--Draft Syllabus--
Human Resources Administration in the Public Sector (SPAA 523)
20:834:523:90
(online, fall 2013, virtual Saturdays)

School of Public Affairs and Administration, Rutgers

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Office Address and Office Hours: Please email for appointment by telephone or Skype. As a
virtual instructor not in the area, I do not keep physical office hours.
IMPORTANT NOTES: (1) This is a virtual Saturday morning class. The midterm and final are
required on specified Saturdays. Other Saturdays are not required, but you are strongly
encouraged to participate while most others are also online and are at a slight advantage by doing
so. (2) Participation is required in the class at least two different days of the week. The initial
deadline night is on Thursdays, but students can do assignments before Thursday night if they
have a class that evening without being at a disadvantage. Saturday is when final discussions
occur and quizzes are due. (3) Student presentations on video via YouTube are required for this
class. Access to a webcam is required; a high quality camera or recorder is NOT required (i.e.,
low quality is just fine) and you are encouraged to make do with what is available to you. If you
do not have the equipment, it is very inexpensive to buy, or for the two assignments you can
borrow someone else’s.

Course Description: Human resources administration in public and nonprofit settings, including
human resource planning, staffing, development, and compensation. Behavioral and
environmental determinants are examined, including production technology, market factors,
service delivery, and government regulations.

Course Goals:
1. Develop a sense of the context of public sector human resource management in the
   politico-administrative context
2. Develop competence with basic HRM legal rights
3. Master best practices in recruitment
4. Understand selection systems in the public sector
5. Understand classification systems
6. Review public sector motivation
7. Comprehend compensation systems and strategies
8. Review benefits programs
9. Cover training basics
10. Understand appraisal systems and philosophy
11. Study the union environment in government
An overarching goal of the class is to provide a strong foundation in the ethics of public
administration in terms of HR. What is legally required, what are professional norms of
good practice, and what should one aspire to in terms of exemplary practice?
Required Texts/Materials:

Access to a webcam is required. Readings that can be electronically accessed are assigned in addition to the required texts. These readings are found in the electronic lectures.

Grades: The instructor uses pluses and minuses. “Perfect” scores are normally reserved for best-in-class responses; a B is an honorable grade in this class. The equivalent grade ranges are:

- 95 to 100 = A
- 90 to 94.5 = A-
- 87 to 89.5 = B+
- 83 to 86.5 = B
- 80 to 82.5 = B-
- 77 to 79.5 = C+
- 73 to 76.5 = C
- 70 to 72.5 = C-
- 66 to 69.5 = D+
- 63 to 65.5 = D
- 60 to 62.5 = D-

Course Assignments: The course will be composed of 7 elements that are discussed below. The weighting of these elements are approximately as follows:

- Midterm: 20
- Final: 25
- Chapter quizzes: 11 (tallied at end of course)
- Video presentations: 10 (all members graded equally)
- Weekly activities: 24 (12 activities times 2 points each)
- Participation: 5 (tallied at end of term)
- Comments on videos: 5 (tallied at end of term)

Please note that I reserve the right to adjust the weighting to suit the specific needs of the class.

Tests: (set times: see schedule for dates and times)
The format will be essays. Normally one question, scenario, or problem will cover each chapter. All questions need to be answered. The tests are open book. *However, the tests are timed, and consciously designed so most students will not have the time to look up much information.* Indeed, your grade will depend on working quickly and efficiently in the allotted time. The quality of the writing is a substantial factor in grading, as is the quality of argumentation. Cut-and-paste is extremely easy to spot and check, and results in a zero on the test, essentially guaranteeing failure in the class. Should the class average for a test be low, the instructor may raise all grades (curve the test). The instructor is standing by during the test (virtually) so email with any questions or issues and you should get a response within 10-15 minutes. Points will be
taken off progressively for going over the time allotment, so do so at your own peril. You may want to respond to the questions initially in Word, and then cut-and-paste them in the test function so that if there is a malfunction or the system goes down (rare), you do not lose your work. Strategy tips:

Tips on taking online, date-specific, timed tests.

- Do not stress out because of the technology. It will only depress the quality of your response.
- If you are running out of time, it is better to give shorter answers to questions than no answer at all; two B- answers are much better for your overall grade than an A and a zero.
- Know that I monitor the test virtually and check my email every ten minutes during the quiz. If you have a problem, email me immediately and I will generally respond within fifteen minutes.
- I am responsible for Blackboard outages during an exam (which would affect the entire class and require an accommodation for everyone. It has never happened to me.)
- You are responsible for reporting individual glitches during a test to me promptly by email (mvanwart@csusb.edu). I handle them—and potential penalties—on a case by case basis.
- You are responsible for your computer and internet service provider. If either crashes entirely, you are responsible for finding another computer in the time window provided. If you are the nervous or cautious type (these are rare experiences), then think through an alternative location before the exams, such as the university itself. If you do not take the exam in the window provided, you will receive a zero—no excuses accepted.

Chapter Quizzes: Chapter quizzes are meant to be chapter practice, not tests per se. Students can take the quiz up to three times and have up to an hour each time. If you go over an hour, no score will be recorded. By necessity, only scores are provided and only the last score counts. The final quiz is due by Saturday night at midnight. Quizzes (after the first week) will not be available after Saturday at midnight. Because there is no penalty for taking the quiz multiple times, students are strongly urged not to wait until the last minute to take the quiz. Indeed, take the quiz early so that it assists you with activities. Because students can take the quiz multiple times, this should not be a stressful experience. Note that in weeks in which there are two chapters, there are also two quizzes. Larry Ibrahim, department web technician, can assist if you are having problems and is authorized to give you two or three “tips” from reviewing your specific results. Note that although the scores in gradebook are reflected as 25 and noted as a part of your total possible points (which is not a useful number really), the class is graded on the weighted average, which is calculated as 1 point per quiz or 11 points out of 100 for the course which is tallied at the end of the course. 21 or more right answers result in a 1.0, 19-20 results in a .5, and 18 or less do not receive credit. [Comment: After I started requiring weekly quizzes, the overall average grades in the class rose substantially. It was especially noticeable in the midterm where it became unusual for some students to “bomb” the test].
Chapter Activities:
All activities must be completed by Thursday at midnight (initial response); earlier responses will be appreciated by your colleagues. Responses to colleagues’ initial postings should be by noon on Saturday but I will automatically extend a grace period. I will provide weekly grades for these activities (unlike the quizzes). This series of activities is in lieu of a paper for the course so it is expected that responses will be researched and thoughtful. “Perfect” scores (3 points) are reserved for the top responses in the class each week. Responses to colleagues are carefully monitored and is reflected in the grade. Tips on postings for Chapter Activities are below:

- All small group postings occur in the same location with the same individuals. I generally grade postings Sunday morning so after that they do not count. (go to: small groups → your group → group discussion board)
- Your initial posting should be provided as a “new thread.” Better initial statements may have some or many of the following elements, depending on the nature of the questions: (a) references to the text, electronic lectures, guest speakers, other sources, (b) examples from one’s personal life, or public examples, and /or (c) elements of high-quality writing such as metaphors, stories, or humor.
- Comment on at least two group members’ postings by Saturday at noon. Be sure to use the respond button, not the new thread button. Good responses to colleagues should be more than breezy statements of agreement. Why do you agree and what information or perspective do you have to add? At least one comment should provide critique or questions to your colleagues. I generally expect answers to questions unless the questions come in after noon on Saturday. Group members who summarize parts or the whole discussion make a major contribution to the discussion.
- I grade all the postings scrupulously and rigorously. Timing counts—a lot in some cases. Responding after Thursday for the initial posting results in a progressive deduction; after Saturday the late posts are not included. I read and count posts until Sunday morning but unless you are answering questions and finishing off a running discussion, they are late. This is a discussion so even if you are technically on time, but you tend to respond late, you will get average credit, not full credit. Another no-no: doing all your postings (i.e., first and second round of postings) at one time to “get it over with” (it is a discussion after all).
- Quality matters—a lot. Do not think of postings as emails because they are not. The quality of writing for full credit should equal that of formal papers (formal rules of grammar), even if a somewhat more conversational tone prevails. Students with postings that show any signs of haste or sloppiness will receive a C or lower. Think about what you want to say, craft it, edit it, reread it, before you send it. I strongly recommend writing the initial statement in Word or another program that has a spell-check function, and then copying it to Blackboard which does not have a good spell-check or any grammar-check function.
- Courteousness is always a given so be sure that you critique arguments or perspectives, not the person. Here are two examples.
  - Wrong approach: I think you are wrong when you say that leaders are born and not made. (too personal)
Right approach: I think that your argument that leaders are born and not made is flawed. Let me provide the reasons and several examples to support my position. (takes issue with a perspective)

Video Presentations:
Two video presentations are required in the course. In the first week you will do a video presentation for your small group to introduce yourself. This will give you the opportunity to learn the mechanics and work out the kinks. I am not grading the quality of your video presentation skills the first week and it is a good time to experiment.

All small groups will do a video presentation for the entire class on the class discussion board related to class discussions linked to textbook chapters. Set up one logistical discussion thread for your own internal purposes. Set up a different discussion thread to present your video and your text to the class. Use a label like: Group 4 Presentation of CHAPTERS 7 AND 8. The first subthread can tell the class what you intend to cover, how you intend to cover it, and outlines or textual information. The second subthread can provide the individual videos for each member of the group or a single, spliced video for the group. Guidelines: (1) each person must be a presenter. In some cases you might want two members to be in a video segment but be careful about “cramming” members into videos. (2) Groups may have a series of videos or a group member may splice it together which is often appreciated by other groups. (3) The maximum total time must not exceed 20 minutes. You do NOT have to cover all the material assigned to you; indeed, it would be difficult to do so; therefore, feel free to be selective about what you cover. Just be sure at the outset to tell your audience what you are going to cover [you need not apologize for what you are not going to cover]. (4) In style, present to fellow students, not the instructor. Humor, charm, cleverness, etc. are much appreciated by your colleagues. (5) Innovations and creative presentations are generally appreciated, even if they are not as refined. For example, guest speakers and skits are good if you want to make the attempt. In the past, some teams have used music for the introduction and interludes, used subtext or text outlines, and other simple video devices. I often give an extra point to any student that acts as the video technician for a group. (6) I will ask for substantial input from students in terms of ranking the groups and will largely follow your preferences. In this activity, I tend to grade on a competitive basis (full credit means that you are ready for prime time 😊). All group members get the same score for this particular activity as long as they participate. If you want to complain about a particularly recalcitrant group member (and you should if they fall significantly out of the norm), please be sure to tell me that you made a reasonable attempt to prod the group member. Note that it will not affect the group grade but it may affect the participation grade of the poor performing student. (7) I generally give the first group a point for going first, since others can and should pick up do’s and don’t’s from them.

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Comments on video presentations:
I look to see that you made substantive comments on your colleagues’ presentations. Comments can cover either content or form. You should also make comments as the presenting group about how you think you did and what you learned from doing the video presentations. I will ask you to make your comments within your small group, not the class at-large. These reviews are due on the Saturday of the week of the presentation.

Participation:
Participation is made up of several elements. First, students can post comments and examples on the class discussion board. All students must post at least one original HR-related comment on the class discussion board (not about technical aspects of the class). I also note any assistance that you provide other students. Second, I look at your class usage statistics, especially your non-small group participation (since that is graded separately). This includes the last closing “activity”. I also look at the pattern of your participation. In rare cases, if you seemed to be responsible for your group doing badly on the presentation, I would deduct points in this category.

Functions of Blackboard Used:
- **Announcements**: I will regularly post announcements and general results. It is critical that you read all announcements.
- **Syllabus**: If the schedule changes (which would be announced), I will update this and label it accordingly.
- **Discussion Board**: If you have a question for me or the class about the class, this is where you ask it so all can see the question and the answer. This is our classroom space for technical issues. Use email for personal issues or individual grade issues. Also, you will post your video presentations for the class here.
- **Lectures**: This is where your electronic lectures are.
- **Small groups**: Use this for small group activities and video presentations. Use New Thread at the top for your initial major statement; use reply buttons at the bottom to respond to colleagues. Post your comments on video presentations here.
- **Tools**: the grade book function is here.

Schedule of Readings and Assignments: (online materials and linked associated readings assumed)

**Module 1:**
- **Reading**: Introduction to the book; look at an HR website for a city or county, state, and federal agency (three)
- **Assignments**
  - Review instructor greeting
  - Postings on Thursday and Saturday

**Module 2:**
- **Reading**: Chapter 1 in *Human Resource Management in Public Service* (hereafter HRM)
- **Assignments**
  - Review electronic lecture
  - Chapter activities by Thursday/Saturday
Module 3:
Reading: HRM Chapter 2
Assignments:
- Review electronic lecture
- Chapter activity by Saturday at noon.
- Chapter quiz

Module 4:
Readings: HRM Chapter 3
Assignments:
- Review electronic lectures
- Chapter activity.
- Chapter quiz
- Review group presentation (Saturday midnight)

Module 5:
Readings: HRM Chapter 4
Assignments:
- Review electronic lectures
- Chapter activity
- Chapter quiz
- Review group presentation (Saturday midnight)

Module 6:
Reading: HRM Chapter 5
Assignments:
- Review electronic lectures
- Chapter activity
- Chapter quiz
- Review and comment on group presentation (Saturday midnight)

Module 7:
Reading: none
Assignments:
- **Midterm**: 9 a.m. to noon a.m. (time to be confirmed)

Module 8:
Reading: HRM Chapter 6
Assignments:
- Review electronic lectures
- Chapter quiz
- Chapter activity by Saturday.

Module 9:
Reading: HRM Chapter 7
Assignments:
- Review electronic lectures
- Chapter quiz
- Chapter activity by Saturday.
- Review and comment on group presentation (Saturday midnight)

Module 10:
Reading: HRM Chapter 8
Assignments:
- Review electronic lectures
- Chapter activity by Saturday at noon.
- Chapter quiz

Module 11:
Reading: HRM Chapter 9
Assignments:
- Review electronic lectures
- Chapter activity by Saturday at noon.
- Chapter quiz
- Review and comment on group presentation (Saturday midnight)

Module 12:
Reading: HRM Chapter 10
Assignments:
- Review electronic lectures
- Chapter activity by Saturday at noon.
- Chapter quiz

Module 13:
Reading: HRM Chapters 11 and 12
Assignments:
- Review electronic lectures
- Chapter activity by Saturday at noon.
- Chapter quiz
- Review and comment on group presentation (Saturday midnight)

Module 14:
Reading: Conclusion
Assignments:
- Review electronic lecture
- Chapter activity by Saturday at noon.
- Make final comments on group presentations

Final exam  TBA.

Academic Honesty
Any violations of academic honesty will result in a failing grade in the class, and a request to have the student dropped from the program. Any indication of academic dishonesty will be vigorously investigated. Unresolved questions relating to test honesty may result in a retest in a proctored environment.

Using any material from another source must be cited (e.g., Van Wart 2005, 345). If it is a direct quotation, quotation marks must be used. Paraphrased ideas must still be cited. Copying another student’s posting for your posting is forbidden. Group responses are not allowed in either the papers or final exam in this class.
Accommodation Needs
Students with documented learning disabilities or special needs must clearly identify those accommodation requirements at the beginning of the class. Students with personal/work-related needs should contact the instructor before the class or during the first week to see if they are resolvable.

Withdrawal from Class
Official withdrawal must occur directly with the registrar; the instructor does not withdraw you. Unrestricted withdrawal is normally at the end of the third week of the semester. Students who do not properly withdraw from the class receive an F for the course.

Special Note on Instructor Royalties:
I make donations to the Department every year to offset the small royalties I get from the books that I have written which are used in various classes. Please note that this textbook was in use before I joined the faculty at CSUSB.