

PSPA 165: Introduction to Public Administration  
School of Social Science, Philosophy, and Religion  
Buena Vista University  
Spring 2014

Class Meetings: M-W-F, 10:00-10:50 a.m. (SSA-111)

Dr. Bradley Best  
SSA- 207

Office Hours: M-W-F, 11:00-12:00 a.m. and 1:00-2:00 p.m.  
(*other times by appointment*)

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### Course Description

This course introduces students to the structures, processes, and behavioral patterns commonly observed in public sector organizations. At the beginning of the term, students investigate the sources of bureaucratic power in American government and its potential inconsistency with democratic rule. These discussions are followed by careful evaluation of executive branch relations with legislatures and courts. Students are asked to consider various theories of management and the impact of organizational culture on administrative performance. Later, students consider the impact of bureaucratic forms of organization on the behavior of individual actors, especially as adaptations to the various features of the task environment (e.g., rules, workload, and professional norms) shape service delivery and interactions with agency clients. Some attention is paid to the history of policy responses to public claims of bureaucratic inefficiency, sluggishness, and unaccountability. On a broader, theoretical level, students explore connections among political and inter-institutional conflict in American government and the core bureaucratic activities of managing, budgeting, project planning, implementing policy, and evaluating program effectiveness. Some attention is paid to various ethical questions confronting public managers and several frameworks for ethical deliberation.

At bottom, PSPA 165 is designed to equip students with an elementary, yet highly portable awareness of the behavior of bureaucratic organizations, administrative processes, perspectives on managerial technique, theories of organizational life, and commonly used methodological approaches to studying executive branch organizations. Moreover, PSPA 165 assumes no prior course work in the public administration field. PSPA 165 adopts the view that all students, regardless of academic major, can both contribute and benefit from a survey of this avenue of social scientific inquiry.

## Required Texts

Denhardt, Robert B. and Janet V. Denhardt. 2014. *Public Administration: An Action Orientation*. Seventh Edition. Thomson Higher Education. Belmont, CA. [ISBN: 978-1-133-93921-4]

Denhardt, Robert B. 2011. *Theories of Public Organization*. Sixth Edition. Thomson Higher Education. Belmont, CA. [ISBN: 9781439086230]

## What to Expect – The Next 15 Weeks

1. **Ownership.** It is especially important for students to gather a sense of ownership of the course. In short, this is your course and it exists to facilitate your learning. Thus, the measure of success you encounter in this course will correlate strongly with the extent to which you exercise your rights (i.e., to effective presentation of ideas, an authentic challenge, assistance with course materials outside of class meetings, and fair evaluation of your work) and responsibilities (i.e, consistent attendance, diligent preparation for class discussions, eager participation in classroom activities, and aggressive preparation for quizzes/exams) as owners of PSPA 165.
2. **Access.** Over the course of the term, you will have unprecedented access to your instructor. Remember that I am here for you – to guide you, to clarify difficult concepts, to add texture and perspective to complex subjects, and maximize your chances for success. Students are expected to ask questions whenever confusions or curiosities arise. Furthermore, students are invited to see the instructor during scheduled office hours or make an appointment for a meeting at a mutually agreeable hour.
3. **Fairness.** Students can expect their work to be examined closely and with total fairness. Evaluation of student presentations and exams is done in a way that maximizes course goals. It is important to note that I enjoy rewarding students for good performance and take pride in students' success.
4. **Challenge.** You deserve the benefits of a classroom environment that stretches your skills and tests your aptitudes. Moreover, at BVU we are committed to challenging students to achieve more than they imagined possible. Your professor, you can be sure, is confident that you can and will acquire skills and abilities that exceed the norm in higher education today. On this point, consider: <http://www.npr.org/2011/02/09/133310978/in-college-a-lack-of-rigor-leaves-students-adrift>

## Course Objectives

*PSPA 165 Introduction to Public Administration* pursues **BVU learning objective #1 (ions) and the Social Science (Explorations)**.

- **BVU Objective #1:** [Students will be able to effectively and creatively solve problems](#)
- **Social Science (Explorations) Objective:** Students are able to **think and write critically**, in ways informed by **social science theory**, about problems and questions of broad social importance.

*PSPA 165 Introduction to Public Administration* also supports the following **Political Science and Public Administration major learning objectives**:

- PSCN (and PSPA) Objective #1: Students will trace the historical development of the public administration field, accounting for key theoretical developments linked to the present state of the discipline
- PSPA Objective #2: Students will identify and describe prominent theoretical perspectives in the field.
- PSPA Objective #6: Students will communicate effectively, consistent with the standards and conventions of the field.

## Student Responsibilities

1. Assigned readings: Students are expected to complete each day's assigned readings prior to the commencement of lecture or class discussion. Failure to adequately prepare for class meetings will result in diminished class participation scores and, no doubt, worrisome performance on examinations.
2. Absences: Students are allowed three (3) unexcused absences during the term. For each additional absence, the student's class participation score will be lowered by two (2) points. In the events that a student encounters some personal crisis, prolonged illness, physical injury, or family exigency requiring many course absences, some relaxation in the attendance policy may be allowed (My point: unexpected and troubling life events occur from time to time. I am eager to accommodate students in their efforts to overcome such difficulties.) However, students are reminded to notify the instructor as soon as possible when such circumstances arise. Doing so increases the likelihood of relaxation in the attendance policy and workable strategies for completing the course.
3. Make-up examinations and quizzes: Students are expected to present on the day of scheduled examinations and quizzes. Make-up exams and quizzes are allowed in only the most extraordinary of circumstances (e.g., profound illness, injury,

- personal crisis, or family exigency). The instructor will serve as the sole arbiter of whether and when to grant the opportunity for a make-up exam or quiz. As in the case of absences, students are counseled to make contact with the instructor at the earliest possible date/time that an absence on exam or quiz day becomes likely. Doing so increases the probability that an opportunity for a make-up exam or quiz will be granted.
4. Class participation: Each week, students will participate in one or more group discussion activities. Each discussion activity requires that students generate oral, and at times written, response to a discussion question/problem presented by the instructor. Effective contributions to these discussions will be reflected in the class participation / preparation portion of the final grade.
  5. Laptop computer policy: Laptop computers are a valuable tool used to enhance the quality of the educational experience at BVU. However, students enjoy no absolute right to the use of laptop computers in university classrooms. As a result, students enrolled in PSPA 165 are allowed classroom use of laptops only when indicated by the instructor. On most days, I will ask students to keep laptop cases closed and take hand-written notes of lectures/discussions. Yet, from time to time, students will be asked to make use of laptop computers as part of the day's instructions. Therefore, students are asked to bring laptops to class, but use them only at the direction of the instructor. Moreover, use of laptop computers for purposes other than those immediately linked to course material is prohibited.
  6. Cell Phones: Students are asked to avoid, during class time, the persistent checking-on and sending-of text messages. If a student finds it necessary to monitor a cell phone in order to attend to an important family or personal matter, do so discretely and professionally [Example: checking on an ill family member, monitoring school closings] "Texting" for entertainment or as an escape from class discussion is, however, ill advised.
  7. Academic honesty: Students are expected to abide by all BVU policies on the subject of academic honesty and plagiarism. Instances of academic dishonesty or plagiarism will result in a failing grade in PSPA 165 and will be reported to the Vice President of Academic Affairs.

### Method of Assigning Final Grades

Two (2) examinations are scheduled. In addition, each student must complete two (2) quizzes. Exam and quiz questions may be in multiple choice, matching, short-answer, or essay format. Students must submit two (2) written essay assignments, each of which must be approximately four (4) pages in length. Finally, each student will be assigned a class participation score. Students are reminded that *the class participation / preparation score comprises a large portion of the final grade [my point: diligent and thorough preparation for class is essential!]* and will reflect, especially, students' contributions to the Friday Seminar discussions. The instructor will serve as the sole and final arbiter of

the number of points earned on the class participation portion of the final grade. Moreover, the graded elements of the course are as follows:

- Examination #1 (50 pts possible)
- Examination #2 (50 pts possible)
- Quiz #1 (25 pts possible)
- Quiz #2 (25 pts possible)
- Essay #1 (30 pts possible)
- Essay #2 (30 pts possible)
- Class preparation / participation (30 pts)  
(including Friday Seminar contributions)

A total of **240 points** are possible in the course.

**Final grades in PSPA 165 will be awarded as follows:**

<u>% of 240 Points Earned</u>	<u>Final Grade</u>
93-100 %	A
90-92 %	A-
87-89 %	B+
83-86 %	B
80-82 %	B-
77-79 %	C+
73-76 %	C
70-72 %	C-
67-69 %	D+
63-66 %	D
60-62 %	D-
59 % or less	F

### Writing Essays

Students are required to submit for grading **two (2)** essays. Written essays are to be approximately 4 pages in length, double-spaced, and printed in 12 point font. **Essays may be submitted electronically – via e-mail attached file** (MS Word format, please) – to me at [Best@bvu.edu](mailto:Best@bvu.edu). Essays will be graded on the basis of clarity of purpose, concision, adherence to the tenets of sound grammar and paragraph construction. In short, essays are to reflect principles of sound composition. Thus, proper citation methods are expected. Students are permitted to use the citation format prescribed by any commonly recognized style guide, such as MLA, Turabian, or the *Chicago Manual of Style*. See Dr. Best's personal website for links to various style manuals and guides to citation.

### **Changes to Course Calendar:**

On rare occasions, it becomes necessary to alter the schedule of course readings and lecture topics. When re-scheduling occurs, the instructor will notify students during scheduled class periods or, if dictated by the circumstances, via e-mail. It is the responsibility of the student to be aware of any and all formal announcements regarding changes to the course calendar.

### **Special Notes:**

Conflicts in policy: In no way will any provision of this course syllabus be interpreted to conflict with the policies adopted by the faculty and administration of Buena Vista University

Academic services: Buena Vista University provides academic services through the Center for Academic Excellence which serves as the university's academic support unit. Students may access tutors by logging on to:  
<http://www.bvu.edu/departments/academicaffairs/cae/>

Accommodating Students with special needs and/or disabilities: Students challenged by special needs or disabilities are encouraged to contact BVU's Center for Academic Excellence (telephone 712-740-1237 or [museld@bvu.edu](mailto:museld@bvu.edu)) for guidance and assistance in seeking necessary accommodations. It is the instructor's policy to do all that is feasible to assist students with special needs.

## Course Calendar – PSPA 165: Introduction to Public Administration

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### **Week 1**      **Course Introduction / Woodrow Wilson’s “Study of Administration”** (1/29 -1/31)

#### Assigned Reading

- Woodrow Wilson, “The Study of Administration”  
<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=465>

### **Week 2**      **Public Administration – Historical Foundations and Basic Questions** (2/3, 2/4, 2/7)

#### Assigned Reading:

- Denhardt and Denhardt: Chapter 1, “Personal Action in Public Organizations”
- American Progressivism (as described by the Heritage Foundation)  
<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2007/07/the-progressive-movement-and-the-transformation-of-american-politics>
- Voices of Progressivism in the Academy, View *Moyers and Company* video on PBS]  
<http://www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/07032009/watch.html>

### **Week 3**      **Historical Foundations – continued** (2/10, 2/12, 2/14)

#### Assigned Reading:

- Denhardt, Chapter 2, “The Intellectual Heritage: Marx, Weber, and Freud”
- **Friday Seminar Discussion and Essay Assignment #1 (30 pts):**  
*“In their own distinct and original ways, Marx, Weber, and Freud speak to one of the most important questions encountered by social theorists: in what ways are our individual lives and sense of ourselves shaped by the large scale, complex organizations of which we are either members or clients? In a concisely written, 3-4 page essay, **summarize** each scholars’ contribution to this important debate. Indicate which author’s contribution most accurately captures the experience of living in a modern, complex society? Explain/defend your answer in a way that reflects an ability to comparatively **evaluate** the thought of Marx, Weber, and Freud.”*

**Week 4**      **Politics, Policy, and Federalism – Part I**

(2/17, 2/19, 2/21)

Assigned Reading

- Denhardt and Denhardt, Chapter 2, “The Political Context of Public Administration”
- Denhardt, Chapter 3, “The Political Heritage: From Wilson to Waldo”

**Week 5**      **Politics, Policy, and Federalism – Part II**

(2/24, 2/26, 2/28)

Assigned Reading

- Denhardt and Denhardt, Chapter 3, “The Interorganizational Context of Public Administration”
- **Video Presentation**, “Can the States Do it Better?” available from “Films on Demand” on the BVU Library website.  
<http://www.bvu.edu/library/databases/databases.dot>
- **Quiz #1 (25 pts)**

**Week 6**      **Ethics in Public Service**

(3/3, 3/5, 3/7)

Assigned Reading:

- Denhardt and Denhardt, Chapter 4, “Ethics”
- James Fieser’s “Ethics” entry in *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*  
Go to: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/ethics/>

**Week 7**      **Ethics in Public Service and Review for Midterm Exam**

(3/10, 3/12, 3/14)

Assigned Reading

- Roberts, Sarah E. 1999. “The Kankakee Wetlands: A Case Study in Ethics and Public Policy.” *Politics and the Life Sciences* 18(2): 191-200. [Note: this article can be retrieved from the BVU Library’s electronic databases – free of charge! Select the “JSTOR” database in the social sciences area of the “find articles” function.]
- **Friday Seminar and Essay Assignment #2 (30 pts):** *In a tightly-worded, 3-4 page essay, identify Sarah Roberts’ purpose(s) in writing “The Kankakee Wetlands: A Case Study in Ethics and Public Policy” (see full citation to the article in the list of assigned readings). Next, trace her chief arguments and summarize what you regard as her most basic conclusion. Finally, and most important, be sure that your essay evaluates the apparent weaknesses and strengths of each ethical perspective.*



**Week 8**      **Organizational Design and Management – Part I and Exam #1**  
(3/17, 3/19, 3/21))

- **Midterm Exam (50 pts) – Scheduled for 3/17**

Assigned Reading

- Denhardt and Denhardt, Chapter 5, “Designing and Managing Organizations”
- Denhardt, Chapter 4, “The Rational Model of Organization”

**Week 9**      **Organizational Design and Management - Part II**  
(3/31, 4/2, 4/4)

Assigned Reading

- Denhardt, Chapter 5, “Organizational Humanism and the New Public Administration”
- Discussion results of midterm exam (3/31)

**Week 10**      **Program Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation**  
(4/7, 4/9, 4/11)

Assigned Reading

- Denhardt and Denhardt, Chapter 6, “Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation”
- Denhardt, Chapter 6, “The Policy Emphasis and the New Public Management”
- **Friday Seminar: A Brief Introduction to Cost-Benefit Analysis**  
Read: <http://www.econlib.org/library/Enc/BenefitCostAnalysis.html>

**Week 11**      **Special Focus – Techniques of Program Evaluation**  
(4/14, 4/16)

Assigned Reading

- Basic Guide to Program Evaluation (from the Free Management Library)  
<http://managementhelp.org/evaluation/program-evaluation-guide.htm>
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s guides and resources on program evaluation (also performance measurement). Students: spend some time on the site, roam about, and make full use of the glossaries, guides, and training materials.  
<http://www.epa.gov/evaluate/>

**Week 12**      **Public Budgeting and Financial Management**

(4/23, 4/25)

Assigned Reading

- Denhardt and Denhardt, Chapter 7, “Budgeting and Financial Management”
- *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*, “Policy Basics: Introduction to the Federal Budget Process”  
[<http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=155>]
- **Quiz #2 (25 pts)**

**Week 13**      **Problem Solving Discussion -- Public Budgeting and Financial Management** ./ **Begin Final Examination Review**

(4/28, 4/30, 5/2)

Assigned Reading

- *Center for Budget and Policy Priorities*, “Strengthening State Fiscal Policies for a Stronger Economy”  
<http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=3675>
- CBO Report (from 2010) “Fiscal Stress Faced by Local Government”  
[http://www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/cbofiles/ftpdocs/120xx/doc12005/12-09-municipalities\\_brief.pdf](http://www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/cbofiles/ftpdocs/120xx/doc12005/12-09-municipalities_brief.pdf).

**Week 14**      **Managing Human Resources**

(5/5, 5/7, 5/9)

Assigned Reading

- Denhardt and Denhardt, Chapter 8, “The Management of Human Resources”
- Denhardt, Chapter 7, “Public Administration and the New Public Service”

**Week 15**      **Managing Human Resources – Part II and Review for Final Exam**

(5/12, 5/14, 5/16)

Assigned Reading

- Denhardt and Denhardt, Chapter 8, “The Management of Human Resources”
- View TED Talks video: Dan Pink, “The Puzzle of Motivation”  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rrkrvAUbU9Y>
- View TED Talks video: Dan Ariely, “What Makes Us Feel Good About our Work?”  
[http://www.ted.com/playlists/123/angela\\_duckworth\\_4\\_talks\\_on\\_h.html](http://www.ted.com/playlists/123/angela_duckworth_4_talks_on_h.html)

**Final Examination (50 pts) is scheduled for: \_\_\_\_\_.**

