not a drag.
MY APPROACH

I am not big on lectures. Lecturing creates a teacher-centered environment. I want my classroom to be student-centered. I am convinced that students learn more when they are active learners rather than passive note-takers. Our classes are 2½ hours long. To make the time go quickly, we will use a variety of media each week:

1. Each class will start with a current events discussion. Students will bring in news items, present and analyze them. This will illustrate the range and relevance of the profession. (15 to 20 minutes).

2. We will then have student presentations on the previous week’s problem (see No. 4 below; 30 to 45 minutes).

3. During the middle hour, I will give a PowerPoint presentation on the week’s topic. Before coming to class, please print out the PowerPoint. Three slides per page will give you enough room to take supplemental notes. I will post the PowerPoint on Blackboard two days before each class. The slides will guide you as to what I consider important. You will be able to concentrate on what I say rather than have to furiously scribble notes. (45 to 60 minutes).

4. I will organize the class into teams of about three members each. Each week, I will give the class a practical problem relevant to the week’s topic. Every team will start working on the problem (about 30 minutes). Before we adjourn, I will ask two or three teams to commit to preparing 10- to 15-minute presentations the following week (see No. 2 above). The members of these teams that have volunteered will work on their presentations during the week, using Blackboard discussion groups to coordinate with one another. The other teams are excused. I expect each team to give about four reports during the semester.

Please note: I will not repeat what is in the readings; it’s not a good use of class time. I have insights to share with you that expand on, rather than repeat, what’s in the books. I expect you to have read what’s assigned. If there is something you don’t understand, ask! You are responsible for the readings and will be tested on them.

REQUIRED READING

There are three assigned books – a textbook and two supplementary ones:

Since we are using two books from the same publisher, I was able to negotiate a special discounted price for the class from NJ Books at the corner of University Avenue and Bleeker Street. If you purchase both books new and at the same time, ask the checkout clerk for your 20% discount. This applies only to the purchase of Goodsell and Khademian, new, concurrently, at NJ Books.

### WEEKLY TOPICS, READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SESSION</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>READING</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Self-introductions; class organization; pretest; writing sample. Intro: What is public administration? What do public administrators do?</td>
<td>H&amp;S, chapter 1.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>The political setting of PA.</td>
<td>H&amp;S, chapter 5.</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>Public performance: measuring how well government does its job.</td>
<td>H&amp;S, chapters 7 and 8.</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>The culture of public organizations.</td>
<td>H&amp;S, chapter 13; K, chapters 1-6.</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>Special session on term paper research and writing.</td>
<td>None.</td>
<td>Midterm exam.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>Theories of public organizations.</td>
<td>H&amp;S, chapter 2.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>The future of the public sector; review and summation.</td>
<td>H&amp;S, chapter 14.</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>None.</td>
<td>None.</td>
<td>Final exam.</td>
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### LEARNING OUTCOMES AND LESSON OBJECTIVES

SPAA is a NASPAA*-accredited institution. NASPAA has established a series of student learning outcomes. It is the school’s intention, and my intention, to assist students in achieving them in each course that I teach. The outcomes are as follows:

- To be able to lead and manage in public governance.
• To participate in and contribute to the public policy process.
• To analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems, and make decisions.
• To articulate and apply a public service perspective.
• To communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenship.

In addition, every lesson has specific objectives. They are listed below and you will also find them as the first slide after the weekly title slide on the course PowerPoint:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LESSON</th>
<th>Students who successfully complete this class will know:</th>
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| 1      | 1. My expectations of them and what they will be expected to do to succeed in this class.  
     | 2. What they should expect from me.  
     | 3. That I plan to develop a relationship with each student.  
     | The scope and methods used to study the public sector. |
| 2      | 1. The meaning of the terms power and politics.  
     | 2. The legitimate role of politics in carrying out the public’s business.  
     | 3. The different roles of patronage appointees and civil servants.  
     | 4. The limits of appropriate political influence. |
| 3      | 1. The distinction between a policy and a decision.  
     | 2. How policies are made, and by whom.  
     | 3. How decisions are made, and by whom.  
     | 4. How public administration differs from business administration. |
| 4      | 1. The Constitutional basis for IGR.  
     | 2. Conflict and cooperation between levels of government, including unfunded mandates.  
     | 3. The changing nature of federalism.  
     | 4. Interstate compacts. |
| 5      | 1. The difference between an input, an output and an outcome.  
     | 2. Basic concepts: continuous improvement, best practice, co-production.  
     | 3. The role of professional societies in improving public sector performance. |
| 6      | 1. How budgets are created and approved.  
     | 2. The political influences on budget-making.  
     | 3. The difference between honest and dishonest budgeting.  
     | 4. Incremental, performance-based and zero-based budgeting. |
| 7      | 1. The meaning of culture.  
     | 2. The meaning of organizational culture.  
     | 3. The difference between the perception and the reality of an organization’s culture.  
     | 4. Differences between the culture of public and for-profit organizations.  
     | 5. The nature of change in an organization. |
| 8      | Special class. |
| 9      | 1. The meaning of leadership.  
     | 2. The difference between authority and leadership.  
     | 3. The many different styles of leadership. |
| 10     | 1. The contributions of 10 great thinkers in public administration. |
|   | 2. The way that theories evolve, going in and out of favor.  
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<th>3. The tension between concerns about organizational performance and concerns about its members – can they be reconciled?</th>
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| 11 | 1. The basics of patronage v. merit selection of public employees.  
|   | 2. The strengths and weaknesses of each.  
| 12 | 1. The nature of ethical dilemmas facing people in the public sector.  
|   | 2. The difference between what is legal and what is right.  
|   | 3. The difficulty in deciding ethical issues – often, things are anything but clear cut. |
| 13 | 1. The huge impact that technology development has had on the way public agencies do business.  
|   | 2. The effect that this has had on transactions between citizens and government. |
| 14 | That future trends in public organizations include:  
|   | 1. Doing less with less (not do more with less).  
|   | 2. More digital communication, less paper.  
|   | 3. Increased privatization and contracting-out.  
|   | 4. Increased sharing of best practices.  
|   | 5. Imbalance in public labor relations: weaker unions or no unions.  
|   | 6. Greater reliance on technology in general. |

*National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration.

**ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY**

The university expects me to take attendance, and I will do so. But a more important reason for being in class is that if you miss a session, although you can obtain notes from a classmate, you will miss out on the hands-on work and the discussion.

In my experience, many students work all day and rush to class, wandering in a few minutes late. This is disruptive. To avoid this problem, the formal class will start at 5:40 rather than at 5:30. Those first 10 minutes will be used for informal discussion or individual consultation. To make up the time, we will not take a break. If you need one, step out discreetly. Feel free to bring food and drink to class; it’s hard to learn on an empty stomach.

**CLASS CANCELLATIONS**

Global climate change has led to an earlier onset of winter weather. Occasionally, the university determines that conditions require the closing of the campus. When this happens, an announcement is made on the homepage of [www.newark.rutgers.edu](http://www.newark.rutgers.edu).

I very rarely must cancel class for personal reasons (e.g., illness), but it is possible. Should this become necessary, I will try to send each of you an email as far in advance as possible.
OFFICE HOURS

This semester, I plan generally to be in my office (Room 327) Mondays and Tuesdays from 1 to 4:30 PM, and Thursdays and Fridays from 1 to 6:30 PM. You are invited (and encouraged) to drop by at any time. In addition, because it is important that I get to know each of you personally, I require that every student see me early in the semester, on or before September 30th. The visit will last 15 minutes, and will be informal. The better I know you, the more I can help you. It is a good idea to call me (973-353-3703) or email me (mgersh@andromeda.rutgers.edu) before setting out to verify that I will be available. If you cannot come during my scheduled hours, we can make alternate arrangements, including meeting after class.

BLACKBOARD

Blackboard is an online instructional portal that offers many benefits for communication among students and between instructor and class. If you are not already familiar with it, there is a tutorial at http://blackboardinfo.newark.rutgers.edu/tutorials.html. Scroll halfway down the page to the section titled “Student Tutorials.” In this course, you will use Blackboard, among other things, to access links to resources, submit assignments, engage in discussions with classmates and with me, download my PowerPoint slides, and check your grades.

CLASS REPORTS, EXAMS, AND GRADING

I use a point system for assigning grades. You can earn a maximum of 100 points. Here is how:

- **News reports:** Credit will be given each time you initiate a report or contribute to a discussion. (1 to 4 points, maximum 10 points for the course.) Points are at my discretion based on the quality and scope of your report. A report on the week’s topic can earn up to 4 points; on any other relevant topic, 3; and making a significant contribution to a discussion, 1 point. Preference will be given to students with an item dealing with the current week’s topic.

- **Team reports:** Credit will be given each time your discussion group gives an oral report (up to 5 points per report for each contributing student, maximum 20 points per student, again at my discretion).

- **Term paper:** Each student will prepare and submit a research paper on a topic of interest. Guidelines will be given in class (25 points).

- **Exams:** There will be a one-hour midterm (15 points) and a comprehensive final exam (30 points).

- **Extra credit:** Occasionally, I give students an opportunity to earn extra points. A maximum of 5 points may be earned beyond the customary 100.
Your grade will be calculated as follows:

- A  90 to 100 points
- B+ 85 to 89 points
- B  80 to 84 points
- C+ 75 to 79 points
- C  70 to 74 points
- F  less than 70 points

Being a reasonable person, I generally curve grades to some extent. In other words, an 87 or 88 will usually get you an A, 82 or 83 a B+, and so on. The cutoff points are at my discretion. If you earn 86 points and the cutoff for an A is 87, I am sorry, but it has to be somewhere.

And please be aware that grades are assigned based on performance alone – not for effort, good intentions or because of special circumstances.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Because you will be doing oral and written assignments, it is essential that you understand what constitutes plagiarism. Either of these modes can be fine or can get you into trouble. Writers and speakers use other people’s words or ideas all the time. It is perfectly acceptable to do so, provided that you credit the original author, either in the text or in a footnote. Failure to acknowledge the source of information is plagiarism, which is a serious academic offense. Plagiarism is not only unethical but also illegal; it is the theft of intellectual property. It is not limited to copying actual words, with or without quotation marks; paraphrasing without crediting the originator of the idea is also plagiarism. In grading your term paper, I will use SafeReport software that effectively searches for plagiarism. If I discover plagiarized content in your submission, the assignment will receive a grade of zero. Plagiarism is easy to avoid: be aware of the need to credit sources.