**GOVT 490 Section 001: Government Organizations, Management and Change**

**Writing-intensive synthesis course**

*Mondays: 7:20 to 10:00 PM*

*George Mason University, Robinson Hall B224, Fairfax Campus*

**Instructor: Dr. Mark Addleson**

Schar School of Policy and Government
George Mason University, 3351 North Fairfax Drive, Arlington, VA 22201
Email: maddleso@gmu.edu

**Office hours:** Before class on Mondays (4:30 to 6:00) in Fairfax, or by appointment via email. NOTE: As I don’t have an office on the Fairfax campus, even if you wish to see me during office hours you must email me at least a day ahead of time.

**The purpose of this synthesis course**

A synthesis course encourages students to integrate the knowledge, skills and values. Synthesis courses strive to expand students' ability to master new content, think critically, and develop life-long learning skills across the disciplines. A general education synthesis course must address outcomes 1 and 2, and at least one outcome under 3.

Upon completing a synthesis course, students will be able to:
1. Communicate effectively in both oral and written forms, applying appropriate rhetorical standards (e.g., audience adaptation, language, argument, organization, evidence, etc.)
2. Connect issues in a given field to wider intellectual, community or societal concerns using perspectives from two or more disciplines
3. Apply critical thinking skills to:
   a. Evaluate the quality, credibility and limitations of an argument or a solution using appropriate evidence or resources, OR,
   b. Judge the quality or value of an idea, work, or principle based on appropriate analytics and standards.
Objectives

The course is about organizations and the management/administration of organizations, especially, but not exclusively, government organizations. In addition to realizing the GMU Synthesis Course objectives, in this course, through reading, writing, class discussion, and work in groups, students are expected to have a critical appreciation of government organizations in the context of changes taking place in society.

This appreciation includes:

- An understanding of paradigms, or worldviews, and how these influence both the way people ‘see’ the world and their actions.
- Insight into the foundations and evolution of ideas and practices about management and administration.
- Understanding organizations and government organizations in particular: what these are, how they function and why they function as they do, including the kinds of problems that people in government organizations deal with.
- Understanding the socialness of organizational life, including how values, attitudes and beliefs shape organizations and management practices.
- Why and how politics plays a central role in the functioning of government organizations and why this is a particular problem today.
- Understanding the kinds of changes taking place in organizations today and factors influencing these changes, including changes in the nature of the work people do.
- Appreciating the kinds of changes (new practices) needed to overcome dysfunctions of government organizations and the magnitude of the challenges in trying to address these.

Course Description:

If you are interested in why organizations are what they are, why we manage organizations as we do, and how thinking and practices are changing, then this is the course for you. In the course you will explore where and how the principles and practices of management emerged and how these were applied to organizing governments, which were assuming new and expanded responsibilities at the end of the 19th Century. You will also examine how views about organizations and management (in general) are changing today – a century later – why they are changing (what is behind these changes) and what the changes signify for government organizations.

We will make use of some real-world examples of problems in government organizations, such as the creation of Department of Homeland Security after the destruction of the World Trade Center in 2001, the Veterans Affairs Administration, and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) where a major cybersecurity intrusion occurred. You will complete a group project on NASA and organizational and management issues behind the explosion of the Challenger space shuttle in January 1986.

Focusing on the ‘design’ and running of government organizations, the course will give you a
deeper understanding of what goes in government organizations. You will see how these organizations function, why they function as they do, and why new structures and practices are needed in government today.

The course includes themes from a variety of disciplines such as sociology, economics, information technology, management and philosophy. We make use of video as well as written material.

An outline of the class content for each week as well as course material will be available on the class Blackboard site. Students registered for the course will be sent the link to the Blackboard site before the class begins in January.

**Course assignments and requirements**

There are no exams. Writing assignments, presentations, and class discussions will test your knowledge of the course materials. Students will be graded on the following.

*Longer written assignments should be submitted as Word documents, in one and half spacing, and sent to me as email attachments.*

1) **In-class contributions (10%)**

Students are expected to come to class having done the required reading and or additional preparation for the week. I will call on students to give short outlines/summaries of what they have read or prepared. This and your other contribution to class discussions will make up 10% of your grade for the class. Your class contribution includes coming to class on time.

2) **Postings to the class blog “What is happening in organizations” (15%)**

For every third week of class, February 1 and 22 and March 21, you will be expected to post a short contribution of approximately 300 words to the class blog in Blackboard. Your task is to comment on an item about government organizations you have found on the web, in a blog, on a newspaper’s website, or some other, similar, online publication. You should include the original piece, or a link to it, along with your posting. The assignment is pass/fail.

3) **A written case analysis - group project (25%)**

For the week of March 14, you will submit a written analysis of the case about the organizational issues surrounding the explosion that destroyed the ‘Challenger’ space shuttle on January 28, 1986. The main content for this group project is contained in a video by Mark Maier titled ‘A Major Malfunction...’ of just over two hours in length. Additional material will be found in the library and on the web. I will distribute the DVD to each group in class.

3) **Oral presentations (15%)**
Each group will also do an oral presentation on their analysis of the *Challenger* case in class during the week of March 14. You will be graded on your presentation and, additionally on one short presentation, in class, on reading material for the week. At the beginning of the semester I will assign a specific reading to each student to present on a particular date.

5) Research paper, due April 27 (35%)

You will write an essay of between 2000 and 2500 words on a topic of your choice, from a list of topics on issues related to organizations and management that I will post on the class Blackboard site.

**Course readings**


Additional readings and supplementary material will be available on the class Blackboard site.

**Calendar:**
(Nota: Classes are Mondays 7:20 to 10:00 PM)

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<td>Week 2 1/30</td>
<td>What was happening at the end of the 19th Century? The evolution of ‘big government’</td>
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<td>Week 3 2/6</td>
<td>Part 1 - Theories of management and organizations: Modernist paradigm</td>
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<td><strong>SPRING BREAK</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Reinventing management</strong></td>
<td>Week 10 3/27</td>
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<td>Week 12 4/10</td>
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<td>Week 13 4/17</td>
<td>Reinventing management. What about government</td>
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Grading

Your written work will be graded according to the following criteria.

NOTE: All written work must be grammatical and well structured. The structure includes, but is not limited to: a coherent set of arguments with an introduction and conclusion; appropriate formatting, with paragraphs, sections and section headings as appropriate; full citations using an accepted style of referencing, such as Chicago, Harvard, APA, or MLA.

A = shows a superior understanding of the relevant material and, in addition, is able to identify and explicate deeper implications of the issues and problems and, if appropriate, make insightful connections between issues or problems.

B = shows a good understanding, while one of the additional considerations is lacking

C = shows only basic understanding, while both the additional considerations are lacking.

D = shows a poor understanding of the issues and problems.

F = none of the above

Your research paper will also be graded on the quality and depth of the research and the use of proper documentation.

Schar School’s Policy on Plagiarism

The profession of scholarship and the intellectual life of a university are built on a foundation of trust. Thus any act of plagiarism strikes at the foundation of the university, including the School of Policy, Government and International Affairs. It constitutes a serious breach of professional ethics.

Plagiarism is the use of another’s words or ideas presented as one’s own. It includes, among other things, the use of specific words, ideas, or frameworks that are the product of another’s work. Honesty and thoroughness in citing sources is essential to professional accountability and personal responsibility. Appropriate citation is necessary so that arguments, evidence, and claims can be critically examined.

Plagiarism is wrong because of the injustice it does to the person whose ideas are stolen. But it is also wrong because it constitutes lying to one’s professional colleagues. From a prudential perspective, it is shortsighted and self-defeating, and it can ruin a professional career.

The faculty of the School of Policy, Government and International Affairs takes plagiarism seriously and has adopted a zero tolerance policy. Any plagiarized assignment will receive an automatic grade of “F.” This may lead to failure for the course, resulting in dismissal from the University. This dismissal will be noted on the student’s transcript. For foreign students who are
on a university-sponsored visa (eg. F-1, J-1 or J-2), dismissal also results in the revocation of their visa.

To help enforce the Schar School’s policy on plagiarism, all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit student’s work without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. The Schar School’s policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace it or substitute for it. http://www.gmu.edu/resources/facstaff/handbook/

Mark Rozell, Dean, Schar School of Policy and Government

Other Important Information:

Deadlines are firm: If you miss a deadline, your grade for an assignment will be reduced unless you are able to provide a compelling reason, with proof, of why you did so. Difficulties with technology including computers and printers generally do not constitute a compelling reason.

Class attendance is required. Except for emergencies, if you cannot attend for some reason, you must email me at least 24 hours before the class, giving your reasons and requesting permission for your absence.

Honor Code. GMU is an Honor Code university. The object of the honor code is:
‘to promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set forth this honor code: Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.’

Please see http://tinyurl.com/onbbw7t for a description of the code and the honor committee process.

Academic integrity is important in this and any class. Amongst other things it means you are responsible for completing any work assigned to you and when you make use of someone else’s work you always acknowledge this, in the accepted way. Academic integrity also means being open to a range of ideas and perspectives. Discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the expectation that everyone is polite, civil and is treated respectfully.

Mason email accounts
Students must use their MasonLive email account to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See http://masonlive.gmu.edu for more information.
Use of technology in the classroom

Laptops and tablets are permitted only if properly used, which means for taking notes and, if asked to do so, looking up information online. Phones must be turned off and out of sight, which means no texting during class.

Office of Disability Services
If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474; http://ods.gmu.edu. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS.

University Policies
The University Catalog, http://catalog.gmu.edu is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university academic affairs. Other policies are available at http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu. All members of the university community are responsible for knowing and following established policies.

Other Useful Campus Resources
Writing Center: A114 Robinson Hall; (703) 993-1200; http://writingcenter.gmu.edu
University Libraries: “Ask a Librarian” http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html
Counseling And Psychological Services (Caps): (703) 993-2380; http://caps.gmu.edu
Other student support services can be found at: http://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/student-support-resources-on-campus