PUAD 700  
Public Administration Ethics  
Tuesday 7:20-10:00  
Innovation Hall 133

Dr. Priscilla M. Regan  
Schar School of Policy and Government  
Office: Research Hall 338  
pregan@gmu.edu  
703-993-1419

Office Hours: Tues: 6:00-7:00, Wed: 3:00-4:00 or  
by appointment

Course Description: This course is designed to help provide a framework for understanding why and under what types of circumstances you will encounter ethical issues and decisions in your career and how you might respond to them. As you will discover, if you have not already realized this, ethical choices and dilemmas can occur in every facet of public administration – budgeting and accounting, human resources, information collection and use, data interpretation and analysis, policy formulation and evaluation, etc. Moreover, public and non-profit administrators operate in environments where laws and regulations, professional standards, organizational cultures and routines, and personal values of oneself and colleagues all come into play. This course offers an opportunity to examine and understand how these differing values, perspectives, goals and purposes interact, as well as how you might incorporate this understanding into your daily worklife and your long-term career.

Class Sessions: This is a seminar course with each class session devoted to discussing the assigned readings and seriously considering the issues, concepts, and theoretical ideas raised in the readings. Even more so than in other areas of study, ethics does not provide only one “right” answer; indeed, this may be thought of as the “grayest” of the gray areas. Because of this, it is critical first that everyone respect the ideas of others and second that everyone strive to be systematic and clear in their reasoning. Class participation is essential and the course is organized so that all will have opportunities and responsibilities to participate. In each class session, both academic articles and case studies will be assigned so that we can connect the theories to the reality.

Four short (3-5 pages) analytical/reflective papers asking students to formulate and sharpen their thinking on an aspect of public administration and ethics will be required. These will be based on questions/topics that are addressed in the readings for the class date on which the papers are due. Students will also write a final paper (6-8 pages) reflecting more broadly on the insights and ideas gleaned from the readings and discussions this semester.

Course Requirements and Evaluation:
Reflective Papers on Readings 15% (each) – total 60%
Participation 15%
Final Reflective Paper 25%
**Academic Integrity:** Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work. In practice, this entails:

1. Quizzes, tests and examinations. No help may be given or received by students when taking quizzes, tests, or examinations, whatever the type or wherever taken, unless the professor specifically permits deviation from this standard.

2. Course Requirements: All work submitted to fulfill course requirements is to be solely the product of the individual(s) whose name(s) appears on it. Except with permission of the professor, no recourse is to be had to projects, papers, lab reports or any other written work previously prepared by another student, and except with permission of the professor no paper or work of any type submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of another course may be used a second time to satisfy a requirement of any other course. No assistance is to be obtained from commercial organizations, which sell or lease research help or written papers. With respect to all written work as appropriate, proper footnotes and attribution are required.

For further information on Academic Integrity at George Mason University, including the process for Honor Code violations see: [http://oai.gmu.edu/](http://oai.gmu.edu/)

**Students with Disabilities:** If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703.993.2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

**Enrollment Responsibilities:**
1. Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class.
2. Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Schedule of Classes: see: [http://registrar.gmu.edu/calendars/spring-2016/](http://registrar.gmu.edu/calendars/spring-2016/)
3. **Last Day to Add** is September 4
4. **Last Day to Drop** with no tuition penalty is September 9
5. **Web Withdrawal Period** with 100% tuition liability is September 10-30

**Course Materials:** There is one required book for this course, which is available in the Campus Bookstore as well as from various online bookstores.


All other readings will be available through the George Mason University library, on Blackboard, or online.
COURSE SCHEDULE

August 28 Introduction and Overview

We will begin by engaging the question of the state of American democracy, the context in which today’s public administration ethics is exercised. Please scan each of the below before class with attention to the following:
- identification of ethical issues
- examination of larger political context
- analysis of media coverage


Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die* – Discussion with authors and *New Guardian* op ed by authors:
  - [https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/commentisfree/2018/jan/21/this-is-how-democracies-die](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/commentisfree/2018/jan/21/this-is-how-democracies-die)

Additional Readings:
- Waldo’s Map: Ethical Obligations of a Public Servant (p. 18 in O’Leary)

Resources:
- House Committee on Ethics [https://ethics.house.gov/](https://ethics.house.gov/)

Sept. 4 Ethical Approaches – Historical Philosophical Traditions

- Relativism – No Single Standard, No “Should’s”
- Teleology/Utilitarianism – Promote the Greatest Happiness
  - JS Mill
- Deontology – Principles
  - Kant
  - Rawls
- Intuitionism – Moral Sense
  - G.E. Moore
- Virtue
  - Aristotle

Readings:
Assignment for Discussion: Read Book One of On Duties and pick out five quotes/passages that resonate as meaningful for you as you think about ethics and public administration

Sept. 11 Professional Codes

  http://www.aspanet.org/PUBLIC/ASPADocs/Membership/Ethics_Assessment_Guide.pdf

Other Readings:


First Reflective Paper
Due
Sept. 11th

Paper Topic – What are the three ethical principles or guidelines taken from philosophical writing and/or professional codes that you believe are most important – and why? Please rank them in order of their importance to you. Evaluate how helpful you believe each is likely to be in real-world situations – and why. (3-5 page paper)

Sept. 18 Ethics and Public Officials – Role of Scandals

Readings:
Nicholas Allen. 2010. “Keeping MPs Honest?,” Public Integrity 12(2): 105-123

Sept. 25 Public Administration Ethics – Conflicts of Interest, Financial Disclosure and Accountability

Readings:
Mary K. Feeney & Gordon Kingsley. 2008. “The Rebirth of Patronage: Have We Come Full Circle?,” Public Integrity, 10(2): 165-176

Oct. 2 Whistleblowing and Leaking

Readings:

O’Leary, The Ethics of Dissent: Managing Guerrilla Government, Chapters 2, 3, 4, 6 & Postlude

Second Reflective Paper
Due
October 2

Paper Topic Overview: Each student will evaluate one of the whistleblowing incident in Chapters 2, 3 or 4.

Oct. 9 NO CLASS – Columbus Day Shuffle

Oct. 16 Public Administrative Ethics and National Security

Readings:

Oct. 23  Everyday Workplace Ethical Scenarios – Situational Ethics: Corruption, Bribery, Free Cup of Coffee, Undue Pressure??

Readings:
John M. Strate, Tae Hwa Jung & James Leidlein. 2009. “Sexual Harassment!, Public Integrity 12:1, 61-76
Alex Tuckness. 2010. "Everybody Does It," Public Integrity 12:3, 261-272

Third Reflective Paper
Due
October 23

Paper Topic Overview: Students will select one among five scenarios of everyday ethical situations and respond.

Oct. 30  Ethics in Nonprofit Organizations – Similarities and Differences

Readings:

Nov. 6  Global Perspectives on Public Administration Ethics

Readings:

Nov. 13  
**Public Policy – Ethical Decisions and Decisionmaking**

**Readings:**

**Fourth Reflective Paper**
**Due**
November 13

**Paper Topic Overview:** Students will respond to one of the four public policy cases.

Nov. 20  
**Big Data – Organizational Use of Information It Can’t Always Understand**

**Readings:**
Nov. 27  The Ethics of “Nudging”


The following four articles are found in *Georgetown Journal of Law and Public Policy*, vol 14 Special Issue 2016


Dec. 4  Revisiting First Principles – How to Construct for 21st Century PA – Restoring Trust in Government

**Readings:**


**Final Reflective Paper**

**Due**

Dec. 4th

**Paper Topic Overview:** Students will have a chance to reflect on what for them are the major “takeaways” regarding issues, principles, and/or future of public administration ethics.