

Department of Public and International Affairs
George Mason University
PUAD 700; Ethics for Public Administrators
Fall 2006

Professor James K. Conant

Office: Robinson A221

Office Hours: Mon. 11:00-12:00, Tue. 6:00-6:45,
Wed. 2:45-3:45, or by appointment

Phone 993-1416/1400

Email-jconant@gmu.edu

Mailbox: A201 Robinson Hall

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

Background on and Purpose of the Course: The study of ethics deals with the fundamental issues of right and wrong, good and bad, and moral duty or obligation. 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. In the public sector, lobbyists have been indicted for giving bribes to elected officials, and members of Congress have been indicted for accepting those bribes. Additionally, we have had acrimonious debates about whether President Bush, Vice-President Cheney, and other members of the administration 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 war 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 have faced, and we will look at frameworks that might serve as useful tools for resolving these types of 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 five topical areas; they are 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

professional 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. I will ask you to sign up for paper topics and be prepared to give a short presentation on one of your papers. All papers are due at the beginning of the class session for which you have written a paper. Once they are submitted, papers cannot be withdrawn.

30% 5-8 page paper from Section I or Section II	50% 8-15 page paper from Section III, IV, or V	20% Class Participation
30% 5-8 page paper from Section I or Section II	50% 10-15 page paper on a topic related to class materials*	20% Class Participation

*For example, an examination of the ethical problems of a nonprofit executive or nonprofit organization, such as the Nature Conservancy, United Way, or Red Cross, would be appropriate and useful. This paper must be original research, it cannot be a paper used for another class. A proposal for the paper must be submitted by the fourth class session and approved by the instructor by the fifth class. The paper is due on the last day of class.

Course Grades:

Course grades will be based on the following scale:

A+ = 100-98; A= 97-92; A-=91-90; B+=89-88; B=87-82; B-=81-80; C+=79-78; C=77-72; C-=71-70; F=< 70.

** All work for this course must comply with the **GMU Honor Code**

Books for Purchase: (required readings) 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*

Paul Krugman, *The Great Unraveling*

George Lakoff, *don't think of an elephant: Know your Values and Frame the Debate*

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

Tracy Kidder, *Mountains Beyond Mountains: The Quest of Dr. Paul Farmer, A Man Who Would Cure the World*

I. INTRODUCTION: LAW, POLITICAL SYSTEMS, THE OBLIGATIONS OF CITIZENS, AND JUSTICE

1. Law, Religion, Politics, and Moral Duty

(Aug. 29)

a. When should a citizen put religious and family obligations above the law? Did Antigone make the right choice?

b. Does a citizen of a democracy have a moral obligation to obey the law even if it (or its application) is unjust? Did Socrates make the right choice?

Required Reading:

Sophocles, *Antigone*

Plato, *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito*

Recommended Reading:

Sabine and Thorson, *A History of Political Theory*, 4th ed., Chapters 1-8

The Bible, Old and New Testaments (especially Exodus and Matthew)

Walzer, *Obligations: Essays on Disobedience, War and Citizenship* (1970)

2. Governmental Systems, Politics, Political Culture, and the Public Interest

(Sept. 5)

What are the principal types of governmental systems (regimes) and do they change over time? What is (are) the essential requirement(s) of a democracy? What did Madison believe were the essential requirements of and safeguards for an American Republic? Is justice a central ideal of American political culture? Should it be? Has America (or have Americans) lost its (their) moral compass?

Required Reading:

Dahl, "Democratization and Public Opinion" (Chapt. 1 in *Polyarchy*) (e-reserve)

Madison, *Federalist Papers* #10 & 51.

Elazar, "The States and the Political Setting," *American Federalism: A View*

From the States, Chapt. 4. (e-reserve)

Moyers, "Barbara Tuchman, Historian," *A World of Ideas* (e-reserve)

Recommended Reading:

The U. S. Constitution

Madison, Hamilton, and Jay, *The Federalist Papers*

Sabine and Thorson, *A History of Political Theory*, 4th ed., Chaps. 22, 24, 32, 33

Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory*

Moyers, "Robert Bellah, Sociologist" *A World of Ideas*

Moyers, "Henry Steele Commager, Historian," *A World of Ideas*

Moyers, "Michael Josephson, Ethicist," *A World of Ideas*

3. Politics, Economics, and the Public Interest in the American Republic (Sept. 12)

What is political economy? What are some of the benefits and limitations of using a political economy framework to conduct empirical research on the American economic, political, and social systems? What is the structure of the American political economy? In what way or ways are economics, politics, and government policy intertwined? In what way or ways does the case of energy policy illustrate this relationship?

How are income and wealth distributed in American society? What are some of the underlying causes of this distributional structure? What effects, if any, has government policy had on the distribution of income and wealth in America? Should government policy be aimed at improving, or at least ameliorating, the living conditions of those whose incomes are in the bottom 20 percent, or even the bottom 40 percent, of the income scale? (Why/Why not? Is it in the public interest to do so? What do the norms of justice require?) Should government policy be aimed at promoting the economic interests of the people whose incomes place them in the top 1%, 10%, or even 20% of the income scale in America? (Why/Why not?)

Required Reading:

Dolbeare and Edelman, *American Politics: Policies, Power, and Change*, 4th ed., Chapters 2, 4, and 6 (e-reserve)

Recommended Reading:

Schattschneider, *The Semi-Sovereign People*

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

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

Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*

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

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

Gawthrop, *Public Service and Democracy*

II. ETHICS AND THE PUBLIC SERVICE

4. Public Employees, Ethics Codes and Code Enforcement: (Sept.. 19)

What are the principal elements of your organization's ethics code? Is the code enforced? What difference does the code make in your thinking and behavior? What difference does the code make in the thinking and behavior of other employees in the organization?

If your organization does not have an ethics code but you want to write a paper about this topic, you might use an organization that some observers believe has a model ethics code and ethics code enforcement--the ICMA. For example, in

your paper you would discuss the following: What are the central elements of the ICMA code? How is the code enforced? What difference does the code and its enforcement make in the behavior of city and county managers?

Required Readings:

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

ICMA Ethics Code, ICMA web site

Recommended Reading:

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

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

Gortner, "Values and Ethics," (e-reserve)

5. Mid-Level Managers

(Sept. 26)

What is an ethical dilemma? What kinds of ethical dilemmas do mid-level managers encounter? Is the Gortner framework a key tool for dealing with ethical dilemmas?

Required Readings:

Gortner, *Ethics for Public Managers*

Wilburn, "Types and Levels of Public Morality," in Bruce, ed.

Recommended Reading:

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

6. Senior Administrators, the Chief Executive, and Competing Values

(Oct. 3)

How should a senior administrator respond when presidential preferences, priorities, or policies conflict with the law, professional values, ethical values, or personal values?

Required Reading:

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

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

Recommended Reading:

Elliot Richardson, *Reflections of a Radical Moderate*

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

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

III. ELECTED OFFICIALS: TRUTH, LIES, AND CONSEQUENCES

7. Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life

(Oct. 17)

Why was lying largely ignored by moral philosophers for several centuries? What constitutes a lie? Is lying unusual or widespread in professions? What are some of the causes of lying by professionals and what are some of the consequences? When, if ever, is lying justifiable (on moral grounds)? In what ways do liars gain advantage over others through their lies? What are the risks to liars of telling lies? What risk does lying pose for society? In what ways has lying by public officials shifted the balance of power in American society? What have been some consequences of this lying and the resultant shift in power?

Required Reading:

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

Recommended Reading:

Pfiffner, "Do Presidents Lie?" (e-reserve)

Maraniss, *First in His Class*

Machiavelli, *The Prince*

Neustadt, *Presidential Power*

8. President George W. Bush and the War in Iraq

(Oct. 24)

Did President Bush lead or mislead the country into war with Iraq? What have been some of the short-term and longer-term consequences of his decision to invade Iraq?

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*, (March) 2004

Recommended Reading:

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

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. A1 and A22

9. President George W. Bush, Economic, Tax, and Expenditure Policy (Oct. 31)

Did President Bush lead or mislead the country on economic, tax, and expenditure policy? What have been some of the short-term and longer-term consequences of his policy initiatives?

Required Reading:

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

Krugman, *The Great Unraveling*, Preface, Introduction, and Chaps. 4-11.

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

Recommended Reading:

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

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"

Recent newspaper and periodical articles on the additional tax cuts of 2006

10. Congress: Money, Influence, Ethics, and Decision-making (Nov. 7)

Does money buy influence with members of congress? Do ethical considerations matter in congressional decision-making? What are some of the consequences of the close links between money, influence, and congressional decision-making? How should a senior administrator respond when members of congress attempt to prevent him/her from enforcing the law and those members actively provide support or cover for people who have violated the law? How should a senior administrator respond when she/he knows that laws congress is preparing to pass or has passed that will make it legal for some to steal from others? Is the "corruption" in congress the case of a "few bad apples," a matter of political party, or is it systemic?

Required Reading:

Caiden and Caiden: "Administrative Corruption," in Bruce ed.
Riccucci, "William Black Tackles the Savings and Loan Debacle"

Recommended Reading:

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

James Q. Wilson, *The Moral Sense*

Recent newspaper and periodical articles on Congressman "Duke" Cunningham,
Jack Abramoff, and Tom Delay

Recent newspaper and periodical articles about the demolition of the House
Ethics Committee after its reprimands of Tom Delay

Recent newspaper and periodical articles on the Pension Benefit Guarantee
Corporation

IV. PRIVATE SECTOR EXECUTIVES

11. Lies, Lying, or Systemic Corruption in the Private Sector

(Nov. 14)

Is lying by senior executives in the private sector limited to a few "bad apples," a few corrupt corporations, or is it systemic? What contributions do elected officials make to the level of lying in the private sector? How widespread is lying or deceit by private sector organizations who have government contracts? What are some of the consequences of lying by individual executives or corporations?

Required Reading:

Caiden and Caiden: "Administrative Corruption," in Bruce ed.

Riccucci, "Stephen Marica: Using the Wedtech Scandal to Establish Credibility"
or

McLean and Elkind, *Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room*

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

Recommended:

Norris, "Wages of Bad Accounting: Bosses Got Rich While Companies
Borrowed," *The New York Times*, 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*

Norris, "What Fraud? All Was Fine At Enron," *The New York Times*, May 19,
2006, p. C1.

Periodical and Newspaper Reports on: Enron, World Com, Arthur Anderson,
Boeing, Freddie Mac; Elliot Spitzer's (the NY Attorney General) pursuit of illegal

corporate activities; NASA and the Columbia and Enterprise Space Shuttle Disasters; Exxon-Mobil's funding of organizations whose purpose is to discredit scientific findings about global warming

Levitt, *Take on the Street: What Wall Street and Corporate America Don't Want You to Know* (2002)

V. DEMOCRACY, POLITICS, & PUBLIC SERVICE: RELIGION AND ETHICS IN THE 21st CENTURY

12. Religion, Moral Values and "Framing" in Politics

(Nov. 21)

How does packaging George Bush as the Strict Father give him "moral authority"?
How does this moral authority serve as a shield against "facts" and opposition?
What benefits and risks does the intertwining of religion and politics hold for American democracy?

Required Reading:

George Lakoff, *don't think of an elephant: Know your Values and Frame the Debate* (2004)

Recommended Reading:

Freidman, "Leading by (Bad) Example," *The New York Times*, Oct. 19, 2005

Meacham, *American Gospel: God, The Founding Fathers, and the Making of a Nation* (2006)

Fowler, *New Engagement: evangelical political thought, 1966-1976* (1982)

Hertzke, *Echoes of Discontent: Jesse Jackson, Pat Robertson, and the resurgence of populism* (1992)

Fowler, *Greening of Protestant Thought* (1995)

Hertzke, *Representing God in Washington: the role of religious lobbies in the American polity* (1998)

Fowler and Hertzke, *Religion and Politics in America: Faith, Culture, and Strategic Choices* (2004)

13. Religion, Moral Values, and Service to Others--Through Nonprofit and Public Organizations

(Nov. 28)

Required Reading:

Tracy Kidder, *Mountains Beyond Mountains: The Quest of Dr. Paul Farmer, A Man Who Would Cure the World* (2003)

14. Reflections on Religion, Ethics, Law, Political Systems, and Democracy

Recommended Reading: Gawthrop, *Public Service and Democracy*

Instructions for Papers; PUAD 700

Format:

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

Please put a cover page on your paper. Include your name, the topic you are writing on, and the date. Please staple the pages of your papers together. Do not put your papers in binders or folders.

Papers for Section I and II

Write a 5 to 8 page essay in which you answer the questions posed for class session numbers 1 through 6. Use the required readings as the principal resources for your paper. You may include material from recommended readings in your paper if you wish to do so. **Begin your paper with a simple and clear statement of the purpose of the paper.**

Examples:

Class Session #1: You can write a paper that answers the questions for either part "a." or "b." Do not attempt to write a paper on both Antigone and Socrates.

Class Sessions #2: Answer the questions using the required readings. You may incorporate recommended readings if you wish to do so.

Class Session #3: Answer the questions using the required readings. You may incorporate recommended readings if you wish to do so.

Class Session #4; write an essay on your organization's ethics code.

If you want to write about the ethics code of the organization in which you work, you should begin the paper by identifying the organization and outlining the principal elements of the ethics code. Then, attempt to determine whether people know about the code, and if so, how they know about it. (Is there any formal introduction to or training in the ethics code?). Next, you should report on whether there is any enforcement of the ethics code (data on enforcement capacity, activity, and consequences for those who violate the code would be helpful here). If you discover that there is no enforcement activity, discuss whether the ethics code has any practical value. If there is enforcement activity, discuss the extent to which 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.) Conclude your essay with an assessment of the ethics code, enforcement activities, and the behavioral consequences of the code (if any).

Class Session #5.

You can answer the first two questions on the syllabus from the material in the Gortner book. The third question is your analysis of the framework.

Alternatively, you could identify an ethical dilemma that you currently face (or have faced) or you could identify an ethical dilemma that a mid-level administrator you know has faced. In either case, use the Gortner Framework to analyze that dilemma and make a recommendation on how you (or the other middle manager) should handle the situation.

Class #6.

Identify the Ethical Dilemma(s) Vince Hutchins faced, report how he dealt with those dilemmas, and assess his actions (or inaction). Then use the case study and your analysis and evaluation of it as a building block for developing answers to the questions for the week.

Identify the Ethical Dilemma(s) Vince Hutchins faced, report how he dealt with those dilemmas, and assess his actions (or inaction). Then, use either the Bailey article or the article by Fredrickson and Hart as a means of analyzing and evaluating the Hutchins case study.

Papers for Sections III, IV, and V (Class Sessions 7-12)

Length: 8 to 12 pages

Format; same requirements as stated on previous page.

Use required **and** recommended readings to develop an answer to the questions for the class session. Remember, our focus is on the ethical dimension of the issues/questions and particularly on lying by elected officials. Sissela's Bok's work on lying provides the underlying foundation for the questions articulated for class sessions 7-11 and for answers you might develop to those questions.