

Bureaucracy and Public Policy
Politics V53.0350
Spring 2007
Professor Sanford Clark Gordon

I. Introduction

Bureaucracies are inescapably embedded in the American political environment, and political conflicts within administrative agencies are ubiquitous. In this course, we will examine the major questions political scientists ask about public bureaucracies: How have they evolved to their current form? Why do bureaucrats engage in behavior that many of us consider pathological or arbitrary? How can unelected government officials be made more accountable to their elected counterparts and to citizens? In addressing these questions and others, we will draw on cases of “government in action” in a number of different public policy areas.

II. Contact and Meeting Information

Professor

Sanford Clark Gordon
19 W. 4th St., Room 311
Phone: (212) 998-3708
E-mail: sanford.gordon@nyu.edu
Office Hours: Monday 2-4pm, or by appointment

Grader

Diana Santana
E-mail: ds1806@nyu.edu

Class meetings

TR 9:30-10:45am, Silver Center 806

III. Required Readings

The following books are available for purchase at the University bookstore:

- Wilson, James Q. 1989. *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why they Do It*. New York: Basic Books
- Carpenter, Daniel P. 2001. *The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press
- Herbert Kaufman, 1960. *The Forest Ranger*. Washington, DC: Resources for the Future

Additional reading material will be made available on Blackboard.

IV. Student Responsibilities and Course Grading

Formal Course Requirements

Classroom Participation and Presentation: 20%
(8% for general participation,
12% for group presentation)

The most significant difference between this class and others like it is its heavy reliance on *case studies*. On eleven occasions, roughly a quarter of our class time (about half of the Thursday session) will revolve around a topical example drawn from the world of bureaucratic politics and performance. We will discuss significant and/or illustrative events in the history of American governance, difficult jobs, success stories, and fiascos.

As an introduction to each of the ten case studies, a group of five students will briefly present the case material and its relationship to the other course materials. Then, we will open the floor to a broader discussion, to be moderated by the presenting students. During our discussions, all students will be expected to demonstrate 1) successful mastery of the facts and 2) the ability to draw broader lessons from the case.

Paper(s) 30%

You have two options:

- a) Write two short papers, each 5-6 pages in length (standard formatting), applying a theoretical perspective covered in class to a case study on which you are not also a presenter. Those students choosing to write on a particular case must hand in their papers by the *beginning* of the class in which the case study is discussed. You must hand in the first of the two papers by Thursday, March 8, and the second by Thursday, April 19.
- b) Write one longer research paper, 10-12 pages in length (standard formatting), on a bureaucracy-related topic. Students choosing this option must get approval on the topic from Professor Gordon before Spring Break. Research papers are due by Thursday, April 19.

Midterm Examination: 20%

The midterm examination will be held on Thursday, March 1. A combination of short answers and essays, the exam will cover the preceding lectures and readings (including case materials).

Final Examination: 30%

According to the Registrar's most recent schedule, the final examination will be held on Thursday, May 3, from 8-9:50am. Roughly 2/3 of the exam will cover material not covered on the midterm.

Policy on missed exams and late papers

Exams: Exceptions in emergency situations are inevitable, but in general, students missing an exam will receive a grade of zero. If you must miss an exam, please contact me before the scheduled test time, and if the excuse is justified (such as in cases of illness or family/personal emergencies), we will schedule a make-up.

Short Papers: Short papers will not be accepted after the topic has been discussed in class.

Research Papers: In general, research papers will be penalized 1/3 of a grade (e.g. from a B+ to a B) per day late.

V. Academic Integrity

All of the work you do in this course is expected to be your own. Absolutely no cheating or plagiarism (using someone else's words or ideas without proper attribution) will be tolerated. All ideas not your own must be properly cited. Any cases of cheating or plagiarism will be handled according to university policy. For more information on university policy, see <http://www.nyu.edu/cas/Academic/bulletin0608.pdf>, pp. 370-371.

VI. Weekly Schedule

Part A. Bureaucracy from the Inside Out

Week 1. Introduction

Tuesday, January 16

What is Public Bureaucracy and Why Should We Study It?

Thursday, January 18

The Federal Bureaucracy, Past and Present: A Whirlwind Tour

- James Q. Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, chs. 1 and 2
- David E. Lewis, "Evolution of the Federal Personnel System," ch. 2 of *Politicizing Administration*, book manuscript in progress (Skim)

Week 2. Microfoundations

Tuesday, January 23

Rationalist Accounts, Old and New

- Weber, Max. (Published posthumously in 1947). "The Types of Legitimate Domination," in *Economy and Society*, 212-241
- Richard M. Cyert and James G. March (1963), "A Summary of Basic Concepts in the Behavioral Theory of the Firm," ch. 7 of *A Behavioral Theory of the Firm*
- Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, chs. 3, 4

Thursday, January 25

Limits on the Rationality of Agents

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case Study: Racial Profiling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - John Knowles, Nicola Persico, and Petra Todd. 2001. "Racial Bias in Motor Vehicle Searches: Theory and Evidence." <i>Journal of Political Economy</i> 109: 203-229 - David Cole and John Lamberth, "The Fallacy of Racial Profiling." Op-ed, <i>New York Times</i>, May 13, 2001 - William Anderson and Gene Callahan. "The Roots of Racial Profiling." <i>Reason</i>, August/September 2001 |
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Week 3. Agency

Tuesday, January 30

Moral Hazard and Adverse Selection

- Terry Moe. 1984. "The New Economics of Organization." *American Journal of Political Science* 28: 739-777
- Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, chs. 7, 9

Thursday, February 1

Patronage vs. Civil Service

- Carpenter, *Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy*, 40-76

- Case Study: The Centralia Mine Disaster

- Martin, John Bartlow. 1948. "The Blast in Centralia No. 5: A Mine Disaster No One Stopped"

Week 4. Discretion

Tuesday, February 6

Sed Quis Custodient Ipsos Custodes

- Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, chs. 17, 18
- Philip K. Howard, "The Death of Common Sense." *U.S. News and World Report*, January 30, 1995, 57-61

Thursday, February 8

- Case Study: Forest Rangers

- Herbert Kaufman. 1960. *The Forest Ranger*. Skim chapter 2, read chapters 3 and 4, skim chapter 5
- Tipple, Terence J., and J. Douglas Wellman. 1991. "Herbert Kaufman's *Forest Ranger* Thirty Years Later." *Public Administration Review* 51: 421-428

Week 5. Culture

Tuesday, February 13

Organizational Culture: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

- Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, ch. 6 and the second half of ch. 8 ("Bureaucratization versus Professionalization")
- Kaufman, *Forest Ranger*, ch. 6

Thursday, February 15

Professionalism and Human Relations

- Case Study: "Forging" Cultures: the USDA and the Railway Mail

- Carpenter, *Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy*, chs. 3 (pp. 76-93), 6, 7

Week 6. Leadership

Tuesday, February 20

Managerial Leadership and Autonomy

- Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, chs. 11, 12
- Carpenter, *Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy*, ch. 8

Thursday, February 22

- Case Study: Tailhook
 - Peter Boyer, "Admiral Boorda's War." *The New Yorker*, September 16, 1996

Week 7. Slack, Review, and Exam

Tuesday, February 27

Catching up; review for the midterm exam

Thursday, March 1

MIDTERM EXAMINATION

Week 8. Redundancy

Tuesday, March 6

Duplication, Turf, and Termination

- Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, ch. 10
- David E. Lewis. 2002. "The Politics of Agency Termination: Confronting the Myth of Agency Immortality." *Journal of Politics* 64: 89-107

Thursday, March 8

- Case Study: Intelligence Failures
 - Wright, Lawrence. "The Agent." *The New Yorker*, July 10 & 17, 2006
 - Gladwell, Malcolm. "Connecting the Dots." *The New Yorker*, March 10, 2003

Week 9. SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

Part B. Bureaucratic Politics from the Outside In

Week 10. Congress

Tuesday, March 20

Delegation and Control

- Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, ch. 13
- Mathew D. McCubbins and Thomas Schwartz. 1984. "Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols vs. Fire Alarms." *American Journal of Political Science* 28: 165-179
- R. Douglas Arnold. 1979. *Congress and the Bureaucracy*, ch. 6

Thursday, March 22

- Case Study: The 1998 IRS Reforms
 - Senator William V. Roth, Jr., and William H. Nixon (1999), chs. 1 and 9 of *The Power to Destroy*
 - Amy Hamilton, "No Misconduct Found in 95 percent of Alleged IRS Harrassment Cases" (*case readings continue on next page*)

- David Cay Johnston, "Rate of All I.R.S. Audits Falls; Poor Face Particular Scrutiny." *The New York Times*, February 16, 2001
- David Cay Johnston, "I.R.S. to Add to Enforcement by Reducing its Clerical Staff" *The New York Times*, January 8, 2004

Week 11. Presidents

Tuesday, March 27

- Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, ch. 14
- David E. Lewis, "Politicizing the Modern Presidency," ch. 4 of *Politicizing Administration*, book manuscript in progress.

Thursday, March 29

- Case Study: Reagan and the EPA
 - Joel Mintz (1995), chs. 4 and 5 of *Enforcement at the EPA*

Week 12. Interest Groups

Tuesday, April 3

Mechanisms of Influence

- Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, ch. 5
- Carpenter, Daniel P. 2002. "Groups, the Media, Agency Waiting Costs, and FDA Approval." *American Journal of Political Science* 46, 490-505 (Technical)
- Gordon, Sanford C., and Catherine Hafer. 2005. "Flexing Muscle: Corporate Political Expenditures as Signals to the Bureaucracy." *American Political Science Review* 99: 245-261 (Technical)

Thursday, April 5

- Case Study: Structural Politics
 - Moe, Terry. 1989. "The Politics of Bureaucratic Structure." In Chubb and Peterson, eds., *The Politics of Bureaucratic Structure*, 267-329

Week 13. Courts and Clients

Tuesday, April 10

Whom does the Bureaucracy Serve? Whom Should it Serve?

- Hargrove, Erwin C., and John C. Glidewell. *Impossible Jobs in Public Management*, chs. 1-3
- Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, ch. 15

Thursday, April 12

- Case Study: Prison Management
 - DiIulio, John J. 1987. *Governing Prisons*, chs. 3, 5

Week 14. Contracting

Tuesday, April 17

Making versus Buying: Transaction Costs and Accountability

- Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, ch. 19
- Mark H. Moore, "Privatizing Public Management." In John D. Donahue and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., eds., *Market Based Governance*: 296-322.
- Paul C. Light. "Which Customer is Right?" *Government Executive*, February 1, 2000, in course packet

Thursday, April 19

- Case Study: The Coalition Provisional Authority
 - Harris, Shane. "Outsourcing Iraq." *Government Executive*, July 1, 2004
 - Chandrasekaran, Rajiv. 2006. "Imperial Life in the Emerald City," selections

Week 15. Wrapping Up

Tuesday, April 24

Catching up; review for the final exam

Thursday, April 26

Conclusion: What We Should Expect from Public Servants?

Final Exam

Thursday, May 3, 8-9:50am