

# PAUP 823 Ethics in Public Administration

## OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

Instructor: Dr. Wie Yusuf

Email: [jyusuf@odu.edu](mailto:jyusuf@odu.edu)

### **Catalog Course Description**

This course reviews the theory and application of ethics in the public sector, identifying public values and how they apply in the administration of government. It reviews sources of values employed in public sector decision-making, and reviews how values in public administration are managed and applied. Systems of professional ethics are reviewed in the context of public professions. Case studies and best practices are examined to help the student understand the application of administrative ethics in public management.

### **Course Objectives**

The purpose of this course is to provide students with an understanding of the ethical dimensions of public service, with particular attention focused on the role, duties, and responsibilities of the professional administrator. Additionally, the course seeks to help students develop awareness, skills, and values "to act ethically" in their public management roles. This course's overarching goal is to enhance capability for ethical practice, and for study and research of ethical issues. For doctoral students, the course also has the goal of developing skills for teaching ethics. Specific course objectives include:

1. To become familiar with the ethical standards and values associated with professional public administration;
2. To develop understanding of the values, principles, standards, and codes public servants use to make decisions;
3. To develop ethical reasoning skills for identifying and dealing effectively with ethical dilemmas;
4. To develop research skills for studying ethics in public administration;
5. To develop pedagogical skills for teaching ethics to students and practitioners in public service;
6. To raise awareness of contemporary administrative challenges and their ethical implications.

## Student learning outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify ethical dimensions of a social problem, and ethical repercussions associated with different solution sets;
2. Apply ethical criteria for making decisions and analyzing ethical dilemmas within public administration;
3. Appreciate diversity issues as they impact communities;
4. Mediate among conflicting ethical reasons, in a group setting, to discover solutions and alternatives that accommodate as many conflicting but legitimate ethical considerations as possible.

As such, this course is designed to be three things – a primer in ethics; an opportunity to learn, study, and practice ethical analysis; and a window into some of the unique ethical issues faced by public and nonprofit managers. We will approach ethical analysis as the combination of critical thinking skills with skills to help you analyze the ethical ramifications of a scenario.

## Course Structure and Format

This course will be approached as a combination lecture-discussion-case analysis. Discourse is a central feature of this course. Students are expected to express opinions, ask questions, and challenge each other and the instructor in a respectful and thoughtful manner. Ethics is a subject about which everyone is familiar, but at the same time, ethics can be complicated and complex, especially as it pertains to the life and work of public administrators. Indeed, the challenge of studying and understanding ethical/unethical behavior may be similar to the challenge of untangling a fishing line--the harder you work at it the more entangled it can become! Alas, unlike resolving a tangled fishing line by cutting the line, we often do not have such an easy choice in untangling an ethical dilemma.

Doctoral students will be expected to directly contribute to the course learning environment by being responsible for one class lecture, leading class discussion – both live and on-line – and by participating in in-class and on-line discussion.

## Texts

There is one required text for this class:

- Berman, Evan & Jonathan P. West. 2006. *The Ethics Edge*. Washington, D.C.: International City/County Management Association. ISBN: 0873267109.

## Grading

The grading scheme is as follows:

Leading case discussion	10%
Leading and participating in BlackBoard discussion forums	5%
Comment and review of blogs	10%
Class lecture	10%
Ethics teaching case	40%
Ethics teaching case – instructor notes	10%
In-class participation	15%

The final grade will be based on the following percentage scale:

<u>Points</u>	<u>Letter Grade</u>
90-100	A
80-89	B
70-79	C
< 70	F

Note: A grade of “I” indicates assigned work yet to be completed in a given course or absence from the final examination. It is assigned only upon instructor approval of a student request. The “I” grade can be given only in exceptional circumstances beyond the student’s control, such as illness. In these cases, the student is responsible for notifying the faculty member. The “I” grade becomes an “F” if not removed by the last day of classes of the following term (excluding the exam period) according to the following schedule: “I” grades from the fall semester become “F”, if not removed by the last day of classes of the spring semester; “I” grades from the spring and summer sessions become “F” if not removed by the last day of classes of the fall semester. An “I” grade may not be changed to a “W” under any circumstances.

Important: All written assignments must be submitted via BlackBoard in Word format (no PDF documents will be accepted). All assignments MUST be submitted by 11pm on the designated due dates. **\*\*Late assignments will not be accepted.\*\***

### **Learning Ethical Reasoning through Cases**

Cases facilitate the development of management skills relevant to the problem solving tasks of public managers. You learn not only to know, but to act.<sup>1</sup> Cases, as a learning tool, facilitate acquisition of reasoning skills such as sensitivity to an ethical situation, identifying alternatives, and selecting a course of action that resolves the situation. The point in case discussion and analysis “is to teach judgment, not doctrine, sound practical reasoning, not system.”<sup>2</sup> Cases also encourage the learner to interpret the facts and make judgments about important issues within a socio-political context. It is a rare ethics issue in public management that lacks a political context. Finally, cases train you in perception as well as analysis.<sup>3</sup>

According to West (2008), case analysis provides the learner with a set of action skills that include: (a) thinking clearly in complex ambiguous situations, (b) devising reasonable, consistent, creative action plans, (c) recognizing the significance of information that is useful, (d) determining missing information and knowing where to find additional information, (e) communicating orally, articulating views, and listening carefully, and (f) identifying and applying values in decision making.

---

<sup>1</sup> Barnes, L.B., C.R. Christensen & A.J. Hansen. 1994. *Teaching and the Case Method*. 34<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

<sup>2</sup> Winston, K. 2000. Teaching Ethics by the Case Method. *Journal of Policy Analysis & Management* 19(1): 153-160.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

### **Student Guidelines - Preparing for Cases<sup>4</sup>**

1. Go through the case as fast as possible, asking yourself “What, broadly, is the case about and what types and amounts of information am I being given to analyze?” Often the problem or decision is laid out at the start and/or end of the case.
2. Read through the case very carefully, underlining key facts and making marginal notes.
3. Exhibits should be analyzed. For each exhibit ask yourself “What is its point? What does it tell me?” Then ask yourself, “What are the issues facing the decision makers? Do the issues focus around a single point? Do they form a principal or main decision question?”
4. Go through the case again, fleshing out the issues that are important to the principal decision.
5. Develop a set of alternative solutions that will deal with the required decision and describe these so you appreciate what they will involve.
6. Analyze each alternative in terms of the disciplinary criteria or issues important to the decision. Consider how it will deal with each of the issues you have identified.
7. Compare the alternatives to see which seems to best meet the criteria or deal with the issues.
8. Make a recommendation based on the comparison of the alternatives.
9. Prepare a statement, if appropriate, of what needs to be done to implement the recommendation.

### **Classroom Conduct**

The following standards are intended to define acceptable classroom behavior that preserves academic integrity and ensures that students have optimum environmental conditions for effective learning.

1. Students must turn off cell phones and pagers during class or have them set to vibrate mode.
2. Classes are expected to begin on time, and students will respect the time boundaries established by the professor. If classroom doors are locked, students may not knock or seek entrance in other ways.
3. Students should notify instructors in advance when a class will be missed. In the event of an emergency that causes a class to be missed, instructors must be notified as soon as possible.
4. Instructors may require that cell phones and other electronic devices be left on their desks during tests or examinations.
5. Students must not engage in extraneous conversations during classes. Such acts are considered to be violations of the Code of Student Conduct.
6. Students will activate their Old Dominion email accounts and check them before each class. If the student chooses to have his/her messages forwarded to another account, it is the student's responsibility to take the necessary steps to have them forwarded.
7. Consumption of food and drink during class is prohibited, except when the professor has specifically approved of such acts.

---

<sup>4</sup> Source: Harling, K. & J. Akridge. 1998. Using the Case Method of Teaching. *Agribusiness* 14(1), 1-14.

8. Offensive language, gestures and the like are disrespectful and disruptive to the teaching-learning process.

### **Academic Honesty**

Violations of the academic honesty code will be dealt with in the strictest terms. You are advised to become familiar with the university's academic honesty code, as well as the Statement on Plagiarism for the Strome College of Business. It is your responsibility to ensure that both the letter and intent of this code are met in all circumstances. Ignorance of this code, or of proper rules of citation, provides no defense. My policy concerning enforcement of this code is inflexible; no exceptions will be made.

### **HONOR PLEDGE**

*"I pledge to support the honor system of Old Dominion University. I will refrain from any form of academic dishonesty or deception, such as cheating or plagiarism. I am aware that as a member of the academic community, it is my responsibility to turn in all suspected violators of the honor system. I will report to Honor Council hearings if summoned."* By attending ODU you have accepted the responsibility to abide by this code. This is an institutional policy approved by the Board of Visitors.

### **Special Needs**

Old Dominion University is committed to achieving equal educational opportunity and full participation for persons with disabilities. It is the university's policy that no qualified person be excluded from participation in any university program or activity, be denied the benefits of any university program or activity, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination with regard to any university program or activity. This policy derives from the university's commitment to non-discrimination for all persons in employment, access to facilities, student programs, activities and services. For additional information visit the Office of Educational Accessibility.

### **University E-Mail Policy**

The Old Dominion University e-mail system is the official electronic mail system for distributing course-related Communications, policies, Announcements and other information.

### **Withdrawal**

A syllabus constitutes an agreement between the student and the course instructor about course requirements. Participation in this course indicates your acceptance of its teaching focus, requirements, and policies. Please review the syllabus and the course requirements as soon as possible. If you believe that the nature of this course does not meet your interests, needs or expectations, if you are not prepared for the amount of work involved - or if you anticipate that the class meetings, assignment deadlines or abiding by the course policies will constitute an unacceptable hardship for you - you should drop the class by the drop/add deadline.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

### **Course Overview and Introduction**

#### Readings

- Course syllabus
- Case 3.10 – Withholding information: When is it ethical or unethical?
- Case 6.14 – Ethics in business and government

### **Ethics in Public Service – Part 1**

#### Readings

- Ch 1 from Ethics Edge (Ethics: Time to revisit the basics)
- Lewis, C.W. 2006. In pursuit of the public interest. *Public Administration Review*, p. 694-701.

### **Ethics in Public Service – Part 2**

#### Readings

- Ch 2 from Ethics Edge (The six pillars of character)
- Ch 3 from Ethics Edge (Moral compassing)
- Svara p. 23-25
- Case 3.8 –When duty and morality clash\*
- Case 3.9 – Follow the law or your conscience?\*
- Case 5.14 – Legal, wrong... or morally required?\*
- Case 3.20 – Resolving right versus right dilemmas\*

### **Basics of Individual Responsibility**

#### Readings

- Ch 4 from Ethics Edge (The ethical professional: Cultivating scruples)
- Svara Ch 3
- Case 2 from Appendix A in Ethics Edge (Investing in your community)
- Case 5 from Appendix A in Ethics Edge (Let's do lunch)
- Case 6.15 – Assessing ethical judgment of a potential employee\*

### **Ethics Triangle**

#### Readings

- Svara Ch 4
- Svara Ch 7
- Case 2 from Appendix A in Ethics Edge (Investing in your community)
- Case 5 from Appendix A in Ethics Edge (Let's do lunch)

### **Ethics and Leadership**

#### Readings

- Ch 5 from Ethics Edge (An ethics-based approach to leadership)
- Ch 6 from Ethics Edge (Leadership ethics)

- Ch 7 from Ethics Edge (Political prudence and the ethics of leadership)
- Case 5.9 – City of progress I\*
- Case 5.10 – City of progress II\*

#### **On-line Module – Group Discussion**

- Case 1 from Appendix A in Ethics Edge (Go along to get along)
- Case 4 from Appendix A in Ethics Edge (The errant elected official)

#### **The Ethical Quality of an Organization**

##### Readings

- Ch 8 from Ethics Edge (Demonstrating ethical leadership by measuring ethics: A survey of U.S. public servants)
- Case 4.8 – Ethics and performance evaluations\*
- Case 5.20 – The U.S. Department of the Interior: A work-in-progress?\*

#### **Ethical Compliance and Codes of Ethics**

##### Readings

- Appendix C in Ethics Edge (ICMA code of ethics with guidelines)
- ASPA code of ethics
- GFOA code of professional ethics
- AICPA Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct
- Code of ethics for nonprofit and philanthropic organizations
- Case 4.13 – Do ethics codes make a difference?\*
- Case 4.11 – Should professional associations censure and expel members for violating their code of ethics?\*

#### **Spring Break (NO CLASS)**

#### **Ethics Management**

##### Readings

- Ch 9 from Ethics Edge (The corruption continuum)
- Ch 10 from Ethics Edge (Fatal choices: The routinization of deceit, incompetence, and corruption)
- Case 5.5 – When the chief asks you to lie\*
- Case 3.18 – Where corruption lives\*
- Case 3.11 – Deception: The good, the bad, and the ugly\*

#### **Ethics Reform and Programs**

##### Readings

- Ch 11 from Ethics Edge (Building a strong local government ethics program)
- Ch 12 from Ethics Edge (Ethics management in cities and counties)
- Case 5.18 – Building a city of ethics\*

## **Ethics Training**

### Readings

- Ch 14 from Ethics Edge (Ethics training in US cities: Content, pedagogy, and impact)
- Case 6.19 – A culture of ethical failure\*
- Case 4.14 – San Diego on the move\*
- Case 5.19 – Ethics reform in Indiana municipalities\*

## **On-line Module - Whistleblowing**

### Readings

- Jensen, J. V. (1987) Ethical tension points in whistleblowing. *Journal of Business Ethics* 6(4): 321-328.
- Grant, C. (2002). Whistle blowers: Saints of secular culture. *Journal of Business Ethics* 39: 391-399.
- Case 5.4 – What's a whistleblower to do?
- Ch 5 from *Ethics in City Hall* (To tell the truth)

## **Public Office vs. Private Life**

### Readings:

- Ch 16 from Ethics Edge (Private life and public office)
- Case 6 from Appendix A in Ethics Edge (Private gain or public victim?)
- Case 3.7 – A purely private matter?\*
- Ch 15 from *Ethics in City Hall* (Elected officials at work and/or play)

## **Ethical Challenges**

### Readings

- Ch 15 from Ethics Edge (Ethical challenges in privatizing government services)
- Ch 17 from Ethics Edge (Public cynicism: Manifestations and responses)
- Ch 18 from Ethics Edge (Current ethics issues for local government managers)
- Case 5.3 – Commercializing a city's website\*
- Case 5.12 – Outsourcing city management ethics\*
- Case 3.13 – Honesty and ethical standards\*

## SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

### In-Class Participation

15% of your course grade will be based on in-class participation. There are two important elements to participation: quality and quantity of participation. While a little quality can go a long way, quantity cannot be a substitute for quality. Class discussions must be civil and reflect a spirit of open-minded inquiry and respect for the opinions of others.

For each class session, you are expected to read all assigned readings. You will not be able to effectively participate if you do not read the material. Because the class is case- and discussion-oriented, this lack of preparation will significantly affect your class participation and your contribution to the peer-learning environment.

At the beginning of every class session, we will review the reading material by discussing:

#### **Were there any points, findings, or statements in the reading that...**

- Surprised you?
- Made you pause or rethink what you thought you knew?
- Provided more concrete evidence of what you already believed?
- Provided an idea to be implemented in your organization?
- Led to an A-ha! Moment?

Please be prepared to discuss these items, as you will be called on to share your thoughts with colleagues in the class.

We will often discuss our personal opinions and experiences as they relate to the issues we are addressing in class. To ensure that class and on-line discussions are civil and reflect a spirit of open-minded inquiry and respect for the opinions of others, we will agree to the following:

- We will not interrupt one another
- We will address our responses to the content of the comments, not to the person
- We will try to use “I statements,” stating what we feel and think rather than anticipating what others may think
- We will ALL be responsible for seeing that everyone has an opportunity to speak
- We will ALL participate and contribute to each other’s learning, recognizing that learning is an interpersonal process, both a gift and an ethical responsibility to our colleagues
- We will respect confidentiality
- We won’t belittle or demean individuals or groups
- We will give people the benefit of the doubt. Life is hard enough for all of us. We will do our best to be wise, caring and decent.

Note that failure to comply may result in points taken off your participation grade.

## Leading Case Discussion

Cases will be assigned throughout the semester. You will be responsible for leading discussion of the cases assigned for. The following rubric, which will be used to grade case discussion leadership by MPA students, may offer you some guidelines.

## Class Lecture

On, you will be responsible for the in-class session, including the class lecture on the case discussion. You should plan to use the whole class period effectively. Consultations with the instructor on appropriate class management strategies are welcomed.

## Blog Comments and Review

MPA students are expected to write several blog entries as part of their personal journal. You must read and comment on the MPA students' blog entries. You are also expected to provide a review and assessment of TWO of these blog entries. You can select which blog entries you would like to review and assess.

For the blog activities, MPA students are asked to respond to the following 5 blog prompts:

- **Portrayal of Public Service Ethics:** Reflect on how American society portrays the ethicality of public service and public servants. Gather 2 artifacts that provide some 'portrait' or portrayal of public service ethics. You can use multiple sources for this artifact, including (but not limited to) newspapers, television, film, music, cartoons, literature, public speeches, etc. Reflect on the content of these artifacts and how they reflect the ethicality of public service and public servants. Write about the message these artifacts send about public service and public servants, and why this message resonates with you. DUE:
- **Personal Code of Administrative Ethics:** After (1) reviewing the professional codes of ethics assigned for class reading, and (2) analyzing a selected code in your group activity, develop a personal code to guide your ethical behavior. Your code will include: (1) an explanation and justification of each tenet drawn from course readings, and (2) a discussion of challenges that would arise in complying with the code (i.e., circumstances that would make it hard to follow each tenet of the code). DUE:
- **Honesty, Lying, Deceit, Transparency:** Machiavelli said "the princes who have accomplished great deeds are those who have cared little for keeping their promises and who have known how to manipulate the minds of men by shrewdness." Also, he says it is more important to appear ethical than to act ethical. Discuss today's politicians. Do you believe they follow Machiavelli's advice? Do great deeds require manipulation and shrewdness? Explain why or why not. Describe any important achievement that you believe warranted manipulation and explain why. If you think no achievement is worth that price, explain why. DUE:
- **End-of-semester Ruminating** – Briefly identify and discuss points of this course that stick with you the most, and how they have changed your thinking about public administration generally or in specific ways. What did you find most useful about this course? How do you think what you learned and practiced in this course will translate into your work and life?

### **Ethics Teaching Case**

You are required to write a teaching case with accompanying teaching notes. As you will note, there are many case studies assigned as reading material for this course. These case studies offer several examples of teaching cases. Additional examples of teaching cases and accompanying teaching notes will be made available on BlackBoard. Your teaching case may be hypothetical, based on historical or current events, or based on your experience in your organization. Your teaching case should be one that can be analyzed by graduate-level students using Svava's ethics problem-solving model (Svava Ch 7). You should also consider incorporating the following questions on developing your case and teaching notes.

- Is there an ethical issue?
- What is the ethical issue?
- What might be done to resolve the situation? Describe in detail and provide rationale
- Does the preferred course of action satisfy the needs/preferences of the primary stakeholders? Why and how?
- Is the action itself ethical? Why and how?

### **1. BlackBoard Discussion Forums**

Two BlackBoard Discussion Forums have been set up for this course (for the on-line module on Whistleblowing). You are responsible for facilitating and leading these on-line discussion forums by reading MPA students' posts, responding to posts as appropriate, and summarizing key discussion points at the conclusion of the Discussion Forum.

### **DISCLAIMER**

Every attempt is made to provide a syllabus that is complete and accurate. However, circumstances and events may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester.