

Department of Public and International Affairs
George Mason University
Ethics for Public Administrators
PUAD 700 (003)
Fall 2005

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Prerequisite for this Course: The prerequisite for PUAD 700 is 6 graduate courses in the GMU MPA curriculum or related graduate program.

Background on and Purpose of the Course: The study of ethics deals with the fundamental issues of right and wrong, and good and bad. This is a fascinating time to be studying ethics. In the last several years, we have witnessed financial scandals in private sector organizations, such as World Com and Enron, that have led to the collapse of these organizations. We have also witnessed scandals or missteps in nonprofit organizations, such as the United Way, the Red Cross, and the Nature Conservancy, that have shaken public confidence in these organizations. Additionally, we have had acrimonious debates about whether elected officials and administrative officials lied to or misled the public about the extent to which Iraq and Saddam Hussein posed a threat to the security of the United States and its citizens. The attack on Iraq and the Bush doctrine of preemptive also set-off an international debate about when (or whether) an “offensive” war is justified.

This course will provide a graduate level introduction to the subject of ethics and a fast-paced examination of individual, group (professional), organizational, societal, and governmental ethics. For example, we will briefly examine the ancient roots of ethics, including philosophical and religious texts. In both sources, we can find very clear statements about what constitutes ethical behavior for individuals and groups, as well as statements about what elements are essential for a “just society.” We will look at the extent to which these ancient teachings or “commandments” are still followed and the extent to which they serve as useful guideposts for us in contemporary society.

We will also examine some of the “classics” in the relatively new literature focused on administrative ethics. Specifically, we will examine some of the ethical dilemmas or challenges public administrators face, and we will look at frameworks that might serve as useful tools for resolving these dilemmas. The social, economic, and political context in which administrators work will also be included in our study. For example, the values elected officials espouse, the way in which they behave, and the decisions they make not only set the value structure for our governmental system but also establish priorities and constraints for public administrators. Likewise, the values, decisions, and behavior of private sector executives and organizations, the media, and nonprofit executives and

organizations, shape the broader societal context in which public administrators work. Thus, they too are worthy of study for those interested in the relationship between ethics and public administration.

Along with an introduction to the study of ethics and an examination of ethical issues in politics, policy, and administration, this course also includes an emphasis on skill development. As articulated by the MPA faculty, MPA Program goals include the development of analytic skills, writing skills, verbal skills, group skills, and presentation skills.

Course Organization, Pedagogy, and Objectives: This course is divided into six topical areas, identified on the syllabus with a Roman numeral. The thematic focus of the course is centered on the relationship between the government/public service and the public interest. We will try to follow the calendar outlined in the syllabus as closely as possible, but, like any administrative plan, adjustments may be required by unanticipated events or circumstances.

Required readings and recommended readings are listed on the syllabus for each week and each topic. I will provide an introduction and overview of each topic at the beginning of each class period or at the end of the preceding class period. The majority of class time will be used to discuss required readings. We will read classics in the field, and we will read case studies. Class sessions will include student presentations on readings, paper topics, and case studies. The format we will use for these presentations will be provided in class.

If (or when) the key concepts, theories, or research findings from the readings are not being articulated clearly or effectively during class discussion or by presenters, I may stop the class and provide a mini-lecture. My preference is to avoid extended lectures. As a graduate student, you have the opportunity to participate in the important dialogue about ethics that is vitally important to the public interest. Your skills as a participant in that dialogue will develop more quickly if you and your classmates participate actively.

At the end of this course, you should be familiar with what some ancient and modern writers have considered core ethical values, you will have had an opportunity to think through which of those core values you think are most important, you will be familiar with frameworks that you can use to make decisions when you face an ethical dilemma in the work place, you will be more skillful at determining the extent to which ethical considerations or value trade-offs seem to guide or be a part of individual, group, organizational, societal, and governmental decision making, and you will be more aware of both the benefits and costs associated with ethical decision-making and ethical behavior.

In addition to these knowledge outcomes, your writing, verbal, group, and presentation skills should be stronger at the end of the course than they were at the beginning. Last, but not least, you should have enhanced your network among MPA students and your

professionals contacts among MPA faculty, alumni, and administrators whom you meet through this class.

Course Requirements: The work for this class consists of doing the required readings for each week, being prepared to discuss those readings in class, and writing papers or case memos. The formats you will use for these papers and memos will be presented in writing and handed out in class. You have some choice with respect to what you write and how much assignments count toward your final grade. The options are outlined below.

Option 1	20% 4-5 page paper; Section I	20% 5-8 page paper from SectionsII-IV	40% 8-12 page paper from SectionsIV-VI		20% Class Participation
Option 2	20% 4-5 page paper; Section I	20% 5-8 page paper from SectionsII-IV		40% 12-15 page research paper	20% Class Participation

Books for Purchase:

The following contain required readings for this course, and they can be purchased at the University Bookstore:

Sissela Bok, *Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life*

Willa Bruce, *Classics of Administrative Ethics*

Harold Gortner, *Ethics for Public Managers*

Norma Riccucci: *Unsung Heroes: Federal Execucrats Making A Difference*

Course Packet for PUAD 700 (003)

Other books with required reading that you may want to purchase include:

Louis Gawthrop, *Public Service and Democracy*

Al Franken, *Lies and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them*

Paul Krugman, *The Great Unraveling*

Other required readings are found in books, articles, and speeches not included in the above materials. The presidential speeches can be found on the Internet and the books (by Paul Krugman and Al Franken) can be purchased at any bookstore. I will ask the Library Reserve Room to secure a copy of both books, and I will request that the books be put on two-hour reserve.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Law, Morality, Politics, and the Public Interest: Connected or Disconnected in the American Political and Governmental System?

(Aug. 30)

Required Readings:

Moyers, "Barbara Tuchman, Historian," *A World of Ideas* (course pack)

Moyers, "Henry Steele Commager, Historian," *A World of Ideas* (course pack)

Moyers, "Michael Josephson, Ethicist," *A World of Ideas* (course pack)

Recommended:

Sophocles, *Antigone*

Plato, *Crito*

Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," (*Science*, vol. 162, pp. 1243-8)

Schattschneider, *The Semi-Sovereign People*

Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*

Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*

Moyers, "James MacGregor Burns, Historian," *A World of Ideas*

Elazar, "The States and the Political Setting," *American Federalism: A View From the States*, Chapt. 4.

Sunstein, *The Second Bill of Rights: FDR's Unfinished Revolution*

2. Ethics in Public, Nonprofit, and Private Administration: Are "Internal" Controls Sufficient to Protect the Public? Is Neutrality the Best Ethic?

(Sept. 6)

Required Readings:

Finer, "Administrative Responsibility in Democratic Government," in Bruce ed.

Thompson, "The Possibility of Administrative Ethics," in Bruce, ed.

Moyers, "Robert Bellah, Sociologist" (course pack)

Recommended Readings:

Madison, *Federalist Papers* #10 & 51.

Gortner, "Values and Ethics," (library reserve)

Bowman, "Whistle Blowing in The Public Service," in Bruce, ed.

3. Ethics Codes and Code Enforcement: Who has a code? Who enforces the Code? Is the ICMA a model?

(Sept. 13)

Required Readings:

Moneypenny, "A Code of Ethics as A Means of Controlling Administrative Conduct," in Bruce ed.

ICMA Ethics Code, ICMA web site

*****Paper #1 Due** (Response to question(s) for Week #1, 2, or ethics code essay)

II. MID-LEVEL ADMINISTRATORS AND ETHICAL DILEMMAS

4. Mid-Level Managers: What Problems (Ethical Dilemmas) Do They Encounter?

(Sept. 20)

Required Readings:

Gortner, *Ethics for Public Managers*, Chaps. 1-5

5. The Gortner Framework: A Key Tool for Dealing with Ethical Dilemmas?

(Sept. 27)

Required Readings:

Gortner, *Ethics for Public Managers*, Chaps. 6-8

III. SENIOR ADMINISTRATORS: OPPORTUNITIES/ETHICAL DILEMMAS

6. Competing Values: How Should an Administrator Respond When Presidential Policies Conflict with Personal and Professional Values?

(Oct. 4)

Required Reading:

Riccucci, "Dr. Vince Hutchins: A Voice for Mothers and Children"

Stephen Bailey, "Ethics and Public Service," in Bruce, ed.

Recommended Reading:

Frederickson and Hart, "The Public Service and the Patriotism of Benevolence,"
in Bruce, ed.

Elliot Richardson, *Confessions of a Radical Moderate*

Suskind, *The Price of Loyalty: George W. Bush, The White House, and the
Education of Paul O'Neill*

IV. ELECTED OFFICIALS: TRUTH, LIES, AND CONSEQUENCES

7. President William Jefferson Clinton and His Predecessors: Is Character the Key to Ethical Behavior? Which Presidential Lies Were Justifiable?

(Oct. 18)

Required:

Bok, *Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life*, I-VIII.

Pfiffner, "Presidential Character: Multidimensional or Seamless?" (packet)

Recommended Reading:

Maraniss, *First in His Class*

Machiavelli, *The Prince*

Neustadt, *Presidential Power*

8. President George W. Bush and the War in Iraq: Leading or Misleading the Country?

(Oct. 25)

Bok, *Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life*, Chaps. IX-XVI.

The White House, "President Bush Outlines Iraqi Threat," Oct. 7, 2002

Pfiffner, "Did President Bush Mislead the Country in His Arguments for War with Iraq?" *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, (Summer) 2003

Recommended Reading:

Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack*

Richard A. Clarke, *Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror*

Suskind, *The Price of Loyalty: George W. Bush, The White House, and the Education of Paul O'Neill*

John Dean, *Worse Than Watergate*

William Raspberry, "Tracking Why We Went to War," *The Washington Post*, May 31, 2004.

Strasser ed, *The 9/11 Investigations*

The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorists Attacks Upon the United States

Robin Wright, "Idealism in the Face of a Troubled Reality," *The Washington Post*, Nov. 7, 2003, pp. A 1 and A22

Paper Due for Section II., III., and IV (weeks 7 and 8)

9. President George W. Bush: Leading or Misleading the Country on Economic, Tax, and Expenditure Policy?

(Nov. 1)

Required Reading:

White House, "Address of the President to the Joint Session of Congress," Feb. 27, 2001

Krugman, *The Great Unraveling*

In Class: Audio from Diane Rehm Show with guests Sissela Bok and James Q Wilson

Research Paper Proposal Due

Recommended:

Matin Wachs, "The Ethical Dilemmas in Forecasting for Public Policy," in Bruce Broder, "Bush's Tax Cut Brushoff," *The Washington Post*, Mar. 9, 2003.

Grieder, *The Education of David Stockman*

Pear, "Inquiry Confirms Top Medicare Official Threatened Actuary Over Cost of

Drug Benefits,” New York Times, July 7, 2004.
Kettl, *Deficit Politics*
Citizens For Tax Justice, “Year-by-Year Analysis of the Bust Tax Cuts Shows
Growing Tilt to the Very Rich,” June 12, 2002.
The Heritage Foundation, “The 2003 Tax Cuts and the Economy”

10. Congress: Does Money Buy Influence? Do Ethical Considerations Matter?
(Nov. 8)

Required:
Rucci, “William Black Tackles the Savings and Loan Debacle”

VI. PRIVATE SECTOR EXECUTIVES AND THE MEDIA

11. Lies, Lying, and Systemic Corruption: How Widespread in the Private Sector? What Contributions do Elected Officials Make to it? How Widespread in Government Contracts with Private Sector Organizations?
(Nov. 15)

Required Reading:
Caiden and Caiden: “Administrative Corruption,” in Bruce ed.
Ruccucci, “Stephen Marica: Using the Wedtech Scandal to Establish Credibility”

In-Class: “World Com,” Hedrick Smith (PBS Video)

Review:
Moyers interviews with Tuchman, Commager, and Josephson

Recommended:
Norris, “Wages of Bad Accounting: Bosses Got Rich While Companies Borrowed,” *The Washington Post*, April 2, 2004, p. C1.
“Hastert & Pelosi, CPAs, *The Washington Post*, April 2, 2004, p. C1.
Lewis, *Liar’s Poker*
Stewart, *Den of Thieves*
Bruck, *The Predators’ Ball*

Recommended Reading: Periodical and Newspaper Reports on:
Arthur Anderson
Enron, World Com, etc.
Elliot Spitzer, NY Attorney General
NASA and the Columbia and Enterprise Space Shuttle Disasters

12. Mistakes, Lies, Lying, Systemic Corruption: How Widespread in the Media?
(Nov. 22)

Franken, *Lies and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them, or..*

An alternative book on the media of your choice, including attacks on or critiques of the “liberal bias” in the media,
or
New York Times, examination of its own new coverage leading up to the Iraq War

VI. DEMOCRACY AND PUBLIC SERVICE: AN ETHIC FOR THE 21st CENTURY

13. A Vision of the Common Good: A Basis for a 21st Century Public Service Ethic?
(Nov. 29)

Required Reading:

Gawthrop, *Public Service and Democracy*

Recommended Reading:

Wilburn, “Types and Levels of Public Morality,” in Bruce, ed.
Eikenberry and Kluver, “The Marketization for the Nonprofit Sector: Civil Society at Risk?” PAR, 2004

14. Summing Up: Reflections on Ethics in Politics, Policy, and Administration
(Dec. 6)

Papers Due for Sections IV (Weeks 9 and 10), V, and VI.
Research Papers Due

Instructions for Papers; PUAD 700 (003)

Format:

All papers or case memos should be double spaced, 12 point type, Times font, 1" margins, with page numbers on the bottom of the page. Please use footnotes or endnotes.

Papers for Section I

Write a 4-5 page essay in which you address the questions posed in the titles for weeks 1 and 2. Use the required and recommended readings as resources for your paper.

Week #3; write a 4-5 page essay on your organization's ethics code, whether there is enforcement of the ethics code, and your assessment of the code and enforcement activities. In the latter case, discuss the extent to which people with whom you work are aware of the code, whether the code has had any effect on your thinking or behavior or the thinking or behavior of those around you. (Attach a copy of the code to your paper.)

Week #3 Alternatives: 4-5 page essay

1. You may study the ethics code of an organization (such as congress) in which you have a special interest but are not an employee.
2. You may write an essay that uses required and recommended readings to address the key questions for the week: Are internal controls or professional standards sufficient to protect the public? Is neutrality the best ethic?

Papers for Sections II, III, and IV (weeks 7 & 8).

Length; 5-8 pages

Format: same as above

Section II. Use the Gortner Framework to analyze an ethical dilemma you have faced or a mid-level administrator you know has faced or currently faces.

Section III. Part I. Identify the Ethical Dilemma(s) Vince Hutchins faced, report how he dealt with those delimmas, and assess his actions (or inaction). Use either the Bailey article or the article by Fredrickson and Hart as a means of analyzing and evaluating the Hutchins case study. Part II. Use the case study and your analysis and evaluation of it as a building block to develop an answer to the question for the week.

Section IV. Use required and recommended readings to develop an answer for the week. Remember, our focus is on the ethical dimension of the issues/questions.

Papers for Sections IV (weeks 9 & 10), V, and VI.

Length: 8-12 pages

Format; same requirements as stated on previous page.

Section IV. Use required and recommended readings to develop an answer for the week. Remember, our focus is on the ethical dimension of the issues/questions.

If you want to use the Savings and Loan Case study, follow directions supplied for Section III. above.