

GOVT 351 Introduction to Public Administration

Spring 2012

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Course Meetings: Students must attend the section for which they have registered.

- Section 01 (CRN 20427): Tuesday and Thursday, 9:30-10:50, Morton 20
- Section 02 (CRN 27590): Tuesday and Thursday, 11:00-12:20, Andrews 201

Office Hours: Tuesday 3:00-4:30pm, Thursday 12:30-2:00pm, and by appointment.

1. Course description

Welcome to GOVT 351. This class addresses a common but understandable misperception about American government. Many people believe that elected officials and judges are the most consequential actors in the country's political system. However, policies and judicial decisions are not self-executing. Collectively, they rely on public bureaucracies and thousands of public administrators to implement them. John Adams recognized this back in 1785 when he wrote: "The executive power is properly the government; the laws are a dead letter until an administration begins to carry them into execution."¹ To understand how that "execution" occurs, this class explores many theoretical lenses to help students understand the bureaucrats who manage and implement policy, the tools they use, and the organizational and political environments in which they work.

2. Readings

These required books are available at the college bookstore.

- Roger W. Cobb and David M. Primo. 2003. *The Plane Truth: Airline Crashes, the Media, and Transportation Policy*. Washington, DC: Brookings. ISBN 9780815771999
- Donald F. Kettl. 2007. *System Under Stress: Homeland Security and American Politics (2nd ed.)*. Washington, DC: CQ Press. ISBN 978087289333. (Be sure to purchase the 2nd edition.)
- Paul Manna. 2011. *Collision Course: Federal Education Policy Meets State and Local Realities*. Washington, DC: CQ Press. ISBN 9781608716494
- Kenneth J. Meier and Laurence J. O'Toole, Jr. 2006. *Bureaucracy in a Democratic State: A Governance Perspective*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press. ISBN 9780801883576
- James Q. Wilson. 1989 [or 1991]. *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It*. New York: Basic Books. ISBN 978046500785.

Other required readings are on the course Blackboard site.

¹ You can see the full context of the quote here: http://www.constitution.org/jadams/ja1_55.htm.

3. Assignments and grading

3.1 Overview

The course stresses three skill sets—discussing ideas, writing, and thinking on your feet in timed settings—that all students trained in the liberal arts should possess. Mastering these skills will help you make positive contributions in your future classes, the workforce, and the communities where you eventually reside.

30%	Class participation and attendance
15%	Midterm exam in-class part
15%	Midterm exam take-home part
20%	Final exam in-class part
20%	Final exam take-home part

I will base final course grades on the following scale, with partial-percents typically rounded to the nearest full percent: A 93-100, A- 90-92, B+ 88-89, B 83-87, B- 80-82, C+ 78-79, C 73-77, C- 70-72, D+ 68-69, D 63-67, D- 60-62, F <60.

Finally, please keep a copy of all work you submit until I have processed final grades.

3.2 Class participation and attendance

Attendance every day and active class participation are essential components of this class. On Blackboard, I have posted a grading rubric that outlines my specific expectations. In sum, everyone should arrive prepared to have thoughtful and energetic discussions about the class material. If generally you are shy in classes you should see me immediately so I can help you overcome that fear of speaking out.

Here are four specific things you should do to prepare to participate in class each day.

- Read the discussion questions I will post on Blackboard for each topic.
- Do the readings while thinking about the discussion questions I have posted.
- Prepare some notes on the discussion questions that you bring to class.
- Bring the assigned readings to class.

3.3 Midterm exam and final exam

The in-class parts of the exams will primarily contain several short answer questions that call for a brief paragraph response. The take-home parts will require you craft a brief (approximately 3-4 pages) essay to a question that I provide. More details about the exam formats and expectations will be forthcoming.

In fairness to everyone, students who arrive late for an exam may not work overtime. The only valid reasons for missing and rescheduling an exam are due to a documented illness, religious observance, death in the family (or similarly grave family emergency), a W&M-sponsored travel commitment that you have discussed with me before the exam, or, during final exams only (as W&M allows), you have several exams in a row. If you miss an exam for another reason you can take a makeup exam for which the maximum grade you can earn is a C (75%).

4. Other notes

4.1 *Common courtesy in class.*

Please show your classmates and me respect by following these basic common-sense practices. Students who do not will see their class participation grade suffer.

Arriving to class: Class will begin promptly so please arrive on time. If on a rare occasion you are late then you should take your seat quietly and not disrupt the conversation that is already underway.

Cell phones: Please turn off your phone and put it away out of sight before class starts. On a particular day if you are expecting an unusually important call (e.g., family emergency, possible job interview, etc.), please let me know as you arrive in class that you may need to step out briefly to take a call. Even on those rare days you should set your phone to vibrate and put it away when class starts. There is no reason for you to have your phone out during class.

Laptop computers (or other similar electronic devices): I would discourage you from taking notes on a laptop because students who rely on them often tend to become stenographers rather than careful listeners and engaged participants. Still, if you prefer to take notes this way, the only programs that should be up and running on your machine are a document where you have your notes for the day and the course Blackboard site. That's it. Other programs or web sites will distract you and the people sitting around you, so please turn them off before class starts. Finally, at times I will call "screens down," and when I do so you should close your machine.

4.2 *Academic misconduct*

I begin by assuming academic misconduct will not become an issue in this class. If it does, for any questions about policies regarding cheating, plagiarism, or other types of academic dishonesty, please see the William and Mary Honor Council's web site and the discussion of the Honor Code in the Student Handbook. If I discover a student cheating, I will initiate an Honor Council proceeding and, at a bare minimum, recommend that the student receive an F for the course. I take this issue extremely seriously, and hope you do too.

4.3 *What you can expect from me*

So far I have described what I expect from you. But what can you expect from me? Several things. First, I will not ask you to do things that waste your time. I am convinced that students respond best when professors encourage them to think hard about interesting ideas and questions. I will work all semester to create that kind of environment. Second, I will give you lots of honest feedback in class discussions, office hours, email exchanges, and on your written work. Finally, I promise to treat you with respect. I anticipate that we will sometimes disagree about government and politics this semester. In fact, I hope we do because that will make the course more interesting. I will not penalize you if you do not embrace my political beliefs, nor will I reward you simply because we happen to agree on political matters.

5. Schedule of topics, readings, and exams

We will adjust this schedule as needed.

BB = Reading is posted on Blackboard.

5.1. Where does the bureaucracy fit in the larger context of the American political system?

Th 1/19	Course introduction: The demands of democracy vs. the imperatives of bureaucracy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meier & O'Toole, Ch. 1 Governance and the bureaucracy problem.
T 1/24	Public bureaucracy versus private bureaucracy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wilson, Ch. 17 Problems; Ch. 19 Markets. • BB. Alexander Hart. 2010. Should businesses be run like the Post Office? <i>The New Republic</i>. http://www.tnr.com/blog/jonathan-cohn/76191/should-businesses-be-run-the-post-office.
Th 1/26	The challenge of political control <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meier & O'Toole, Ch. 2 Democracy and political control of the bureaucracy.
T 1/31	Governance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BB. Laurence J. O'Toole, Jr. and Kenneth J. Meier. 1999. Modeling the impact of public management: Implications of structural context. <i>Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory</i> 9(4). Read pp. 505-511; you can skip the rest. • Meier & O'Toole, Appendix [in their book]. A specific model of governance.

5.2. What is the bureaucracy, exactly?

Th 2/2	People <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wilson, Ch. 1 Armies, prisons, schools; Ch. 2 Organization matters.
T 2/7	People (cont.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wilson, Ch. 10 Turf; Ch. 12 Innovation. • BB. Mark Moore. 1995. <i>Creating Public Value: Strategic Management in Government</i>. Ch. 3 Organizational strategy in the public sector, pp. 70-76 (excerpt).
Th 2/9	Government organizations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wilson, Ch. 9 Compliance.
T 2/14	Networks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meier & O'Toole, Ch. 2 Democracy and political control of the bureaucracy (re-read pp. 34-37); Ch. 3 Structural barriers to political control.
Th 2/16	No class. I will be on research trip studying the Indiana state education bureaucracy and implementation of that state's education reforms. Do the readings posted on Blackboard (to be announced) as background on the Indiana case. We will discuss them, and some insights from my trip, when I return. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background reading on Indiana to be posted to Blackboard.
T 2/21	Catch-all day <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Indiana trip debrief 2. Discussion about in-class midterm exam and writing the take-home midterm exam. 3. Preview <i>Collision Course</i> discussion. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manna, Ch. 1 Contexts

Th 2/23	Case: Education policy and the No Child Left Behind Act—Executives and managers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manna, Ch. 2 Logic and levers of NCLB; Ch. 3 System leaders implement the law.
T 2/28	Case: Education policy and the No Child Left Behind Act (cont.)—Operators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manna, Ch. 4 Schools and districts under the microscope; Ch. 5 Teachers and their tasks; Ch. 6 Subgroup accountability and student achievement.

Thursday, March 1. MIDTERM EXAM. The take-home part is due when you arrive to class to take the in-class part.

Tuesday, March 6 and Thursday, March 8 – No class. Spring break.

5.3. What influences how bureaucrats think?

T 3/13	Bounded rationality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BB. Bryan D. Jones. 1999. Bounded rationality. <i>Annual Reviews of Political Science</i>. vol. 2. Read pp. 297-305 and then skim or read other sections that you find interesting. • BB. Julie Watson. 2010. Cops show Marines how to take on the Taliban. Associated Press. http://www.nbclosangeles.com/news/local/Cops-Show-Marines-How-to-Take-on-the-Taliban--98202989.html.
Th 3/15	Culture and circumstances <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wilson, Ch. 2 Organizations (re-read pp. 25-27); Ch. 3 Circumstances; Ch. 6 Culture.
T 3/20	Bureaucratic values <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wilson, Ch. 4 Beliefs. • Meier & O’Toole, Ch. 4 Political control versus bureaucratic values.
Th 3/22	Organized interests <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wilson, Ch. 5 Interests.
T 3/27	Case: Homeland security <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kettl, Ch. 1 Stress test; Ch. 2 Coordination dilemmas; Ch. 3 Reshaping the bureaucracy.
Th 3/29	Case: Homeland security (cont.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kettl, Ch. 4 The federalism jumble; Ch. 5 The political costs of managing risk; Ch. 6 Balancing liberty with protection.

5.4. To whom is the bureaucracy accountable?

T 4/3	Dimensions of accountability: Top-down vs. bottom-up democracy revisited <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meier & O’Toole, Ch. 1 Governance and the bureaucracy problem (re-read pp. 9-14). • BB. Paul Light. 1997. <i>The Tides of Reform: Making Government Work, 1945-1995</i>. Ch. 1 The tides of reform. pp. 15-43.
Th 4/5	Executive and legislative branches <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wilson, Ch. 13 Congress; Ch. 14 Presidents.
T 4/10	Executive and legislative branches (cont.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wilson, Ch. 13 Congress; Ch. 14 Presidents.

Th 4/12	Judicial branch <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wilson, Ch. 15. Courts.
T 4/17	Accountability and the law's letter versus its spirit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meier & O'Toole, Ch. 5. Inside the bureaucracy: Principals, agents, and bureaucratic strategy. Manna, Ch. 7. Federal leadership and the future of educational accountability (skim pp. 141-148; read pp. 148-165).
Th 4/19	Case: Airline regulation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cobb & Primo, Ch. 1 Plane crashes and public policy; Ch. 2 After the crash; Ch. 3 Death in the skies in the 1990s.
T 4/24	Case: Airline regulation (cont.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cobb & Primo, Ch. 4 The crash of USAir flight 427; Ch. 5 The crash of ValuJet flight 592; Ch. 6 The crash of TWA flight 800.

5.5. Overall, what to conclude about the bureaucracy's role in a democracy?

Th 4/26	Some generalizations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wilson, Ch. 20 Bureaucracy and the public interest. Meier & O'Toole, Ch. 6. Democracy, bureaucracy, and modern governance. Required: pp. 121-125 and 131-138. Optional: pp. 145-152. This optional section will be of interest to those of you who are considering pursuing further research in areas related to our work this semester.
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5.6 Final exam schedule and notes

In-class part

- You must take the in-class part with your regular section unless you clear a change with me first.
- GOVT 351-01 (9:30am section): Wednesday, May 2, 9:00am-12:00noon
- GOVT 351-02 (11:00am section): Wednesday, May 9, 2:00-5:00pm

Take-home part:

- The take-home part is due for all students (both sections) by Wednesday, May 9 at 2:00pm. I am glad to accept them earlier than that as well.