

PUBP2030: Organizations and Policy Spring 2026

Instructor: Dr. Ben Jordan (bjordan3@gatech.edu)

Class hours & Venue: M/W 9:10-10:45 Clough 125

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Social Sciences area.

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help students master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I understand human experiences and connections?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcome:

- Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social, or geographic relationships develop, persist, or change.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Intercultural Competence
- Perspective-Taking
- Persuasion

Course Description

This class provides foundational knowledge about organizations and management. The instructor will present materials to facilitate discussions, while students are expected to contribute their own experiences. Together, we will co-construct the learning environment. The goal of this class is for students to be able to draw on the shared knowledge when they enter the workplace, helping them navigate their organizations and make better decisions.

Assessments

Three Papers (15% per each)

Participation (35%) - including class discussions and occasional low-stakes "pop" quizzes

Case contributions (20%) - weekly to bi-weekly case exercises (some individual, some group)

Weekly Schedule

Week 1 – Introduction: Strategic Planning for Organizations & Policy

Course introduction and short diagnostic quiz

Discussion in small groups on key issues facing us - and society

Prioritization of key current issues of focus for the semester

Week 2 — Organizations as Policy Actors

Theory of organizations - foundational readings

Discussion of different organizations where we have experience

Week 3 — Bureaucracy & Scientific Management

Theory readings spanning bureaucracy and scientific management

Case: DOT — Transportation Safety & Oversight Failures

Week 3 — Bounded Rationality & Organized Anarchy

Readings on Leadership and Organizational hierarchies - theory and reality

Case: EPA — Flint Water Crisis

Week 4 — Data, Bias, and Expertise

Readings on how data and bias play out in different types of organizations

Case: DOE — Grid Reliability & Emergency Response

Week 5 — Organizational Wrongdoing

Readings covering examples of wrongdoing in various types of organizations

Case: Enron

Week 6 — Informal Structure in Organizations

How informal structures can trump formal structure

Case: FTC — Antitrust & Consumer Protection Backlash

Week 7 — Paper 1

Writing workshop (no new readings)
Synthesis discussion (no case)

Week 8 — Red Tape & Reengineering

Readings and discussion on over-design of rules and processes

Case (tentative): FDA / USDA — Food & Drug Risk Regulation

Week 9 — New Public Management

Outsourcing of government services - pros, cons and pitfalls

Case (tentative): World Bank — Project Governance & Accountability

Week 10 — Paper 2

Writing workshop
Reading synthesis (no case)

Week 11 — Fall Break

Week 12 - Institutional Theory

Readings and discussion on institutional theory

Case: UNFCCC / COP — Consensus Governance

Week 13 — Power in Organizations

Readings and discussion on power and powerlessness

Case (tentative): WTO — Dispute Settlement & Institutional Strain

Week 14 — Organizational Networks

Readings and discussion on informal organizational networks

Case (tentative): WHO — Crisis Response & Legitimacy

Weeks 15/16 — Paper 3 & Course Synthesis

Final paper due

Course integration and wrap-up

CASE READINGS (Illustrative - exact readings will be assigned on a weekly basis)

The following readings support Wednesday case discussions. These materials are primary, public institutional sources. Students are expected to **browse these sources strategically** to understand each organization's **mandate, decision authority, incentives, and failure modes**. Students are **not expected to read every document in full**. *Students may focus on one organization or incident per case unless otherwise noted.*

We will discuss these organizations and incidents in class using the following **standard discussion prompts**:

1. What is the organization's mandate, and who defines it?
2. Where does decision-making authority sit (formally and informally)?
3. What incentives and constraints shape behavior?
4. What organizational failures occurred, and what caused them?
5. Who faced consequences, and why?
6. What reforms might reduce the likelihood of recurrence?
7. What might a career path look like in this organization, and how could an individual influence policy from within?

Week 2 - Department of Transportation (DOT)

- National Transportation Safety Board. (n.d.). Accident investigations. <https://www.nts.gov/investigations/Pages/default.aspx>
- U.S. Department of Transportation, Office of Inspector General. (n.d.). Audit and investigation reports. <https://www.oig.dot.gov>
- U.S. Government Accountability Office. (n.d.). Transportation safety. <https://www.gao.gov/transportation>

Week 3 - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. (n.d.). Flint drinking water response. <https://www.epa.gov/flint>
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Inspector General. (2016). Management weaknesses delayed response to the Flint water crisis. <https://www.epa.gov/oig>
- U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Oversight and Reform. (n.d.). Flint water crisis investigation. <https://oversight.house.gov>

Week 4 - Department of Energy (DOE)

- U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Inspector General. (n.d.). Reports and reviews. <https://www.energy.gov/ig>

- U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Electricity. (n.d.). Grid reliability and resilience. <https://www.energy.gov/oe>
- North American Electric Reliability Corporation. (n.d.). Reliability standards. <https://www.nerc.com>

Week 5 - Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC)

- U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. (n.d.). Enforcement actions. <https://www.sec.gov/enforcement>
- U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. (n.d.). Litigation releases. <https://www.sec.gov/litigation/litreleases>
- U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. (n.d.). Investor bulletins. <https://www.sec.gov/investor>

Week 6 - Federal Trade Commission (FTC)

- Federal Trade Commission. (n.d.). Cases and proceedings. <https://www.ftc.gov/legal-library/browse/cases-proceedings>
- Federal Trade Commission. (n.d.). Policy statements and guidance. <https://www.ftc.gov/policy>
- U.S. Government Accountability Office. (n.d.). Competition and consumer protection. <https://www.gao.gov/competition>

Week 8 - Food and Drug Administration (FDA) / Department of Agriculture (USDA)

- U.S. Food and Drug Administration. (n.d.). Recalls, market withdrawals, and safety alerts. <https://www.fda.gov/safety/recalls-market-withdrawals-safety-alerts>
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food Safety and Inspection Service. (n.d.). Recalls and public health alerts. <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/recalls>
- U.S. Department of Justice. (n.d.). Consumer protection branch. <https://www.justice.gov/civil/consumer-protection-branch>

Week 9 - World Bank Group (WBG)

- World Bank. (n.d.). Inspection Panel. <https://www.inspectionpanel.org>
- World Bank. (n.d.). Environmental and social framework. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/environmental-and-social-framework>

- World Bank. (n.d.). Project database. <https://projects.worldbank.org>

Week 12 - UNFCCC / Climate Governance

- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. (n.d.). UNFCCC process and COP portal. <https://unfccc.int/process>
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. (n.d.). Nationally determined contributions registry. <https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/NDCStaging/Pages/All.aspx>
- United Nations. (2015). Paris Agreement. <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>

Week 13 - World Trade Organization (WTO)

- World Trade Organization. (n.d.). Dispute settlement system. https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/dispu_e/dispu_e.htm
- World Trade Organization. (n.d.). WTO legal texts and agreements. https://www.wto.org/english/docs_e/legal_e/legal_e.htm
- World Trade Organization. (n.d.). Trade policy review mechanism. https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/tpr_e/tpr_e.htm

Week 14 - World Health Organization (WHO)

- World Health Organization. (n.d.). Health emergencies program. <https://www.who.int/emergencies>
- World Health Organization. (n.d.). Governance and constitution. <https://www.who.int/about/governance>
- World Health Organization. (n.d.). Independent evaluations and reviews. <https://www.who.int/about/accountability>