Introduction

This course is an intensive study of bureaucratic politics. My goal is for the seminar participants to emerge with an understanding of the key ideas in the study of bureaucracy and an understanding of the ways in which engaging these ideas is prerequisite to an informed analysis of American politics and policy. My main questions are these:

What are public bureaucracies, and why should we study them?
What are the prerequisites to successful bureaucratic reform?
What purchase do these perspectives give us on the functioning of American democracy?

I view this course as a continuation of the study of public administration in American politics introduced in the American graduate core course. I am expecting students to have already studied American politics at the graduate level. There will, of course, be gaps. Theoretical approaches derived from neoclassical economics will dominate our exploration, to the detriment of sociological, cognitive psychological, and Marxian approaches. In addition, some interesting empirical work on public bureaucracies, along with new methodological approaches, will not be covered in this theoretically oriented exploration. Finally, the focus will be almost exclusively on bureaucratic politics in the United States.

Seminar requirements and assignment of grades

1. Class participation

Please come to class having completed and prepared to discuss the assigned readings. Regular class attendance is expected. Please notify me in advance for absences due to participation in religious observances and scheduled activities of official University student organizations.

On one occasion, each student will be expected to lead the seminar discussion for 30-45 minutes on the week’s readings. In preparation for this, each student is asked to prepare a 1 page handout to distribute in class on the day of the discussion. The goal of this assignment is not to summarize the readings, but to identify the key arguments of the work(s) and evaluate them on the basis of theory, evidence, and method.

Student participation will constitute 30% of the final grade.
2. Final examination

A two-hour closed-book final examination will be given Tuesday, April 11 during the regular class time. Students will be asked to answer 1 essay question from a list of 3. I will reserve the computer lab for the examination. Your answers to either question also do not need to (and shouldn’t) involve a large amount of memorization. The point is to thoughtfully engage the theoretical approaches that we cover.

The exam will count towards 30% of the final grade.

3. Research Prospectus

Students will be asked to write a research prospectus (12-15 pages) and present it to the seminar.

Your prospectus should:

- identify an interesting research question that engages with the literature that we have read and discussed
- situate the question within the appropriate literature
- describe the method and evidence that you would use to answer your question

We will be encountering a variety of methodological approaches during the semester, including historical, observational, formal, and empirical methods. Your prospectus should explain why your proposed methodology (or methodologies) is appropriate to your study. The prospectus should not merely summarize the relevant literature. Rather, it should engage it, situating your exploration within the literature, pointing out commonalities, conflicts, and how your analysis may contribute to our understanding of public bureaucracies.

The prospectus is due on Monday, April 24. Please hand in a paper copy.

Participants will be asked to make a short (10 minute) presentation to the seminar describing the research proposal, the theoretical issues, and the proposed methods. The final two class sessions will be devoted to these presentations.

The prospectus and presentation will count towards 40% of the final grade.

Required Readings

The following texts have been ordered and are available for purchase at the University Bookstore:


Most articles are available through JSTOR (www.jstor.org). I will place all other articles or chapters in the 12th floor lounge.

**Weekly Schedule**

**January 17: Course introduction and completion of bureaucratic tasks**

**January 24: The problem of the bureaucracy**

Chester Barnard. 1938. *The Functions of the Executive*, (Introduction, Chapters 2, 6-8, 11).


**January 31: Economics**


**February 7: Behavior**

Herbert A. Simon. 1945. *Administrative Behavior*, (Chapters 1-5, 7).


February 14: Incentives and Tasks


February 21: Information and Discretion


February 28: Oversight


March 7: Development


March 14: Culture

DiIulio, John J., Jr. 1987. Governing Prisons, (Chapters 1, 2, 4, and 6).


March 28: Domestic Policy—The Case of No Child Left Behind

Scott Abernathy. No Child Left Behind and the Public Schools. (manuscript).


April 4: Foreign Policy


April 11: In-Class Exam

April 18: Working Session

April 25: Presentations

May 2: Presentations