

POLS 260: Public Administration

Spring 2026 ♦ MWF 11-11:50am ♦ North Quad 143

Instructor: Dr. Jordan T. Long

Email: jordan.long@bsu.edu

Allow 48-hour response time

Office: North Quad 263

Office Hours: MW 12-12:50pm

In-person and by appt only

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Overview: Every day, millions of federal, state, and local government officials manage and carry out government functions, transforming policy into results for the American people, or public administration (PA). This course describes PA theories and practices in the U.S. and the development, implementation, and evaluation of agency policies and programs.

Structure: This course is run like an agency job. Students are new trainees who proceed through different weekly topics via lecture (Mondays); reading & discussion (Wednesdays); and skill-building activities (Fridays) to grow their merits. The Instructor is your supervisor: directing your learning, evaluating progress, and holding you to high professional standards.

Student Success: The language of PA will be brand new for most of you. To succeed in learning a new language, you must: 1) *immerse* yourself in the content to grasp definitions quickly; 2) *analyze* course material for meaning, connections, and tie-ins with the real world; and 3) *communicate* what you know (even clumsily) with others. Your Instructor will help you, but student success [coaching](#) and free [tutoring](#) is also available outside of class.

Materials: There is not a textbook for the course. All content, readings, and links are available on CANVAS by date directing trainees to specific pages, tables, and graphics. Supplemental reading on current events may be incorporated as it occurs.

Specific Learning Objectives: Upon completion of this course, trainees will be able to:

- Label numerous federal agencies by name and function
- Understand how administration makes its rules, implements its aims, and adjudicates results
- Identify dueling theories, forces, and public values inherent in public administration
- Differentiate common administrative tools including goods, services, grants, and contracts
- Analyze challenges administrators face relative to other public, private, and nonprofit sector actors
- Build competencies and skills that enhance professional and personal growth
- Investigate employment opportunities of potential future careers in public service

UNIVERSITY POLICIES:

Welcome: Ball State is committed to ensuring that all members of the community are welcome, through valuing the various experiences and worldviews represented at Ball State and among those we serve. We promote a culture of respect and civil discourse.

Freedom of Expression: Ball State is committed to fostering a learning environment that values intellectual diversity, encourages free expression, and promotes open inquiry. That means treating each person in the Ball State community with civility, courtesy, compassion, and dignity and respecting and learning from differences in people, ideas, and opinions. Please review Ball State University's [Statement on Freedom of Expression](#), the resources on Ball State's [Freedom of Expression webpage](#), and Ball State's [Beneficence Pledge](#).

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COURSE POLICIES:

Punctuality: Trainees should be in their seat ready to go by the start of class time; this is a basic requirement of any government job. Roll will be taken daily for a grade; late trainees must give account of their whereabouts to the Instructor prior to leaving or forfeit attendance points that day. Habitually tardy trainees would be fired from a government job; in this class they lose 50% attendance points each day at the discretion of the Instructor.

Absences: While a public administrator must document each absence to their supervisor in a government job, due to the size of this class, the following absence policy is in effect:

TYPE	DEFINITION	TRAINEE RESPONSIBILITY
Excused Absence	Mandatory "required" absence such as a signed medical excuse from a doctor; university activity, disability, or athletics request; documented future education or employment interview; religious holiday or funeral attendance; or other severe emergency approved by the Instructor.	<i>Contact another trainee for notes and send ONE email to the Instructor within 7 days</i> after the absence occurred specifying the exact dates missed and attaching documented proof (JPG or PDF; no links) in the email. Once approved, this will recover 100% lost attendance points for the specified dates.
Non-excused Absence	Discretionary "life happens" absence such as illness not treated; weather/car/travel issues; pet drama; personal day/vacation; general apathy; or other non-emergency reason not excused by the Instructor.	<i>Contact another trainee for notes but do NOT email the Instructor.</i> Trainees have 2 non-excused absences in the semester that do not penalize. Any non-excused beyond that cannot recover the lost attendance points.

Electronics: All cell phones should be silenced and kept off the space in front of you unless instructed otherwise; the Instructor will keep his on in case of emergency. Laptops and iPads are to be used for official class business only; trainees who abuse this policy will be held to account publicly and risk loss of electronics for the entire class.

Communication: Each of you has the potential to make valuable contributions to this class. Therefore, you can expect regular exchange with your Instructor and other trainees this semester. Face-to-face dialogue builds trust and is encouraged as long as speech is professional and respectful of others' time and contributions. If you need something repeated, clarified, or have questions that cannot be answered by the syllabus, don't wallow in uncertainty! Raise your hand so the Instructor can get you an answer. You may also speak with him briefly after class concludes or send him an email for office hours.

Academic Integrity: Ball State has a thriving intellectual community. A hallmark of this is that students and faculty uphold academic ethical standards, meaning that everyone is honest, trustworthy, and responsible in their educational pursuits. While study groups outside of class are encouraged, all assignments should be completed on your own. Solicitating other persons or AI generator to complete work you submit in POLS 260 will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty will be reported to the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs whose [process](#) resolutions include failure, suspension, expulsion, and degree withholding.

Disability: If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of an existing, developing, or unexpected disability, contact the Instructor as soon as possible. Ball State's Disability Services Office coordinates services for students with disabilities; documentation of a disability must be on file in that office *before* any accommodations can be provided in this course. Disability Services can be contacted at 765-285-5293 or dsd@bsu.edu. It is the student's responsibility to provide any disability accommodation letter to the Instructor.

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COURSE GRADING:

Attendance (11pts): Attendance is calculated at the end of the semester as the total number of classes attended out of the total number of classes offered, accounting for any excused absences emailed to the Instructor and the two non-excused.

Engagement (4pts): The Instructor will evaluate each trainee's level of engagement with the course at the end of the semester utilizing the following rubric:

4	Trainee <i>regularly</i> makes contributions to class discussion. Comments, answers to questions, and in-class group activities demonstrate outstanding critical thinking & completion of readings.
3	Trainee <i>often</i> makes contributions to class discussion. Comments, answers to questions, and in-class group activities demonstrate strong critical thinking & completion of readings.
2	Trainee <i>occasionally</i> makes contributions to class discussion. Comments, answers to questions, and in-class group activities demonstrate critical thinking & completion of readings.
1	Trainee <i>rarely</i> makes contributions to class discussion. Comments, answers to questions, and in-class group activities demonstrate some lack of preparedness.
0	Trainee <i>almost never</i> makes contributions to class discussion. Comments, answers to questions, and in-class group activities demonstrate moderate lack of preparedness OR the student does not attend class regularly enough to engage with the course in a meaningful way.

Quizzes (30pts): Trainees take weekly quizzes on CANVAS on your own. There are 15 of these worth 2 points each. Quizzes will post no later than Friday afternoons and are due by the start of the next Wednesday's class, giving you the better part of 5 days to complete (exceptions are Week 4---there are two quizzes that week due Monday & Wednesday and Week 8---the quiz that week is due on Monday). Quizzes are untimed and may be taken twice during the open period to improve your score; the higher score is retained. Questions pull primarily from reading, images, or videos assigned for the day the quiz is due. Quizzes submitted after 11:00:00am on the date due result in a zero score.

Exams (50pts): Trainees take three exams in class on paper. The first two are worth 15 points each; the third is a cumulative final worth 20 points. All exams are multiple choice and true-false questions; the final contains agency matching questions. Trainees who know they will miss an exam must contact the Instructor at least 2 weeks out. A missed exam on the day may only be made up if it is a severe emergency that would qualify as an excused absence; failing to show for an exam without notifying the Instructor results in a zero score.

Active Reflection Writing (5pts+): Trainees submit 1 single-spaced, 500-750 word journal entry on CANVAS reflecting on two concepts or activities from POLS 260 that helped you learn something about yourself. Be honest and allow what you have learned to impact where you are right now and explain that impact. This writing can be submitted anytime in the semester but is due no later than 5:00:00pm on Friday, April 24. Late submissions result in a zero score.

Final Grades: Trainees accrue points out of 100 that correspond to final letter grades as follows: Any final grade ≥ 0.50 is rounded up to the nearest whole number and will not be negotiated or communicated over email.

Excellent		A 93-100	A- 90-92
Good	B+ 87-89	B 83-86	B- 80-82
Satisfactory	C+ 77-79	C 73-76	C- 70-72
Passing	D+ 67-69	D 63-66	D- 60-62
Failure	F 0-59		

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COURSE SCHEDULE:

NOTE: + signs indicate trainee reading, images, or videos on CANVAS

WEEK 1: Introduction to PA

Monday, Jan 5

- (1) Syllabus
- (2) Uploading Your Headshot Photo ID to CANVAS
- (3) PA Diagram #1: U.S. Government
+ Constitution Article I§8; Article II§2-4; & Article III§2.
- (4) PA Diagram #2: Principals v. Agents

Wednesday, Jan 7

- (1) Diagram Recap: Federalism
- (2) PA in its Infancy:
 - a. Pendleton Civil Service Reform Act of 1883
+ Pendleton Backstory: CANVAS reading.
 - b. Politics-Administration Dichotomy and Best Principles
+ Wilson, W. (1887). The study of administration. *Political Science Quarterly*, 2(2), 197-222. ****Read Section II p.209-214 looking for politics & admin differences and list of administrative principles**
- (3) PA of Today:
 - a. Form
+ Four Agency Types: CANVAS reading.
 - b. Function (Rulemaking, Implementation, Adjudication)

Friday, Jan 9

- (1) Autonomy
- (2) FEDERAL AGENCY BREAKDOWN: CABINET DEPARTMENTS

WEEK 2: Budgeting and Finance

Monday, Jan 12

- (1) Budget Basics: Fiscal Year, Revenue, and Expenditures (Outlays)
- (2) Budget Process
- (3) Budget Analysis: Forecasts and Frameworks

Wednesday, Jan 14 – **QUIZ #1 due by 11am**

- (1) Federal Budget:
 - + Mandatory v. Discretionary: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n9Ah0iJaTrU>
 - + FY24 Pie Graph: CANVAS image.
 - + Differentiating Surplus, Deficit, and Debt: CANVAS reading.
 - + Debt Clock: <https://fiscaldata.treasury.gov/datasets/debt-to-the-penny/debt-to-the-penny>
- (2) State & Local Budget: Fund Types and Balance
+ FY26-27 Indiana Budget ****Read Budget Narrative p.1-7**

Friday, Jan 16

- (1) FEDERAL AGENCY BREAKDOWN: EOP and MISC BUDGET
- (2) BUILDING A BUDGET ACTIVITY

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WEEK 3: Organization

Monday, Jan 19 – **MARTIN LUTHER KING JR DAY no class**

Wednesday, Jan 21 – **QUIZ #2 due by 11am**

- (1) Headquarters, Bureaus, and Field Offices
- (2) Classical Model of Organization: Agency Head & Purpose, Process, Client, Place
+ Simon, H. (1946). Proverbs of Administration. *PAR*, 6(1), 53-67.
****Read p.53-62**
+ Process Mapping (Swimlane): CANVAS Image
- (3) Bureaucratic Model of Organization: Senior Executives and Divisions of Labor
+ Org Charting: CANVAS Image
- (4) Organizational Systems: Open v. Closed
- (5) Organizational Culture: Strong v. Weak

Friday, Jan 23

- (1) e-Government Organization
- (2) Networked Organization
- (3) FEDERAL AGENCY BREAKDOWN: INDEPENDENT AGENCIES
- (4) 6S LEAN ORGANIZATION ACTIVITY

WEEK 4: Administrative Law

Monday, Jan 26 – **QUIZ #3 due by 11am**

- (1) 14th Amendment Due Process Clause
+ CANVAS reading.
- (2) Legislative statutes and SCOTUS judicial review
- (3) Rulemaking: Regulations, Notice-and-Comment Procedure
+ *Bi-Metallic v. State Board of Equalization*: CANVAS reading.
+ APA of 1946: §551(1,4-5) & §553: CANVAS reading.
+ Federal Register: <https://www.federalregister.gov/> ****Skim the website**
- (4) Red Tape, Spillover, and Federalism
+ Red Tape: CANVAS reading.

Wednesday, Jan 28 – **QUIZ #4 due by 11am**

- (1) Interpretive Rules: *Auer*, *Kisor*, and *Chevron* deference
+ RIP *Chevron* deference: CANVAS reading.
- (2) Quasi-Legislative
- (3) Adjudication:
+ *Londoner v. City & County of Denver*: CANVAS reading.
+ APA: §551(6-7); §554; §555(e); §556(ab); & §557(c1-3): CANVAS reading.
- (4) Case-by-case, Levels, Backlog
- (5) Quasi-Judicial

Friday, Jan 30

- (1) FEDERAL AGENCY BREAKDOWN: REGULATORY COMMISSIONS
- (2) DISABILITY RULES AND ADJUDICATION ACTIVITY

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WEEK 5: Sectors and Values

Monday, Feb 2

- (1) Sectors: Public, Private, and Nonprofit
- (2) Blurring: Utilization, Privatization, Partnership
- (3) Collaborative Governance

Wednesday, Feb 4 – **QUIZ #5 due by 11am**

- (1) Public Values
 - + Rosenbloom, D. (1983). Public Administration Theory and the Separation of Powers. *PAR* 43(3), 219-27. ****Know his nine public values**
- (2) Transparency and FOIA
 - + CANVAS reading.
- (3) The Three Elements of Trust
 - + CANVAS reading.

Friday, Feb 6

- (1) FEDERAL AGENCY BREAKDOWN: GOVERNMENT CORPORATIONS
- (2) VALUE TRADEOFF ACTIVITY

WEEK 6: Theory and Practice

Monday, Feb 9

- (1) Theory v. Practice: Bridging the Gap
- (2) Classical Theory: Science
- (3) New Public Management: Customer Orientation
- (4) Postmodern Theory: Pluralism
- (5) Positive (“what is”) v. Normative (“what should be”)

Wednesday, Feb 11 – **QUIZ #6 due by 11am**

- (1) Friedrich-Finer Debate
 - + CANVAS reading.
- (2) Public Choice
 - + CANVAS reading.
- (3) The Administrative State
 - + CANVAS reading.
 - + VIDEO: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RmAUMhdcFTk>

Friday, Feb 13 – **EXAM #1 in class**

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WEEK 7: Tools, Grants, and Contracts

Monday, Feb 16

- (1) Direct Tools: Goods, Services, Entitlements
- (2) Indirect Tools: Loans, Tax Breaks, Bonds, Voucher, and...
- (3) Grants and Grantwriting

Wednesday, Feb 18 – **QUIZ #7 due by 11am**

- (1) Contracts
- (2) Contracting Out (Privatization)
 - + Brown, T. L., Potoski, M., & Van Slyke, D. M. (2006). Managing public service contracts: Aligning values, institutions, and markets. *PAR*, 66(3), 323-331.
- (3) Procurement: RFP and Contract Components
- (4) Hollow State: Info Asymmetry, Principal-Agent, Delegation, Social Dilemma.
 - + CANVAS Reading.

Friday, Feb 20

- (1) INFRASTRUCTURE CONTRACT ACTIVITY

WEEK 8: Policy Implementation, Goals, & Risk

Monday, Feb 23 – **QUIZ #8 due by 11am**

- (1) Policy, Targets, and Context
 - + Matland, R. E. (1995). Synthesizing the implementation literature: The ambiguity-conflict model of policy implementation. *JPART*, 5(2), 145-174.
[**Read p.145-150](#)
- (2) Capacity
- (3) Duration and Modification
- (4) PI Stages and Success Indicators
- (5) PI Pitfalls: Overoptimism, Siloing, Poor Goal Setting, and Risk
 - + S.M.A.R.T. Goals: CANVAS reading.
 - + Risk Management: CANVAS reading.

Wednesday, Feb 25

- (1) RISK ASSESSMENT and WRITING S.M.A.R.T. GOALS ACTIVITY

Friday, Feb 27 – **PROFESSOR CONFLICT no class**

WEEK 9: Spring Break

Monday, Mar 2 – **SPRING BREAK no class**

Wednesday, Mar 4 – **SPRING BREAK no class**

Friday, Mar 6 – **SPRING BREAK no class**

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WEEK 10: Pressures and Power

Monday, Mar 9

- (1) Legislative, Executive, and Judicial Pressures
- (2) Public: Opinion, Misinformation, Administrative Burden
- (3) Discretion: State Agent v. Citizen Agent
- (4) Clearance, Compliance, and (Technical) Competence

Wednesday, Mar 11 – **QUIZ #9 due by 11am**

- (1) Neutral Competence: Email and Social Media Use
 - + Hatch, C. (1939; 2012). Hatch Act: to Prevent Pernicious Political Activities.
 - + Hatch Act Social Media Guidance. ****Skim**
- (2) Authority v. Power (Definition, Flow, and Attainment)
 - + Long, N. E. (1949). Power and administration. *PAR*, 9(4), 257-264.
- (3) Power Types
 - + CANVAS reading.

Friday, Mar 13

- (1) POWER PLAY CARD GAME

WEEK 11: Reasoning

Monday, Mar 16

- (1) Decision-making: Process and Pyramid
- (2) Bounded Decisions: Satisficing through Ignorance
- (3) Incremental Decisions: Muddling Through
- (4) Influences on Decisions: Nudges and Fatigue

Wednesday, Mar 18 – **QUIZ #10 due by 11am**

- (1) Problem-Based v. Outcome-Directed Thinking
 - + Wicked Problems: CANVAS reading.
 - + Flipping Questions: CANVAS reading.
- (2) Analyzing
 - + SWOT: CANVAS Image
- (3) Sensemaking
 - + Weick, K. E., Sutcliffe, K. M., & Obstfeld, D. (2005). Organizing and the process of sensemaking. *Organization science*, 16(4), 409-421.
 - **Read p.409-410 and Skim the rest identifying 3 types of sensemaking**

Friday, Mar 20

- (1) I-O-O: Inputs, Outputs, and Outcomes
- (2) BUILDING A LOGIC MODEL

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WEEK 12: Public Management and Performance

Monday, Mar 23

- (1) POSDCoRB Tasks
- (2) Fayol: Authority, Centralization, Order, Stability, Unity of Direction, Morale
- (3) PM Reform Drivers

Wednesday, Mar 25 – **QUIZ #11 due by 11am**

- (1) Performance: Span-Levels, Mindset, and Law
+ GPRA and GPRAMA: CANVAS reading.
- (2) Performance Measurement
+ Behn, R. D. (2003). Why measure performance? Different purposes require different measures. *PAR*, 63(5), 586-606. ****Focus on TABLE 1**
- (3) Performance Challenges and the Fundamental Attribution Error
+ Bouckaert, G., & Peters, B. G. (2002). Performance measurement and management: The Achilles' heel in administrative modernization. *Public performance & mgmt review*, 25(4), 359-362.

Friday, Mar 27

- (1) Burnout
- (2) TASK MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY (EISENHOWER MATRIX)

WEEK 13: Leadership and Teams

Monday, Mar 30

- (1) Differentiating Public Management and Leadership
- (2) Leadership Trait and Contingency Theories
- (3) Administrative Leadership: Ends, Means, Alignment, Service, Balance
- (4) Stages of Team Development
- (5) Purpose and Credibility

Wednesday, Apr 1 – **QUIZ #12 due by 11am**

- (1) Leadership Style
+ <https://www.capitalone.com/learn-grow/business-resources/types-of-leadership-styles/>
- (2) Leader-Member Exchange (LMX)
+ CANVAS reading.
- (3) Team Players: Humble, Hungry, Smart
+ CANVAS reading.

Friday, Apr 3 – **EXAM #2 in class**

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WEEK 14: Human Resources

Monday, Apr 6

- (1) Human Capital
- (2) HR Planning
- (3) HR Development: Shadowing and Mentoring
- (4) HR Management

Wednesday, Apr 8 – **QUIZ #13 DUE by 11am**

- (1) Discrimination: Civil Rights Act of 1964
 - + Disparate Treatment and Impact: CANVAS Reading
 - + EEOC Types: <https://www.eeoc.gov/youth/your-rights> **Click on each of the 12 discrimination types under the 'Your Rights' tab on the left to read
- (2) Sexual Harassment
 - + CANVAS reading

Friday, Apr 10

- (1) GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN THE WORKFORCE ACTIVITY

WEEK 15: Organizational Behavior

Monday, Apr 13

- (1) ABC Model
- (2) Flow of Behavior within Organizations
- (3) The 5 C's: Criteria, Control, Communication, Conflict, and...

Wednesday, Apr 15 – **QUIZ #14 due by 11am**

- (1) Change: Aversion and Management
 - + Types of Organizational Change: CANVAS reading.
 - + Fernandez, S., & Rainey, H. G. (2006). Managing successful org change in the public sector. *PAR*, 66(2), 168-176.
- (2) Job Affect: Emotions, Moods, and Traits
 - + Barsade, S. G., & Gibson, D. E. (2007). Why does affect matter in orgs? *The Academy of Mgmt Perspectives*, 21(1), 36-59. **Focus on Table 1
- (3) Job Satisfaction, Motivation, and Commitment

Friday, Apr 17

- (1) CONFLICT RESOLUTION SCALE
- (2) ACTIVE LISTENING ACTIVITY

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WEEK 16: Employment Conditions

Monday, Apr 20

- (1) Employment Terms: Line/Staff, Full/Part-Time, Street-Level, Collars
- (2) Hiring: Application, Onboarding, Probationary Period, Permanence
- (3) Termination Conditions: Reduction-in-Force and At-Will

Wednesday, Apr 22 – **QUIZ #15 DUE by 11am**

- (1) Firing: Disciplinary Action (Warning, PIP), Adverse Action (Hearing)
- (2) Office of Personnel Management (OPM)
- (3) Job Classifications: General Schedule

+ Series Explained: <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/classification-qualifications/classifying-general-schedule-positions/#url=Standards>

+ Grade and Step Explained: <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/pay-systems/general-schedule/#url=Overview>

+ Step Variation by Location: <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/2025/general-schedule/>

- (4) Unions: Dues, Bargaining, Open-Shop

Friday, Apr 24

- (1) JOB HUNT ACTIVITY
- (2) **ACTIVE REFLECTION WRITING DUE by 5pm**
- (3) Course Evaluations

+ Student Login: <https://www.bsu.edu/about/administrativeoffices/vice-provost/student-services/course-evaluations>

WEEK 17: Ethics Coda and Cumulative Final Exam

Monday, Apr 27

- (1) Ethics: Principles and Conduct
- (2) Distinguishing Legal and Ethical
- (3) Bureaucratic and Democratic Ethos: Outcomes v. Principles
- (4) Public Interest as Key

Wednesday, Apr 29 – **STUDY DAY no class**

Thursday, Apr 30 – **CUMULATIVE FINAL at special time from 9:45-11:45am**

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