

GOVT 376W: Government Failure?: The American Administrative State

Instructor: Gbemende Johnson

Email:gxjohnso@hamilton.edu

Phone: 315-859-4446

Course Time: 1:00pm to 4:00pm

Course Room: KJ 142

Office: KJ 119

Office Hours: Wednesday: 1:00pm to 3:00pm, Tuesday 11:00am-12:00pm and by appointment

Course Description:

The size of the American administrative state has grown exponentially in the Post-FDR era. As the scope and complexity of American public policy increases, administrative agencies, such as the Social Security Administration (SSA) or the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), are required to promulgate rules and regulations as dictated by legislation. However, in carrying out their responsibilities, these administrative agencies must be responsive to the conflicting policy mandates of Congress, the President, the courts, and sometimes the public. Federal administrative activity gains the most attention when the federal government has apparently failed to meet the public's expectations of good and effective governance. Some notable examples include the failure to prevent the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) sluggish and ineffective response to Hurricane Katrina, controversies over the State Department's response to terrorist attacks in Benghazi, and the various crises facing the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). This course examines the politics of agency design, delegation, political oversight, and internal agency processes. We will discuss the structure and practices of the federal administrative structure and how federal agencies function. We will also discuss potential reforms and proposals to help government work efficiently and effectively.

This course has three main goals. First, students should gain in-depth knowledge of the structure of the federal executive branch, the federal executive personnel system, and the responsibilities of federal administration agencies. These responsibilities include rule creation, regulation, disaster response and prevention, education and occupational safety. Second, we will explore the concept of government failure. Specifically, what does it mean for a government to fail in its responsibilities? How does failure of government oversight differ from failure of government operation? Third, students will explore the tensions that permeate through the federal bureaucracy. Specifically, how does the struggle between the president and Congress affect the way in which bureaucracies carry out their responsibilities? What is red tape and why do we have it? How does internal bureaucratic contribute to efficient or problematic government performance.

Required Texts:

Cooper, Christopher, and Block, Robert. 2006. *Disaster: Hurricane Katrina and the Failure of Homeland Security*. New York: Times Books.

Lewis, David E. 2008. *The Politics of Presidential Appointments: Political Control and Bureaucratic Performance*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Wilson, James Q. 1989. *Bureaucracy*. New York: Basic Books

National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States. 2004. 9/11 Commission Report. New York: W.W. Norton

Grading and Writing Requirements:

This course is Writing-Intensive (WI). Because learning to write well is an on-going process, the faculty has committed to a WI Program that will assist students in learning to write well in multiple disciplines and throughout their time at Hamilton. To comply with Writing-Intensive Course guidelines the majority of student assessment and grading will come from writing assignments spread throughout the semester. I will return graded writing assignments in a timely manner as to allow students to incorporate feedback into their subsequent assignments. Students are required to visit the Writing Center for at least one of their writing assignments and are **strongly** encouraged to visit the Writing Center throughout the semester. A discussion of the course assignments appears after the Course Schedule.

Grading Breakdown:

Research Paper Project: 65%

 Research 2-Paragraph Proposal: 1%

 Research Prospectus: 14%

 Literature Review: 10%

 Analysis Section: 15%

 Final Draft: 25%

Participation: 25%

Bureaucracy News Minute: 5%

Peer Review Assignment: 5%

Classroom Discussion and Dialogue

While I will periodically lecture throughout the semester, maintaining an open and vigorous class discussion is essential to the success of this seminar. Students are expected to make frequent and informed contributions to classroom discussions and dialogue. Participation grades will be assigned on the basis of knowledge of the readings, before class preparation, in-class discussion, and activities the instructor may define. To come prepared for class you should have done the reading, be able to synthesize the main arguments or findings, and form an opinion about whether it is correct or incorrect. *Is it true? Why or why not? How do you know? How does it relate to other readings or materials from the class? Why is it important?* Although I prefer volunteers, the instructor will call on students to contribute to classroom discussion. I highly recommend that students read the *Washington Post* daily.

To ensure that students are keeping up with each reading, the instructor may administer “pop” quizzes or short in-class writing assignments. The assignments will count as part of the participation grade.

Participation Grade Scale

A Repeated excellent comments, demonstrated engagement with the literature

B Good, solid participation

C Some comments but shows lack of preparation

D Attends but does not participate

Attendance

Students are granted two free absences. **However, each additional unexcused absence will result in a 1/3 grade reduction of the overall course grade.** Students must bring some form of documentation in order for additional absences to be excused. Excused absences include doctor’s visit, religious observance, death in the family, etc. Tardiness will also negatively affect your overall course grade. **Two consecutive tardies will result in a 1/3 grade reduction of your overall course grade.**

Class Break

At approximately 2:15pm each class student, we will break for 15 minutes. Students are expected to return by 2:30pm (or within 15 minutes of the class break). Students not returning on time post-break will be counted as tardy.

Except for emergencies, students are expected to remain in class during class except during the break period.

Late Assignments

It is essential that students submit their assignments by the deadline established by the instructor. Late papers, exams, or assignments will be reduced by a 1/3 letter grade for every 12 period that they are late. **Assignments will not be accepted 3 days after the due date.**

Technology in the Classroom

Cell Phones: Please ensure that your cell phones are on silent before coming to class. Students are expected to refrain from texting and/or surfing the internet on their phones while in class. If students are caught using their cell phone in class they receive a warning. If a student is caught using their cell phone a second time in class **his/her overall participation grade will drop by one full letter grade.**

Laptops: I ask that students refrain from using laptops in class. Although I understand the importance of technology in daily life, I have found laptops to be very distracting to students during class. If there is a reason that you feel necessitates your use of a laptop during class, please speak with me as soon as possible so we can discuss your technological needs.

Honor Code

I expect all students to abide by the Hamilton College Honor Code. Violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Court. For detailed information on Hamilton's Honor Code visit this website: <http://www.hamilton.edu/student-handbook/studentconduct/honor-code>.

Student Accommodations

I request that any student with a documented disability needing academic adjustments or accommodations speak with me during the first two weeks of class. All discussions will remain confidential. Students with disabilities should also contact Allen Harrison in the Dean of Students Office (Elihu Root House; ext. 4021) who coordinates services for students with disabilities

The content of the syllabus is tentative and subject to change with notice

COURSE SCHEDULE

| Date | | Topic | Readings |
|-------------------|-------------------|--|---|
| Tuesday (Week 1) | 01/16/2018 | Introduction: What is Government Failure | Light, Paul C. 2014. "A Cascade of Failures: Why Government Fails, and How to Stop It." |
| Tuesday (Week 2) | 01/23/2018 | Understanding the Federal Executive Branch: Structure and Personnel | Lewis, David E. 2008. <i>The Politics of Presidential Appointments</i> . Ch. 1-2 Carpenter, Dan. 2005. The Evolution of the National Bureaucracy in the United States, pg. 41-66 (on Blackboard) Discussion of Research Project |
| WEEK 2 | 1/26/2018 | ASSIGNMENT DUE | RESEARCH PARAGRAPH PROPOSAL (by email by 11:59pm) |
| Tuesday (Week 3) | 01/30/2018 | Bureaucracy and Inefficiency: Mini-Case: Trump's EPA | Moe, Terry M. 1989. The Politics of Bureaucratic Structure, pg. 267-285 (on Blackboard) Wilson, James Q. 1989. <i>Bureaucracy</i> . Ch. 1-2, 19 EPA Articles: On Blackboard |
| Tuesday (Week 4) | 02/06/2018 | Bureaucratic Incoherence: Case Study: 9/11 | National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States. 2004. <i>9/11 Commission Report</i> . pp. 1-46; Chapter 3, Chapters 7-11. Documentary: On Native Soil |
| Tuesday (Week 5) | 02/13/2018 | Red Tape and Standard Operating Procedures Case Study: VA Crisis | Wilson, James Q. 1989. <i>Bureaucracy</i> . pg 114-122, pg 129-136, Ch. 17. VA Articles: On Blackboard Guest Speaker: Francis Coats (Director of Campus Safety) |
| WEEK 5 | 2/17/2018 | ASSIGNMENT DUE | RESEARCH PROSPECTUS (by email by 11:59pm) |
| Tuesday (Week 6) | 02/20/2018 | Agency Environment and Adaptation Case Study: Benghazi | Wilson, James. 1989. <i>Bureaucracy</i> . Pages 168-171, Ch. 10-12 Benghazi Report (on Blackboard) Benghazi News Articles: On Blackboard |
| Tuesday (Week 7) | 02/27/2018 | The President and Political Oversight of the Bureaucracy Case Study: DOJ Attorney Scandal | Lewis, David E. 2008. <i>The Politics of Presidential Appointments</i> . Ch 3-4. Wilson, James Q. 1989. <i>Bureaucracy</i> . Ch. 14 DOJ Articles: On Blackboard |
| Tuesday (Week 8) | 03/06/2018 | Congress and Political Oversight of the Bureaucracy Case Study: Congress and its agents | Wilson, James Q. 1989. <i>Bureaucracy</i> . Pages 122-129, Ch. 13. McCubbins, Mathew W. and Thomas Schwartz. 1984. "Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Political Patrols v. Fire Alarms" (on Blackboard) Congress News Articles: On Blackboard |
| WEEK 8 | 03/12/2018 | ASSIGNMENT DUE | LITERATURE REVIEW DRAFT (by email by 11:59pm) |
| Tuesday | 03/13/2018 | SPRING BREAK | |
| Tuesday | 03/20/2018 | SPRING BREAK | |
| Tuesday (Week 9) | 03/27/2018 | The Trump Transition and Bureaucracy Case Study: President Trump and the FBI | Burke, John P. 2001. "Lessons from Past Presidential Transitions." Trump Administration Transition and FBI News Articles: On Blackboard |
| Tuesday (Week 10) | 04/03/2018 | Emergency Response Case Study: Hurricane Katrina | <i>Disaster: Hurricane Katrina and the Failure of Homeland Security</i> . Documentary: The Storm Guest Speaker: Jennifer Ambrose (Director of Writing Center) |
| Tuesday (Week 11) | 04/10/2018 | Agency Drift and Collusion Case Study: Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill | Wilson, James. 1989. <i>Bureaucracy</i> . Ch. 3-6 "Deep Water: The Gulf Oil Disaster and the Future of Offshore Drilling." (on Blackboard) Guest Speaker: Catherine Beck (Assistant Professor of Geosciences) |
| WEEK 11 | 04/12/2018 | ASSIGNMENT DUE | ANALYSIS SECTION DRAFT (by email by 11:59pm) |
| Tuesday (Week 12) | 04/17/2018 | Political Conflict and Government Performance Case Study: The Fiscal Cliff | <i>Performance</i> Lewis, David E. 2008. <i>The Politics of Presidential Appointments: Political Control and Bureaucratic Performance</i> . Ch. 6-7 <i>Conflict</i> Lewis, David E., and Terry M. Moe. 2010. "Struggling Over Bureaucracy: The Levers of Control," (on Blackboard) Documentary: Cliffhanger |
| Tuesday (Week 13) | 04/24/2018 | The Way Forward: Government Reform | Light, Paul C. 2008. <i>A Government Ill Executed</i> . Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. (excerpts on Blackboard) "A New Civil Service Framework" (excerpts on Blackboard) |

| | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---|--|
| Tuesday (Week 14) | 05/01/2018 | Peer Review of Analysis Section & Course Review | |
| | 05/10/2018 | ASSIGNMENT DUE | Final Draft Due (by email by 11:59pm) |

Assignments

GOVERNMENT FAILURE RESEARCH PAPER PROJECT

Students will complete a 20 to 25 page research paper that examines one of the instances of government failure described by Paul Light in his article “A Cascade of Failures: Why Government Fails, and How to Stop It.” The broad question that each student will explore is “How do we understand why failure X occurred and what policies can prevent such occurrence in the future?” With their project, students will examine one of Light’s cases based upon 2 of the 5 contributors to failure (page 11). In addition to analyzing a specific instance of failure, students will provide policy recommendations to prevent or reduce the occurrence of future failures (similar to their specific case). For example, if I am interested in examining the Postal Service Financial crisis, I could explore how policies and resources contributed to the financial difficulties experienced by the USPS. In their paper, students should have a clear thesis that provides their proposed policy recommendations. For example, with the USPS example, my policy recommendation could stipulate changes to the way in which the USPS is funded. With their project, Students are expected to use existing facts, data, and evidence for this project. Students are also expected to draw from course materials, scholarly sources, and if necessary, journalistic sources. Below is in an example structure for the final paper.

I. An **INTRODUCTION**

- a. What is my case?
- b. Which contributors to failure am I exploring?
- c. How did these contributors contribute to the specific failure in this case?
- d. What are my policy recommendations for these specific contributors? (Thesis)
- e. Roadmap of my paper

II. A **LITERATURE REVIEW** that analyzes previous work pertinent to the research question.

- a. What do we already know about this topic?
- b. Themes and tensions in the literature?
- c. How will you add to existing literature?

III. An **ARGUMENT** (or theory) section where the author explains his or her thesis in detail.

- a. Here is an overview of the problem and my proposed policy recommendations (in response to my failure case).

IV. A. **RESEARCH DESIGN** section that explains how the author will conduct their analysis

- a. I am going to explore these components of my failure based upon my specific components. I will utilize these various data sources for my examination.

V. An **ANALYSIS/RECOMMENDATIONS** section where the author provides an in-depth examination of their case using 2 contributors specified by Light. Students must also provide policy recommendations in response to their analysis of their failure case.

VI. A **CONCLUSION** that reviews the aim of the project, summarizes the findings, and explains the implications of your work.

The Research Paper Project is separated into 5 separate stages.

1. Research Paragraph Proposal
Approximately two paragraph statement of proposed failure case and 2 contributors. If possible, an example policy recommendation.
2. Research Prospectus
3-5 page paper that explains your failure case, contributors, and proposed policy recommendations. The prospectus includes a brief discussion of existing literature, argument section, research design section, and conclusion.
3. Literature Review Draft
5-7 pages. A literature review is not an annotated bibliography. As a writer, your job is not only to summarize previous literature. Rather, writers should also identify themes, tensions within the existing literature, the current direction of existing literature, and explain how the existing literature connects to their research question. You should also discuss how your research will contribute to existing literature.
4. Analysis Draft
5-7 pages. Students will examine the failure cases with a particular focus on their two specified contributors to failure. Students will also develop policy recommendations in response to their analysis.
5. Final Research Paper

Writing Format

I prefer that students use Chicago Style or MLA citations. Students should also use **Times New Roman or Garamond** 12-point font. All writing assignments should be double-spaced with 1-inch margins.

Revisions

Students are allowed to revise the Research Prospectus **OR** the Analysis Section Draft. Students can only revise an essay once. Students are required to either meet with me or have a conference at the writing center before submitting a revised paper. **I will average the grades on the previous version and the revised version to calculate the final paper grade.** Although highly unlikely, it is possible for the revised average to be lower than the initial grade depending on the quality of the revised paper. The schedule for revisions is as follows:

-If a student wants to revise an essay, he or she must notify me within **48 hours** of receiving their grade.

-After revision notification, the student must have a writing conference with me or a tutor in the writing center within **seven days**.

-The student must submit their revised draft to me within **five days** of the writing conference. Students must include a statement that explains how they addressed my original comments and suggestions.

Bureaucracy News Minute

Once during the semester, each student will find a current news article related to the Executive Branch. Students will email me a link to the article, and a 2-paragraph summary of the article and how it relates (broadly) to topic/issue pertinent to our course. Students will present their current event article and summary to the class.

Peer Review Assignment

Students will read, review, and assess the analysis section of one of their peers. In addition to discussion their comments and feedback in class. Students will provide a review memo to their reviewee.