

2021 SYLLABUS
PADM 530: ETHICS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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Office Hours: By Appointment

REQUIRED TEXTS

J. Patrick Dobel, *Public Integrity*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.
ISBN: 0-801-86916-1.

Sissela Bok, *LYING: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life*. New York: Vintage Books/Random House, 1978. ISBN 0-394-72804-1.

Rosemary O’Leary, *The Ethics of Dissent: Managing Guerrilla Government*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press 2006. ISBN: 1-933116-60-9

P.M. Forni, *Choosing Civility*. New York, St. Martin’s Press, 2002.
ISBN: 0-312-28118-8

Collected Readings: On UNM Learn

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to familiarize students with the ethical nature and dilemmas of public administration in American society. The most common approach to ethics in government focuses on avoiding impropriety and is taught by looking at criminal laws and sanctions. This is generally a negative, punitive and technical dimension stressing those ethical boundaries as determined by the law. Typical examples include conflicts of interest, misuse of public resources, whistle blowing, and resignation in protest. Though these matters are at times important, they arise so infrequently in relation to the daily dilemmas faced by decision makers, and seldom have implications beyond the career of the particularly affected administrator.

We will take a different approach in this class. We will focus on ethical dilemmas and concerns that arise from the daily exercise of discretionary authority. We will address positive and negative uses of administrative power, and discuss questions such as “How do I make ‘right’ or ‘wise’ decisions?” “What is a ‘wise’ decision?” “To what and to whom do my ethical obligations extend?” “Should/do I have sufficient

authority to make a decision?” “What values do I serve, and what are their priorities?” Obviously, most of these questions cannot be definitively answered, but public administrators must still ponder them if they are to perform their duties effectively and appropriately.

The principal goals of this course are to:

- Help students refine their reflective capacity concerning decisions in the public sector;
- Give students a sense of the types of character and excellence that are desired of them as professional public administrators; and
- Become familiar with the literature on ethics in the field of Public Administration.
- Create in the student a greater personal insight that will support their public decision making.

More specifically, this course will address:

- The nature and types of ethical obligations involved in American public administration;
- The integration and application of various types of moral judgment in administrative contexts;
- The relation of American constitutional and political theory to the ethical obligations and loyalties of public administrators;
- The character and ethical relation of administrative politics to electoral, judicial and pluralistic politics;
- Typical moral dilemmas in public sector decision making;
- The ways individual personality and thought processes may impact decision making.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This course will be highly discursive (we will jump from topic to topic quickly and seemingly randomly) and exploratory. **Emphasis will be placed upon the joint contributions of students and the instructor.** Regular class attendance and participation in discussions is essential to the success of this class and will consequently be necessary to secure a satisfactory grade. The following requirements are intended to enhance the classroom experience and assist the student in participating in a meaningful manner.

Homework 1: What do newspapers report about ethics or ethical dilemmas in public service? (20%) Do you think that ethics dilemmas in government are rare or difficult to find? Think again! Your assignment involves reading various newspaper accounts of possible ethics dilemmas in government. Government can be federal, state, regional or local level. No non-profit issues, please, unless related to government relationships. You are searching for an article which highlights either an ethical issue/problem or commentary on the current state of ethics in public service. When in doubt, consult the instructor. Begin several weeks in advance scanning news accounts for such problems. Stick to major national newspapers as much as possible: Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, New York Times, Wall Street Journal, etc. although The Albuquerque Journal is also appropriate for state and local reporting. These references are easily accessible on line but please note: you must rely on traditional newspapers as your reportable source. Avoid community newspapers such as The Santa Fe Report or The Alibi, and all non-traditional news sources. Admittedly, those venues may lead you to traditional news accounts; just make sure you do not use them for your primary source. Once you have settled on a good, meaty problem, analyze why this satisfies your definition of an ethical dilemma worthy of our attention. In other words:

- Justify or explain how this qualifies as an ethical problem in public service. You may rely on class texts for support or derive your own explanation. How is what is reported an ethical dilemma for public administration or public administrators?
- Why is this issue important or worthy of our consideration? What does it teach us?
- What implications does this problem conceivably pose? This analysis or commentary on the article is expected to consume no more than a few pages. The article with your analysis are due in my e-mail box (vanvleck@unm.edu) September 20th on or before 6:00 pm MDT.

Homework 2: Profiles in Courage or Wrongdoing (20%) This assignment involves another news search but this time students are looking for an individual public official – a civil servant, political appointee or elected official - who has taken an ethical stance or failed to do so, “blown the whistle” on wrongdoing, or is otherwise an example of what to do or not to do. Yes, you can use an individual who has committed an illegal act however more interesting examples are those which have ethical bearing exclusively. Governor Christie and his staff’s closure of the George Washington Bridge Ft. Lee exit may qualify. The Governor did not order the Ft. Lee closure. His staff did evidently executed this on their own. That they did so is arguably illegal (according to Federal law) but the Governor would in this example not be prosecutable. On the other hand, whether he contributed to a vengeful, hostile climate is worthy of ethical deliberation. Note that whoever you choose, this individual’s acts must be recorded in contemporary news reporting. As a class we will consider these examples after filing and reflect on whether material for Homework 1 was easier to find. The assignment itself offers the news account and a brief, one to two page account justifying why this individual’s acts serve as models

for what WE should or should not do. For suitable news sources follow the guidelines above in Homework 1. Homework 2 is due October 25th in my e-mail box (vanvleck@unm.edu) on or before 6:00 pm MDT.

Case Studies: For the “Final Exam”, students will prepare a 2-5 page briefing, addressing the argument for the assigned case- An oral discussion of the case (5-10 minutes) will also be expected.

The case study paper and presentation will be done individually. The instructor will assign cases according to the master class calendar. Each presenter will formulate the arguments both for or against the proposition in the case study and provide an explanation which argument the student finds more persuasive. Students will present their arguments to the class. Presenters may be faced with questions or comments from the instructor or the class.

Case studies will be randomly designated and students will submit their briefing papers and debate the case study on the assigned date.

Case studies are due December 3d in my e-mail box (vanvleck@unm.edu) on or before 6:00 pm MDT.

3. **Participation:** Preparation and participation are key ingredients to successful completion of this class. I expect students to be prepared each evening and to participate in our class activities and discussion. Regular attendance, offering informed comments, raising relevant issues for class consideration, and providing real world ethical dilemmas will bolster your participation grade. We will typically begin each class session with a brief discussion of current events—brought in by students—demonstrating ethical challenges. (Sadly, there is no shortage of material).

4. **Platform:** We will be using Zoom as the instruction platform for this class. Please be mindful of the background that will be visible from your computer screen. The fewer the distractions the better. Just because we are using Zoom technology and video on demand is not an excuse for non attendance. Students are expected to be in attendance, with their cameras turned ON and their name inserted at the bottom of the screen. Please mute your microphone when you are not speaking as this will cut down on the background noise and feedback. This will be a challenge for everyone, but with a little common sense and courtesy, we will get through this together.

GRADING CRITERIA

1. Homework Assignments 20% (each assignment for a total of 40%)
2. Case Studies 60% (30% written content 30% presentation)

GRADING RUBRIC:

A = Outstanding (thorough and creative analysis, and high quality of written and oral expression - clear, logical flow of subject matter, grammar and style) .

A- = Commendable work (thorough coverage of topic, though with minor flaws and/or omissions)

B

+ = Good work (covers the essentials with adequate depth in substance as well as quality of written/oral expression)

B = Acceptable work (covers most of the essentials with adequate quality of written/oral expression, though lacks depth in some explanations of subject matter)

B- = Marginal work (borders on unacceptable - weak written/oral expression, coverage of subject matter lacks attention to some essential points and/or is overly vague about them)

C+/C = Below standard (lacks adequate coverage of essential points, written/oral expression is very weak).

C-(or lower) = Failing, inadequate work/performance overall. (Fails to answer questions, writing is very confusing, vague, does not cover many essential points).

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Academic honesty is fundamental to the activities and principles of a university. All members of the academic community must be confident that each person's work has been responsibly and honourably acquired, developed and presented. The academic community regards academic dishonesty as an extremely serious matter, with serious consequences attached thereto. All sources from which ideas and words are drawn should be fully acknowledged and cited.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere thanks to the following individuals who graciously provided me with permission to use and appropriate their materials into this class:

Dr. Guy B. Adams
Dr. Brian N Williams
Dr. Jerrell D. Coggburn
Rick Green, Professor and MPA Director
Michael Harmon, Professor

University of Missouri
University of Georgia
North Carolina State University
University of Utah
George Washington University

COURSE SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS

Aug. 23: Review of Syllabus. Discussion: Defining Ethics and morality

Theme: Types of Ethics:

READ: COLLECTED READINGS: Briefing #1, "Types of Ethics".

Theme: Types of Moral Judgments.

READ: COLLECTED READINGS : Briefing #2, "Common Types of Moral judgment.

READ: COLLECTED READINGS: Rohr, Chap 1-2

Aug. 30: **Theme: Distinguishing Public from Private Ethics**

READ: COLLECTED READINGS: Briefing #3, "Public & Private Morality"; and excerpt from Morgan *et.al.*, *Administrative Responsibility & Ethics* pp.111-115.

READ: COLLECTED READINGS: Hecló, Introduction & excerpts from chap. 2.

Sept. 6: **Labour Day—No Class**

Suggested Reading: Forni, Part One (pp. 3-32)

Sept. 13: **Theme: Viewing Civility as Ethics**
The First Ten Rules of Civility

READ: Forni, Rules 1-10 (pp. 35-80)

Sept. 20: **Do the Right Thing**

In Class Discussion—No Assigned Reading

Homework Assignment #1 Due

Sept. 27: Theme: Integrity and Public Moral Character

READ: Dobel chap. 1 and 3

Discussion: What does it mean to have integrity? Discuss Dobel's model of public integrity?

Oct. 4: Theme: The Temptations of Power and the Problems of Compromise.

READ: Dobel, chap. 2

Discussion: The promise and problems of compromise

Oct. 11: Theme: Sleaze and Guerilla Government

READ: Dobel, chap. 7

READ: O'Leary, chap. 1

Oct. 18: Theme: More Guerilla Operations.

READ: O'Leary chaps 4 and 6.

Discussion: What do you think of Claude Ferguson's Character and actions?

Oct. 25: Theme: Whistleblower or Traitor

Read O'Leary chap 5

Discussion: The Case of Private Manning
The Case of Edward Snowden

Homework Assignment #2 Due

Nov. 1: Theme: Ethical Practice and Lying. READ: Bok, chaps 1-7

DISCUSSION: Are we naturally inclined to lie? How can we avoid telling lies when under pressure? Are there good professional reasons to tell lies? Should we never tell lies?

Nov. 8: **Theme: Ethical Practice and Lying con't.** **READ:** Bok, chaps 8-15
(Students interested in the philosophical analysis of lying should read
the Appendix.)

Nov.15: **Theme: Bureaucratic Responsibility and Managing Guerilla
Government.**

READ: O'Leary chap. 7

Nov. 22: **Theme: "Staying in or Getting Out."**

READ: Dobel, Chaps. 5-6;

Discussion: What does it mean to have honour?

READ: Sixth Interlude O'Leary pp. 135-138

Nov. 29: **Theme: Privacy and Prudence**

READ: Dobel, chap. 9-10

Dec. 6: **FINAL EXAM:**

FINAL EXAM CASE STUDIES

Dec 13: **FINAL EXAM:**

FINAL EXAM CASE STUDIES

COLLECTED READINGS

1. Briefing #1: "Types of Ethics" (Richard T. Green)
2. Briefing #2: "Common Types of Moral Judgment" (Richard T. Green)
3. Briefing #3: "Public & Private Morality" (Richard T. Green)
4. Douglas Morgan, Richard Green, Craig Shinn, Kent Robinson. Chapter 5 "Administrative Ethics and Responsibility." *Foundations of Public Service* Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, May 2008.
5. Case excerpts from James S. Bowman, Jonathon P. West, Marcia A. Beck. *Achieving Competencies in Public Service: The Professional Edge*. 2d ed. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2010 pp 119-129; 147-173.
6. Heclo, Chapter 1 "Introduction" and excerpts from Chapter 2: "Our Modern Impasse," in Hugh Heclo, *On Thinking Institutionally*. Boulder. CO: Paradigm Publishers 2008.
7. Payne, Bruce. "Richard Helms and the Foreign Relations Committee" *HBS Case Services*, Harvard Business School, Boston, MA. 1981.
8. John Schaar, "The Case for Patriotism," *American Review*, no. 17, (May 1973).
9. Cooper, Terry L. "Citizenship and Professionalism in Public Administration," *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 44, Special Issue (March 19894).
10. Scenario: Law Enforcement and Civic Engagement. (Richard T. Green).
11. Douglas Morgan, Richard Green, Craig Shinn, Kent Robinson, "The Case of the Angry Library Patron." in *The Foundations of Public Service*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2008.
12. James Pfiffner, "Torture and Public Policy," *Public Integrity*, Vol. 7, no.4: 313-330.