

# POLS210: Bureaucracy and the American Political System

**Section 001:** MWF 1:30-2:20 PM in  
Burnett 118  
**Office Hours:** Wed. 2:30 - 3:30 (or by  
appointment)  
**Semester:** Fall 2014

**Instructor:** Frank Gonzalez  
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## Course Objectives

1. What is bureaucracy? Is it needed? Why or why not?
2. How does U.S. government structure itself to administer and execute laws?
3. Is the bureaucracy meant to be a democratic institution? Does it represent citizens interests?
4. What theories explain bureaucratic policymaking? How well do they work?
5. How has bureaucracy succeeded? Failed?
6. Have citizens and elected officials leaned on the bureaucracy too much?

## Required Texts

- Meier, K.J., and Bohte, J. 2006. Politics and the Bureaucracy: Policymaking in the Fourth Branch of Government. (5th Edition). Belmont, CA: Thompson Wadsworth.
- Sunstein, C. R. 2013. Simpler: The future of government. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

## Grading and Assignments

- Participation and Attendance - 20%: This class relies heavily on the participation of students. As such, attendance is required. Students are allowed **3** unexcused absences, but are penalized **10%** of their final grade for each additional absence. Additionally, simply showing up to class will not earn students the entire 20% of their participation and attendance grade. This class is designed to be interactive, and so students are expected to be active in class discussions and exercises. It may often be difficult or uncomfortable for some to engage in public forms of debate or discussion, especially as some of the topics we will cover in class may be sensitive. However, active engagement, discussion, negotiation, and even debate are fundamental aspects of bureaucratic behavior and policy implementation. Thus, it is vital that students be active in class. Those who are usually uncomfortable with such engagement should be reassured in knowing that all comments and questions are welcome (*except* those that are insensitive or offensive) and that the course is designed to provide for as conducive a setting as possible for students to express their views. Questions during class are always welcome and are a good means of participation.
- In-Class Exercises - 5 @ 5% each for a total of 25%: In-class exercises will be assigned throughout the semester for students to have the opportunity to interact with issues related to bureaucracy. These exercises may include but are not limited to: presentation of information, debating alternative sides of an argument, writing assignments, or group decision-making exercises.

- Projects - 2 @ 15% each for a total of 30%: Group-based projects never go away, and are especially fundamental to bureaucratic behavior and policy implementation. Bureaucracies do not succeed or fail on the basis of a single person's work. In this class, neither will you. At two points during the semester you will be split into small groups to work on projects aimed at engaging in bureaucratic behavior. The precise details of these projects will be announced later in the semester. It should be noted that each group member is responsible for contributing to the final project. Grades will be a function of **both** the individual student's contributions to the project *as well as* the overall group's performance as a whole. Thus, grades may vary depending on the amount of work that each student contributed toward his or her group's project, but the overall quality of the project will influence all group members' grades. For each project, presentations of the finished products will be given to the class.
- Final Paper - 25%: Rather than taking a final exam, students will write a final paper that is worth 25% of their final grade. The precise details of this paper will be announced later in the semester. The paper will be 8-10 pages in length (not including title page or bibliography) and will require students to critically evaluate several features of contemporary American bureaucracy.

### Grade Scale

| Letter Grade | %              |
|--------------|----------------|
| A+           | 97-100         |
| A            | 93-96.9        |
| A-           | 90-92.9        |
| B+           | 87-89.9        |
| B            | 83-86.9        |
| B-           | 80-82.9        |
| C+           | 77-79.9        |
| C            | 73-76.9        |
| C-           | 70-72.9        |
| D+           | 67-69.9        |
| D            | 63-66.9        |
| D-           | 60-62.9        |
| F            | 59.9 and below |

### Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty is taken *extremely* seriously in this course. **Anyone found guilty of fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism will, at a minimum, receive an F for this course, and will be referred to university authorities.** Fabrication means altering information dishonestly, falsification means inventing information dishonestly, and plagiarism means presenting someone else's work as your own, either by not giving proper acknowledgment of the source or by presenting in whole or in part any work that has been prepared by or copied from another person.

### Incompletes and Late Papers

Course incompletes will not be given except in extreme situations where all of the appropriate documentation is provided. Late assignments will be docked one letter grade if not handed

in at the beginning of class on the due date (i.e., assignments handed in during the middle or at the end of class will already be docked one letter grade). Grades on the assignment will be lowered one additional letter grade for each additional day late.

## **Class Conduct**

This course will consist of a substantial amount of discussion and debate, and I look forward to class discussions that are energized and thought-provoking, but this is not an excuse for incivility in the classroom. Your fellow classmates will undoubtedly often hold different opinions than your own, and I expect you to handle this disagreement with civility and respect for differing viewpoints. Failure to show such respect will reflect in your final grade.

It is also worth noting that laptops are acceptable in the classroom - this is not the Stone Age. However, they should be used strictly for note-taking. It is not difficult to tell when someone is using their laptop for other purposes such as social networking, checking email, or writing angry blog posts rather than engaging in the class discussion. If I observe this behavior, it will be reflected in your final grade.

## **Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.

## Course Schedule and Readings

All readings should be done *prior* to the date for which the readings are assigned.

| <u>Date</u>      | <u>Topics and Readings</u>  |
|------------------|---|
|                  | no readings   |
| Sep. 3 - 5       | <b>More on people hating bureaucracy</b><br>Goodsell, <i>Chapter 3</i> , (on Blackboard);   |
| Sep. 8 - 12      | <b>Bureacratic power - the 4th branch of government</b><br>Meier & Bohte, <i>Chapter 3</i> , pp. 42-74;<br><i>In-Class Exercise # 1 - Parks and Rec</i>   |
| Sep. 15 - 19     | <b>Regulatory, Distributive, and Redistributive policy</b><br>Meier & Bohte, <i>Chapter 4</i> , pp. 75-113;   |
| Sep. 22 - 26     | <b>What the people want!</b><br>Meier & Bohte, <i>Chapter 5</i> , pp. 114-134;<br><i>In-Class Exercise # 2 - Public Issues and Expectations</i>   |
| Sep. 29 - Oct. 3 | <b>Please don't feed the bureaucracy.</b><br>Meier & Bohte, <i>Chapter 6</i> , pp. 135-178;<br><i>Group Assignment # 1 assigned - Bureaucracy in Your Backyard</i>  |
| Oct. 6 - 10      | <b>Why do the people want that?</b><br>Sunstein, <i>Chapter 2</i> , pp. 36-50;  |
| Oct. 13          | <i>No Class - Columbus Day?</i><br>no readings - BUT see readings for Wed.  |
| Oct. 15 - 17     | <b>Catering to the human brain</b><br>Sunstein, <i>Chapter 5</i> , pp. 100-126;   |
| Oct. 20          | <i>No Class - Fall Break!</i><br>no readings - BUT see readings for Wed.  |
| Oct. 22          | <b>Catering to the human brain - continued</b><br><i>same as last week</i>  |
| Oct. 24          | <b>Group Presentations</b><br><i>no readings</i><br><i>Group Assignment # 1 due - Presentations start today</i>   |
| Oct. 27 - 29     | <b>Group Presentations - continued</b><br><i>no readings</i><br><i>Group Assignment # 1 - Presentations Monday and Wednesday</i>  |
| Oct. 31          | <b>Halloween Bureaucracy</b><br><i>no readings</i><br><i>In-Class Exercise # 3 - Halloween Bureaucracy</i>  |
| Nov. 3 - 7       | <b>Is the bureaucracy democratic?</b><br>Meier & Bohte, <i>Chapter 7</i> , pp. 179-208;<br><i>Final Paper assigned</i><br><i>In-Class Exercise # 4 - Final Paper Prep</i><br><i>Group Assignment # 2 assigned - Let's Be Democratic; Let's Debate</i> |
| Nov. 10 - 14     | <b>Is the bureaucracy democratic? - continued</b><br><i>no readings</i><br><i>more Parks and Recreation</i>   |
| Nov. 17 - 21     | <b>Reforming the bureaucracy</b><br>Meier & Bohte, <i>Chapter 8</i> , pp. 209-228;  |
| Nov. 24          | <b>Reforming the bureaucracy - continued</b>  |

Date

Topics and Readings

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|             |   |
|-------------|---|
|             | Sunstein, <i>Chapters 6 &amp; 8</i> , pp. 127-146, 173-189;   |
| Nov. 26-30  | <i>No Class - Happy Thanksgiving!</i><br>no readings  |
| Dec. 1 - 5  | <b>Simplifying government</b><br>Sunstein, <i>Chapter 9-10, and Epilogue</i> , pp. 190-216;<br><i>In-Class Exercise # 5 - Evaluating contemporary bureaucracy</i> |
| Dec. 8 - 10 | <b>Group Presentations</b><br><i>no readings</i><br><i>Group Assignment # 2 due - Presentations this week</i>   |
| Dec. 12     | <b>Last Day of Class - final presentations</b><br><i>Parks and Recreation</i>   |
| Dec. 17     | <b>Final Papers Due by 2:20 PM</b>  |

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