

Organizations & Policy

Last Updated: Mon, 01/05/2026

Course prefix: PUBP

Course number: 2030

Section: Public Policy

CRN (you may add up to five):

31831

Instructor First Name: Benjamin

Instructor Last Name: Jordan

Semester: Spring

Academic year: 2026

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.

Course learning outcomes:

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.

Required course materials:

There will be weekly reading assignments for both Monday and Wednesday class meetings. Monday will focus primarily on theoretical foundations, while Wednesday will be applied cases. A schedule of the readings is below.

Week 1 — Introduction: Organizations as Policy Actors

Monday (January 12):

Course introduction and short diagnostic quiz (no readings)

Wednesday (January 14):

Simon, H. A. (1946). The Proverbs of Administration. *Public Administration Review*, 6(1),

53-67.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/972148>

Week 2 — Bureaucracy & Scientific Management

Monday (January 19): NO CLASS

Wednesday (January 21):

Fry, B. R., & Raadschelders, J. C. (2013). Frederick W. Taylor: The man, the method, the movement. In *Mastering Public Administration*. CQ Press. (Book chapter; library access)

Case: DOT — Transportation Safety & Oversight Failures

Week 3 — Bounded Rationality & Organized Anarchy

Monday (January 26):

Cohen, M. D., & March, J. G. (1974). Leadership in an Organized Anarchy. In *Leadership and Ambiguity*. Harvard Business School Press.

Mintzberg, H. (1990). The Manager's Job: Folklore and Fact. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/1990/03/the-managers-job-folklore-and-fact>

Wednesday (January 28):

Case: EPA — Flint Water Crisis

Week 4 — Data, Bias, and Expertise

Monday (February 2):

Lewis, M. (2018). *The Fifth Risk* (selected excerpts). W. W. Norton.

<https://www.norton.com/books/9780393357455>

Lewis, M. (2016). *The Undoing Project* (Chapter 6). W. W. Norton.

<https://www.norton.com/books/9780393354775>

Kahneman, D., et al. (2021). Bias Is a Big Problem. But So Is "Noise." *The New York Times*.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/15/opinion/noise-bias-kahneman.html>

Maltz, M. D., Gordon, A. C., & Friedman, W. (1991). Detective Use of the Mapping System.

In *Mapping Crime in Its Community Setting* (pp. 91-106). Springer. (Library access)

Wednesday (February 4):

Case: DOE — Grid Reliability & Emergency Response

Week 5 — Organizational Wrongdoing

Monday (February 9):

Barboza, D. (2013). Coin of Realm in China Graft: Phony Receipts. *The New York Times*.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/04/business/global/coin-of-realm-in-china-graft-phony-receipts.html>

Weaver, G. (2019). How to Scandal-Proof Your Company. Harvard Business Review.
<https://hbr.org/2019/07/white-collar-crime>

Wednesday (February 11):
Case: SEC — Disclosure, Enforcement, and Liability

Week 6 — Informal Structure in Organizations

Monday (February 16):
Blau, P. (1955). Consultation Among Colleagues. In *The Dynamics of Bureaucracy*.
Dalton, M. (1959). Men Who Manage (selected excerpts).

Wednesday (February 18):
Case: FTC — Antitrust & Consumer Protection Backlash

Week 7 — Paper 1

Monday (February 23):
Writing workshop (no new readings)

Wednesday (February 25):
Synthesis discussion (no case)

Week 8 — Red Tape & Reengineering

Monday (March 2):
Stinchcombe, A. L., & Heimer, C. A. (1985). Three Origins of Red Tape.
Hammer, M. (1990). Reengineering Work: Don't Automate, Obliterate. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/1990/07/reengineering-work-dont-automate-obliterate>

The Robots Are Coming for Phil in Accounting. The New York Times (2021).
<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/06/business/the-robots-are-coming-for-phil-in-accounting.html>

Wednesday (March 4):
Case: FDA / USDA — Food & Drug Risk Regulation

Week 9 — New Public Management

Monday (March 9):
Gen, S., & Kingsley, G. (2007). Effects of Contracting Out Engineering Services. *Public Works Management & Policy*, 12(1), 331-343.
Ramesh, M. (2008). Autonomy and Control in Public Hospital Reforms. *The American Review of Public Administration*, 38(1), 62-79.

Wednesday (March 11):
Case: World Bank — Project Governance & Accountability

Week 10 — Paper 2

Monday (March 16):

Writing workshop

Wednesday (March 18):

Reading synthesis (no case)

Week 11 — Spring Break

Monday (March 23): no class

Wednesday (March 25): no class

Week 12 - Institutional Theory

Monday (March 30):

Meyer, J. W., & Rowan, B. (1977). Institutionalized Organizations.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2778293>

DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. (1983). The Iron Cage Revisited.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2095101>

Westphal, J. D., Gulati, R., & Shortell, S. M. (1997). Customization or Conformity?

Administrative Science Quarterly, 42, 366-394. (Library access)

Wednesday (April 1):

Case: UNFCCC / COP — Consensus Governance

Week 13 — Power in Organizations

Monday (April 6):

Hickson, D. J., et al. (1971). Strategic Contingencies Theory.

Salancik, G. R., & Pfeffer, J. (1974). Power in Organizational Decision Making.

Wednesday (April 8):

Case: WTO — Dispute Settlement & Institutional Strain

Week 14 — Organizational Networks

Monday (April 13):

Krackhardt, D., & Hanson, J. R. (1993). Informal Networks.

<https://hbr.org/1993/07/informal-networks-the-company-behind-the-chart>

Uzzi, B., & Spiro, J. (2005). Collaboration and Creativity.

Wednesday (April 15):

Case: WHO — Crisis Response & Legitimacy

Weeks 15/16 — Paper 3 & Course Synthesis

Monday (April 20):

Final paper due

Wednesday (April 22):

Course integration and wrap-up

Monday (April 27): LAST CLASS

Course integration and wrap-up

WEDNESDAY CASE READINGS

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.ntsb.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 programme.
<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>

Grading policy:

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)

Attendance policy:

Students are expected to attend class each week and contribute productively, as participation is a major portion of the semester grade. Excused absences will be tolerated when there is an advance notice (ideally at least one class meeting ahead of reasonable absence). Students are expected to keep up with work assignments even when they are required to miss class.

Academic honesty/integrity statement:

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. All work submitted must be original and properly cited. Plagiarism, cheating, or any form of academic dishonesty will result in immediate consequences as outlined in the university's academic integrity policy.

Core IMPACTS statement(s) (if applicable):

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