

Political Science 6201
Theory of Public Administration--Responsibility
Fall 2009
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Professor Howe
Pafford 134
Hours: MF 2:00 – 4:00
TR 1:00 – 3:00

Public Administration - Responsibility

“To find justice in the family, where everyone counts, is hard enough; to find it in a bureaucracy, where no one counts, is infinitely more difficult.” --Lewis Mainzer.

“Power has a rationality that rationality does not know, whereas rationality does not have a power that power does not know.” --Bent Flyvbjerg

Syllabus

Purpose: This course explores the meaning of administrative responsibility and democracy in late modern times. The theme of the course is “making public administration matter.” The course will focus heavily on developing an ethical sensibility that combines an ancient Greek emphasis on the virtue of *phronesis*, or “doing well,” with the late modern emphasis on power as *governmentality*, or the regulation of self-regulation. What sorts of ethical standards and what conceptions of democratically responsive administration can we realistically demand of ourselves? This course is not densely factual: it seeks to induce reasoned reflection about good public administration, good public officials, and effective democracy.

Materials: Bent Flyvbjerg. (1998) *Rationality and Power*.
William Thompson. (2009) *Ethics in City Hall: Discussion and Analysis for Public Administration*
Hannah Arendt. (1964) *Eichmann in Jerusalem*
Adams & Balfour, (2004) *Unmasking Administrative Evil*.
Other materials will be on reserve at the Library On-Line service.

Learning Outcomes: Students will demonstrate an ability to identify and critically assess ethical issues arising out of a variety of administrative settings. The course will introduce students to some major paradigmatic frameworks in the philosophy of political inquiry, provide a framework for and an introduction to the intellectual history of the field of public administration, and provide a socialization experience for students—whether academic or in-service—into the role of the public administration intellectual. Through written papers, presentations, and debates students will demonstrate their graduate-level familiarity with competing perspectives in the theory social inquiry.

Requirements: Each student is asked to read the assigned items carefully, to write weekly review essays on the readings, to participate actively in discussions of the readings, to prepare an original term paper, and to give an oral presentation based on the term paper (it may be in progress or completed at the time of the presentation). There will be no examinations. I am sympathetic to your finding a topic that suits your interests, background, and work plans. However, your paper must have relevance beyond the narrow concerns of one program or workplace and anecdotes from work must be related to substantial ethical themes from the discipline’s literature, themes such as: democratic accountability, professionalism, or justice. **Anyone caught cheating in any way on any assignment will receive a grade of F for the course.**

- Weekly Essays	50%
-Term Paper	
Oral Presentation	10%
Paper	40%

Assignments

- Aug 19 Introduction
- Aug 26 Thompson & Leidlein, Chapters 1 – 7.
Thompson & Leidlein, Appendix, 1.
- Sep 2 Thompson & Leidlein, Chapters 8 – 21.
Thompson & Leidlein, Appendix, 2 and 3.
Hirsh, “The General’s Report” (handout)
- Sep 9 Schmidt, “Grout: alternative Kinds of Knowledge and why they are ignored (handout)
Flyvbjerg, “Rationality, body, and intuition” (handout)
Flyvbjerg, “Values in social and political inquiry” (handout)
- Sep 16 Eikenberry, “Nonprofit organizations, philanthropy, and democracy” (handout)
Sørensen, “The Everyday Maker: A new challenge” (handout)
Sørensen. “The Everyday Maker: Building political rather than social capital (handout)
- Sep 23 Flyvbjerg, “The power of example” (handout)
Flyvbjerg, *Rationality & Power*, chapters 1 – 10.
- Sep 30 Flyvbjerg, *Rationality & Power*, chapters 11 – 20.
Stivers, “Resisting the Ascendancy of Public Management” (handout).
- Oct 7 Foucault, “The means of correct training” (handout)
Foucault, “Panopticism” (handout)
Foucault, “Governmentality” (handout)
- Oct 14 ADAMS & BALFOUR, *Unmasking Administrative Evil*, Chapters 1-4.
My Lai Massacre: <http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/mylai/MYLAI.HTM>
<http://www.fsa.ulaval.ca/personnel/vernag/EH/F/cause/lectures/my-lai.htm> (suggested)
- Oct 21 ADAMS & BALFOUR, *Unmasking Administrative Evil*, Chapters 5-7.
- Oct 28 Hersh, Torture at Abu Ghraib. *New Yorker* (May 10, 2004) (reserve).
Remnick, Hearts and Minds. *New Yorker* (May 17, 2004) (reserve).
Hersh, Chain of Command. *New Yorker* (May 17, 2004) (reserve).
Hersh, The Gray Zone. *New Yorker* (May 24, 2004) (reserve).
- Nov 4 ARENDT, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* Chapters 1-8
Movie, “Wannsee Conference” (90 min) In class
Paper topics due
- Nov 11 ARENDT, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* Chapters 9-15; Epilogue, Postscript
- Nov 18 Student Presentations
Papers due for those graduating in December, 2007.
- Dec 2 Student Presentations
Papers due.

Weekly Essays

Every week, a brief original review essay over the assigned readings is required. An original essay is one in which at least ninety percent of the words are your own. If it is found that a student paper is not the original work of the student, that student will receive an F grade for the course. These essays ask for good reading, careful reflection, and thoughtful commentary, not research. Above all, this essay should demonstrate that one has read and understood the assigned text. The essay might also contain such things as: your evaluation of the material, any perplexities or questions you want to raise, any inconsistencies you find, any disagreements you care to discuss, and, of course, any new thoughts of your own concerning the issues of administration and democracy, responsibility, or accountability. Each review should be about three double-spaced typewritten pages. It should use correct grammar and sentence structure and stick to a theme. Please do not write substantially longer papers. **Submit these on the day due, late submissions will not be counted.**

Sample Topic: Codes of Ethics. What good are they? Looking over a number of these codes, what sorts of things do professional organizations think are important to include. What sorts of things are seldom included that perhaps ought to be? Is it even *possible* to act on principle?

Sample Topic: What does Mary Schmidt mean by local knowledge? Why doesn't mainstream public administration foster or honor such knowledge? Should we?

Sample Topic: *Phronesis*. What does Bent Flyvbjerg mean by the concept of phronesis? Why does he reject *techne* and *episteme* in favor *phronises*?

Sample Topic: Explore the slogan: Power has a rationality that rationality does not understand. Give concrete examples from the text.

Sample Topic: What does Foucault mean by *governmentality*? Contrast governmentality with juridical governance. What techniques and technologies are at work in the creation of modern subjectivities?

Sample Topic: About Abu Ghraib (and torture generally), is there a difference between public and private morality? Perhaps the good person would be a bad citizen (Machiavelli thought so). Is it possible to hold public servants accountable for atrocities they commit in the name of preserving the freedom and security of the rest of us? When, and to what extent, do superiors bear responsibility for actions of subordinates?

Sample Topic: Hannah Arendt reports that Adolf Eichmann seemed to believe himself to be a decent man because he was a good supervisor and he received routine promotions. Is there something about organizational life itself that fosters a sort of ordered inhumanity? In a regime where it is no longer possible to say that atrocious behavior is wrong, does it become impossible to think or feel it was well?

Term Paper

In this class you are required to write an original paper. An original work is one that attempts to make an original contribution; it attempts to make a difference. An original paper is at least eighty-five percent your own words. Direct quotations are supposed to illustrate *your* point or exemplify an author's position that *you* plan to explicate, interpret or criticize. Direct quotes are normally only a sentence or two. If your paper is largely or primarily verbatim quotes from other authors—whether clauses, sentences, paragraphs, multiple paragraphs, pages,

whole essays, or chunks of chapters—even if you change a few (or many) words and **even if you cite the source**, it is not an original paper, and, in fact, is not even college-level work. Think of it this way: if you were in an in-class test and copied the answer from the student next to you, Suzanne, and if you then earnestly and honestly wrote at the bottom of your paper that you had copied your answer from Suzanne, it would still be an answer you copied from Suzanne, not *your* work. Never copy other people’s work. Period. You are expected to provide original explications and analyses of arguments, and original interpretations of what these things mean to us all. How, according to you, ought we to understand or think about or respond to the ideas and arguments presented in the texts? But note: “original” does not necessarily mean “publishable quality.” Students are expected only to be conscientiously learning these skills. Do not be afraid to be who you are, especially if you want to improve. If you came to get better, you came to the right place.

The theme of your paper is “making public administration matter.” You must interview three to five people who are engaged in government, non-profit, or citizen activism (this could certainly include the social ministries of many area pastors). The focus is to learn from strangers (the public), from administration (the pros), and from theory (the academic class material). The paper should attempt to relate the material discovered through interviewing to the themes in the course readings: local knowledge, phonesis, power, and rationality. Basically, you should plan to ask people what issues they believe need attention and what are the main obstacles to addressing the issues, and you should be alert to the role of power and its rationality.

Twenty pages will normally suffice. Be thorough but concise. Write clearly, organize tightly, and proofread the final version. Any topic reasonably within the scope of the course may be considered. A paper that partially or substantially coincides with one being written for another course may be acceptable, provided both faculty have approved and the paper fits this course. Note Well: if you cheat on your paper you will be expelled from the MPA program. In every case, you must check with the instructor concerning proposed topics. Submit your topic by **October 31** in a short essay with the following format:

My paper topic is _____.

I intend to argue (or show, or analyze, or evaluate, or synthesize) that _____

_____.

because _____.

List at least five sources or ideas for people you might interview.

I am planning to ask them about _____.