

Department of Public and International Affairs
George Mason University
PUAD 700 (Section 611): Ethics for Public Administrators
for the MPA Fellows, Cohort #3
Spring 2006

Professor James K. Conant
Office: Robinson A221
Office Hours: M 11:00 - 12:00; T 6:15-7:00
W 3:00 – 3:50

Phone 993-1416
Email: jconant@gmu.edu
Mailbox: A201 Robinson Hall

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 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 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 five topical areas, identified on the syllabus with a Roman numeral. The thematic focus of the course is centered on the relationship between the government, law, 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.

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

Course Requirements and Grades: The work for this class consists of doing the required readings for each class session, being prepared to discuss those readings in class, and writing papers. The formats you will use for these papers can be found on page 8. At the end of class session #1, you will sign-up for the topics on which you will write papers. Please note that you will be a "class expert" for the class sessions for which you write a paper, and you will have the opportunity to give a 10-15 minute presentation on your paper. The presentation will be a verbal presentation only (no paper handouts, overhead slides, power point presentations). All papers are due at the beginning of class.

Grades will be based on the four components listed below:

10%	25%	45%	20%
Paper #1 2- 3 page paper on your ethical values	Paper #2 5-8 page paper from Sections I-III	Paper #3 7-10 page paper from Sections IV-V	Class Participation

Grades: Course grades will be based on the following scale:

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

Required Readings/Books for Purchase:

The following contain required readings, and they can be purchased at the GMU Bookstore:

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

Willa Bruce, *Classics of Administrative Ethics*

Harold Gortner, *Ethics for Public Managers*

Seamus Heaney, *Burial at Thebes* (a version of Sophocles' *Antigone*)

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

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*

Readings Packet

I. INTRODUCTION: Law and the Obligations of Citizens and Administrators

1. Law, Religion, Ethics, Politics, and Government: Were they connected in the earliest Western societies? If so, what were the consequences of these connections (or the lack of connection) for individuals, families, groups, and the Greek city-states?

(Jan. 25)

****Paper Due: "My Core Ethical Values and the Sources of Those Values" (2-3 pages)**

Required Readings:

Seamus Heaney, *Burial at Thebes* (a version of 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)

2. Democratic Government, Law, Religion, Ethics, and the Public Interest: What is the (presumed) connection between them? To what extent does the connection exist in contemporary America? To what extent should the connection exist?

(Feb. 1)

Required Readings:

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

Dolbeare and Edelman, *American Politics*, Chaps. 1 & 4 (e-reserve)

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

Elazar, "The States and the Political Setting," *American Federalism: A View From the States*, Chapt. 4. (e-reserve)

Recommended Reading:

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

Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory*

Schattschneider, *The Semi-Sovereign People*

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

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

Moyers, "Robert Bellah, Sociologist"

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

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

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

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*

Madison, *Federalist Papers* #10 & 51.

Gortner, "Values and Ethics,"
Gawthrop, *Public Service and Democracy*

II. ETHICS CODES; MID-LEVEL ADMINISTRATORS AND ETHICAL DILEMMAS

3a. Who has a code? Who enforces the Code? What Difference Does it Make (if any)? Is the ICMA a model?

3b. Mid-Level Managers: What Problems (Ethical Dilemmas) Do They Encounter? What Tools do They Have for Dealing with Ethical Dilemmas? Can the Gortner Framework be a Useful Tool for Middle Managers?

(Feb. 8)

Required Readings:

Wilburn, "Types and Levels of Public Morality," in Bruce, ed.
ICMA Ethics Code, ICMA web site
Gortner, *Ethics for Public Managers*

Recommended Reading:

Monypenny, "A Code of Ethics as A Means of Controlling Administrative Conduct," in Bruce ed.
Chandler, "The Problem of Moral Reasoning in Public Administration: The case for a code of ethics," in Bruce, ed.
Thompson, "The Possibility of Administrative Ethics," in Bruce, ed.
Bowman, "Whistle Blowing in The Public Service," in Bruce, ed.
Dempsey, "The inspector general concept: Where it's been and where it's going," in Bruce, ed.

III. SENIOR ADMINISTRATORS AND ETHICAL DILEMMAS

4a. Competing Values: How Should an Administrator Respond When A President's Policy Preferences or Directives Conflict with Personal Values, Professional Values, and the Public Interest?

4b. How Should an Administrator Respond When Presidents or Members of Congress Instruct them to Ignore the Law and/or Act in Ways that Damage the Public Interest?

(Feb. 15)

Required Reading:

a. Stephen Bailey, "Ethics and Public Service," in Bruce, ed., *and/or*
Fredrickson and Hart, "The Patriotism of Benevolence," in Bruce ed.
Riccucci, "Dr. Vince Hutchins: A Voice for Mothers and Children"

OR

b. Stephen Bailey, "Ethics and Public Service," in Bruce, ed.
Riccucci, "William Black Tackles the Savings and Loan Debacle"

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*

IV. ELECTED OFFICIALS: TRUTH, LIES, AND CONSEQUENCES

5. President George W. Bush: Leading or Misleading the Country into War with Iraq?

(Feb. 22)

Required:

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

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

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

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

Strasser ed, *The 9/11 Investigations*

The 9/11 Commission Report

Robin Wright, "Idealism in the Face of a Troubled Reality," *The Washington Post*, Nov. 7, 2003, pp. A1 and A22

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

(Mar. 1)

Required Reading:

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

Krugman, *The Great Unraveling* (assigned chapters)

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

Recommended Reading:

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"

7. Members of Congress: Does Money Buy Influence? Do Ethical Considerations Matter? Is Corruption in Congress an Individual Matter, A Matter of Political Party, or is it Systemic?

**** (Mar. 3) **** Friday Afternoon, 1:15-5:45

Required Reading:

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

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

Washington Post and *New York Times* articles on Tom Delay and Jack Abramoff

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

8a. Moral Values and "Framing" in Politics: 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 Religion and Politics Hold for American Democracy?

(Mar. 8)

Required Reading:

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

8b. Reflections on Democratic Government, Law, Religion, Ethics, Politics, and Administration

Instructions for Papers

Format:

All papers or case memos should be double spaced, 12 point type, Times or Times Roman font, 1" margins, with page numbers on the bottom of the page. When you are taking material word for word from a source, be sure you put the material inside quotation marks. If you are using class sources, you can simply put the author's name and page number in parentheses after the quote. If you are using sources that are not on the class reading lists, be sure to provide source identification in a bibliography or in footnotes or endnotes.

Paper #1

Write a 2-3 page paper titled: My Core Ethical Values and the Sources of Those Values.

Paper #2

Write a 5-8 page essay in which you develop answers to the questions posed in the titles for Sections I, II, and III. Use the required and recommended readings as the principal resources for your paper.

Example: Write a 5-8 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.)

Example for Class Session 4a.: This paper should have two sections. Part I. Identify the Ethical Dilemma(s) Vince Hutchins faced, report how he dealt with those dilemmas, and assess his actions (or inaction). Use either the Bailey article or the article by Fredrickson and Hart (or both) 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.

Paper #3 (Sections IV and V)

Length: 8-12 pages

Format: same requirements as stated above.

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

****For class session #7, you may write a paper on economic policy, or tax policy, or expenditure policy or on the combination of the three. The Bush speech and the Krugman book provide sufficient resources for all of these options.**

****For class session #8b. you may write a paper offering your own reflections on ethics in politics, policy, and administration, but you must use required and recommended readings from the course as the basis for those reflections.**