Professor James K. Conant  
Office: 631 Founders Hall, Arlington  
Office Hours: Mon. & Wed. 3:00 – 4:00 PM, and 7:15 – 7:45, or by appointment  
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**Prerequisite:** Completion of at least six graduate courses in the GMU MPA program is required for enrollment. Those six classes typically include PUAD 502, 511, 520 and 540.

**Purpose and Overview of the Course:** In this course, we will use a variety of ethical lenses to look at politics, policy, and management—the principal knowledge areas of the MPA program. Thus, you will have an opportunity to review material that you covered in your required and elective courses in the MPA program, and you will have an opportunity to examine politics, policy, and administration in new ways.

The study of ethics deals with the fundamental issues of right and wrong, good and bad, and moral duty or obligation. In this course, we will examine the ethical values of individuals, groups (including professionals), organizations, and societies. We will begin the semester with an “ethical values inventory.” Specifically, you will be asked to think through and define your own core ethical values, the sources of those values, situations in which two or more of those values might (or have) come into conflict, and how you would decide (or did decide) which of those values is the most important.

Additionally, we will briefly examine the ancient roots of the study of ethics in Western civilization, including philosophical and religious texts. In both sources, we can find very clear statements about what constitutes ethical behavior for individuals and groups, as well as statements about what constitutes “justice” in society. We will look at the extent to which these ancient works and religious “commandments” are still followed by individuals and groups, as well as the extent to which they serve as useful guideposts for contemporary American society.

Our study of ethics will also include an examination the ways in which ethical values were central to the development of Western political theory. Then we will examine the ways in which western political theory served as a basis for the founding of the American Republic. In addition, we will look carefully at the ethical values contained in the founding documents of the American Republic, including competing conceptions of justice. We will also look the ways in which those competing conceptions of justice reflected fundamental cleavages in American society that ultimately led to the Civil War.
A number of “classics” in the relatively new literature focused on administrative ethics will also be included in the materials covered in this course. Specifically, we will examine some of the ethical dilemmas or challenges that middle level and senior level public administrators face, and we will look at frameworks that might serve as useful tools for resolving the types of dilemmas these managers may have to confront.

The social, economic, and political context in which public administrators work will also be included in our study. For example, the ethical values that elected officials espouse, the way in which they behave, and the decisions they make set the value structure for our governmental system and establish priorities and constraints for public administrators. Likewise, the values, decisions, and behavior of private sector executives and organizations, the media, and nonprofit executives and organizations, shape the broader societal context in which public administrators work.

In addition to the developing knowledge of the topics mentioned above, enhancement of your analytic skills, writing skills, verbal skills, group skills, and presentation skills is a key objective of this course. Employers of our graduates often identify these skills as key workplace skills. Since most of you are taking this class near the end of your MPA program, our objective is provide ample opportunities for you to demonstrate the strengths you have developed in each of these skill areas.

**Course Organization, Pedagogy, and Outcomes:** This course is divided into 14 class sessions of two hours and forty minutes. We will try to follow the calendar outlined in the syllabus as closely as possible, but, like any administrative plan, adjustments may be required by unanticipated events or circumstances.

Required readings and recommended readings are listed on the syllabus for each class session. I will provide an introduction to and an overview of each topic, either at the beginning or end class. The majority of class time, however, will be used to discuss the topics and required readings listed on the syllabus.

Class discussion will be focused on the answers that class members develop to the key questions for each week. Class discussion will include paper presentations. Class members will make a 15 minute presentation on one of the papers developed during the semester. Authors of independent research papers (Option #3) will have up to 20 minutes for their presentation. The paper presentation will be part of the class discussion grade.

At the end of this course, you should be familiar with what some ancient and modern writers have considered core ethical values, and you will have had an opportunity to think through which of those core values you believe are most important. You will also be familiar with frameworks you can use to make decisions when you face an ethical dilemma in the work place. Additionally, you will be more skillful at determining the extent to which ethical considerations, or value trade-offs, seem to guide or be a part of
individual, group, organizational, societal, and governmental decision making, and you will be more aware of both the benefits and costs that can be associated with ethical decision-making and ethical behavior. Along with these knowledge outcomes, your skill set (writing, verbal, group, and presentation skills) should be stronger at the end of the course than they were at the beginning, and your network among other MPA students should be larger.

**Course Requirements and Grades:** The work for this class consists of doing the required readings for each week, being prepared to discuss those readings in class, and, for most members of the class, writing two papers. Some of you may decide you want to write an independent research paper, and I encourage you to consider this option. In order to pursue option #2 or #3, you must submit a research paper proposal by the due dates listed below and have my approval to proceed.

Additional information about paper requirements and formatting requirements is provided in a separate document.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paper #1</th>
<th>Paper #2</th>
<th>Class Disc.</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Option #1</strong></td>
<td><strong>30%</strong>: 7-10 page paper for any week.</td>
<td><strong>45%</strong>: 12-15 page paper for any week.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Option #2</strong></td>
<td><strong>30%</strong>: 7-10 page paper for any week between class #2 and class #7.</td>
<td><strong>45%</strong>: 12-15 page research paper. Proposal is due class #6 and must be approved by the instructor. Paper and presentation are due class #14.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Option #3</strong></td>
<td><strong>20%</strong>: Research Paper Proposal** is due by class #4, and must be approved by the instructor.</td>
<td><strong>55%</strong>: 20-25 page research paper due class #14. A summary of the paper will be presented during that class.</td>
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**Additional directions for research paper proposals are provided in a separate document.**

**Course Grading Scale:**
Course grades will be based on the following scale:
A+ = 100-98; A = 97-92; A- = 91-90; B+ = 89-88; B = 87-82; B- = 81-80; C+ = 79-78; C = 77-72; C- = 71-70; F = < 70.
Due Date for Papers: Papers are due at the beginning of the class session for which they are written. For example, a paper written on the topics listed under class #5 on the syllabus is due at the beginning of class #5. All written assignments must be submitted to me in paper form and electronically as a Word document attached to an email. (Smith.Paper 1) *Once a paper is submitted, it cannot be withdrawn.*

Late Papers: A one-grade penalty will be applied for a paper that is one to three days late; a two-grade penalty will be applied for four to seven days.

Incompletes: Requests for incompletes will only be granted in accordance with university policy. A request for an incomplete must be submitted in writing.

Class Participation, Attendance and Ethic: Participation in the discussion of required readings is an important part of your contribution to the class, and it is a key component of your class discussion grade. If you are not in class, you cannot contribute. Being on time to class, listening carefully to what your classmates have to say, and responding to your classmates in a courteous and professional manner are also part of the class discussion grade. *Finally, I respectfully request that you do not use electronic devices during class, unless you are doing so exclusively for class purposes such as accessing an electronic version of a required text.* We will have two short breaks during each class session so you can check and respond to texts, emails, and voice mail.

Honor Code: George Mason University has an Honor Code, which requires all members of this community to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing are all prohibited. All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee. *See [honorcode.gmu](http://honorcode.gmu)* for more detailed information. The core presumption of the Code is that all written work is your own work. Proper citation of material taken from other published work is required.

Disability: If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Resources at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

Enrollment Status: All students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class. Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the *Schedule of Classes*. In order to withdraw from this class after the date specified in the *Schedule of Classes*, you will need the approval of the dean, and such approval is only given for nonacademic reasons.
The following required readings are available for purchase at the GMU Bookstore (Fairfax Campus):

2. Bruce, Willa, *Classics of Administrative Ethics*
4. Lakoff, George, *don’t think of an elephant*
5. Plato, *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito*
7. Sophocles, *The Three Theban Plays*
8. Goodwin, Doris Kearns, *Team of Rivals* *
   *This book is available for purchase from the GMU bookstore and other sources. In addition, the book is available in print form and audio form at the Fairfax County Public Library. A copy of the book is also available on 2-hour reserve at the GMU Arlington Campus Library in Founders Hall.*

Additional Required Reading:
Reader (This packet is available in Blackboard under the “Course Content” heading.)

Additional Book Recommended for Purchase:
“the strong do what they have the power to do and the weak suffer what they must.”
Thucydides, “The Melian Dialogue,” The History of the Peloponnesian War, 401 B.C

“Religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, school and the means of education shall forever be encouraged.”
Northwest Ordinance; July 13, 1787, Sec. 14, Art. 3

I. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1. Ethics and Ethical Values in Private and Public Life (August 29)

   Required Reading:
   Ethical Values Inventory (available on Blackboard under the “Course Content” tab and as class handout)
   Elazar, Table 14: Characteristics of the Three Political Cultures, (Reader, p. 7.)
   U.S. Government Table of Organization, (Reader, p. 1)
   Conant and Critchfield, Executive Branch Independent Establishments and Government Corporations, (Reader, p. 2)
   Conant, Table 20: Key Skills Needed by Managers at Each Level, (Reader, p. 3)
   Definitions for PUAD 700, assembled by James K. Conant, (Reader, p. 4)
   Definitions of Academic Activities, assembled by James K. Conant, (Reader, p. 5)
   Definitions of Key Terms: Model, Theory, Dogma, and Ideology, assembled by James K. Conant, (Reader, p. 6)
   National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, (Reader, pp. 8 – 11.)

   Recommended Reading:
   Elazar, Daniel, “The States and the Political Setting,” American Federalism: A View From the States, Chapter 4. (Blackboard, e-Reserve)
   James Q. Wilson, The Moral Sense
   Sissela Bok, Common Values

II. FOUNDATIONS: POLITICAL SYSTEMS, MORAL DUTY, AND JUSTICE

2. The Ancient Greeks, Western Religious Traditions, and Political Philosophy (September 5)

   Required Reading:
   Conant (Summary), “Legacies of the Greek Philosophers,” original source is Sabine and Thorson, (Reader, pp. 12 - 13)
   "Greece and the Theater," in Fagles ed., Sophocles, The Three Theban Plays
   "Map of Ancient Greece,” (Reader, p. 14)
   Sophocles, Antigone, in Fagles ed., Sophocles, Three Theban Plays
Plato, *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito*


**Recommended Reading:**


Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*


Machiavelli, *The Prince*

Machiavelli, *Discourses*


Gortner, *Ethics for Public Managers*, Chapter 1

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### III. POLARIZED POLITICS

#### 3. The American Revolution, the Articles of Confederation, the Northwest Ordinances and the U.S. Constitution

(September 12)

**Required Reading:**


The Northwest Ordinances of 1787, (Reader, pp. 17-19)


**Recommended Reading:**

*The Federalist Papers*, ed. Rossiter, esp. 1, 15, 18, 21, 23, 38, 39, 45, 51

*The Anti-Federalist Papers and the Constitutional Convention Debates*, ed. Ketcham

#### 4. The American Civil War

(September 19)

**Required Reading:**

Lincoln, *The Gettysburg Address*, (Reader, p. 20)

Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals* (especially Part I)

**Recommended Reading:**

Lincoln (Spielberg-Movie)

*The Federalist Papers*, ed. Rossiter

Shelby Foote, *The Civil War: A Narrative, Volume I, From Sumter to Perryville*

Ken Burns, The Civil War, PBS video

Bruce Catton, *The Coming Fury*
James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: Volume I*

**IV. DEMOCRACY, POLITICAL CULTURE, AND THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND POLITICAL CONTEXT OF AMERICAN GOVERNMENT**

5. **American Political Culture and the Key Characteristics and Institutional Requirements of Democracy**  
   (September 26)

**Required Reading:**  
Elazar, “American Federalism: A View From the States, Chapter 4 (Blackboard, e-Reserve)  
U.S. Constitution, Article 1 Section 4. And amendments 13, 14, 15, 19, 24, 26, Federalist Papers, Rossiter, ed.  
Rutenburg, A dream Undone: Inside the 50 year campaign to roll back the writing votes act. The New York Times Magazine July 29, 2015  

**Recommended Reading:**  
Shelby County v. Holder, 2013  
Dahl, *Polyarchy* (entire)  
Moyers, “Barbara Tuchman, Historian,” *A World of Ideas*  
The *Federalist Papers*, ed. Rossiter  
Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory*  
Moyers, Interviews with Robert Bellah & Henry S. Commager, *A World of Ideas*

   (October 3)

**Required Reading:**  
U.S. Census Bureau, “Share of Aggregate Income (1947-2010),” (Reader, p. 21)  
U.S. Income Tax Table, (Reader)
Recommended Reading:
Pope Francis’ Encyclical on the Environment:
   http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html
Schattschneider, *The Semi-Sovereign People*
Sumner, *Social Darwinism*
Moyers, “James MacGregor Burns, Historian,” *A World of Ideas*
Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*
Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*
Sunstein, *The Second Bill of Rights: FDR’s Unfinished Revolution*
Gawthrop, *Public Service and Democracy*

V. DUTIES OF EMPLOYEES AND MANAGERS

7. Ethics and Ethics Codes
   (October 10)

Required Readings:
U.S. Office of Government Ethics, Organizational Chart and Mission and Responsibilities
Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch, 5 C.F.R. Part 2635 As Amended at 76 FR 38547 (July 1, 2011)

**If you are writing about your own organization’s ethics code, use that code, rather than the U.S. Government’s, as the focal point for your paper.

Recommended Reading:
American Society for Public Administration: Code of Ethics
Bowman,” Whistle Blowing in The Public Service,” Classics., Bruce, ed.
Richard Leiby, “John Sopko is fighting corruption in Afghanistan, and making noise while he is at it,” Washington Post, May 26, 2014

U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, Blowing the Whistle: Barriers to Federal Employees Making Disclosures, Nov. 2011


Rufus Miles, “Miles Law,” Public Administration Review

Mosher, Democracy and the Public Service

Roberta Ann Johnson, Whistleblowing: When it Works and Why

C. Fred Alford, Whistleblowers: Broken Lives and Organizational Power


8. Middle Managers and Competing Obligations
   (October 17)

Required Readings:
Gortner, Ethics for Public Managers

Recommended Reading:
Bruce, “Solving Ethical Dilemmas, p. 93-96, in Bruce, ed., Classics of Administrative Ethics


VI. DUTIES OF SENIOR MANAGERS, POLITICAL APPOINTEES, AND ELECTED OFFICIALS

9. Senior Managers, Political Appointees and Competing Obligations
   (Oct. 24)

Required Reading:


Recommended Reading:
Elliot Richardson, Reflections of a Radical Moderate

Frederickson and Hart, “The Public Service and the Patriotism of Benevolence,”
*Classics...*, Bruce, ed.

10. Senior Managers, Political Appointees and Competing Obligations
   (October 31)

**Required Reading:**
Ricucci, “William Black Tackles the Savings and Loan Debacle”, *Unsung Heroes: Federal Executrats Making a Difference*
Definitions of Key Terms (Lie, Deceive, Fraud, Predator, and Predatory), assembled by James K. Conant, (Reader)

**Recommended Reading:**
Bailey, “Ethics and the Public Service,” in *Classics....Bruce, ed.*
William K. Black, *The Best Way to Rob a Bank is to Own One: How Corporate Executives and Politicians Looted the S & L Industry*
Wachs, “Ethical Dilemmas in Forecasting Public Policy,” in *Classics, Bruce ed.*

**Readings on the collapse of the banking system and the 2008-2009 Recession:**
“Breaking the Bank,” PBS Frontline Video
“Inside the Meltdown,” PBS Frontline Video
Wilburn, “Types and Levels of Public Morality,” *Classics of Administrative Ethics,* Bruce, ed.
The Madoff Affair, PBS Frontline Video
Steven Pearlstein:
John Cassidy, *How Markets Fail: The Logic of Economic Calamities*
Satajit Das, *Extreme Money: Masters of the Universe and the Cult of Risk*
Simon Johnson, *13 Bankers*
Paul Krugman, *The Return of Depression Economics and the Crisis of 2008*
Yves Smith, *ECONned: How Unenlightened Self Interest Undermined Democracy and Corrupted Capitalism*
11. Elected Officials: The Consequences of Lies and Lying
   (November 7)

   Required Reading:
   Bok, Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life
   Definitions of Key Terms (Lie, Deceive, Fraud, Predator, and Predatory), assembled
   by James K. Conant, (Reader)

   Recommended Reading:
   Pfiffner, “Did President Bush Mislead the Country in His Arguments for War with
   Iraq?” Presidential Studies Quarterly, (March) 2004
   Machiavelli, The Prince
   Neustadt, Presidential Power

VII. POLARIZED POLITICS, COMPETING CONCEPTIONS OF JUSTICE, AND THE FUTURE OF
    AMERICAN POLITICS, POLICY, AND ADMINISTRATION

12. Language, Ethical Values, and Political Parties
    (November 14)

   Required Reading:
   Lakoff, don’t think of an elephant: know your values and frame the debate
   PEW Research Center- “Political Polarization in the American Public”
   http://www.people-press.org/2014/06/12/political-polarization-in-the-
   american-public/

   Recommended Reading:
   Ian Urbina, Manny Fernandez, and John Schwartz, “After Plant Explosion, Texas
   Conant, Introduction and Chapter 1, Wisconsin Politics and Government
   Bok, Common Values
   Kohut and Stokes, America Against the World
   Lakoff, Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think
   Edelman, Politics as Symbolic Action
   Edelman, The Symbolic Uses of Politics

13. The Laziness Dogma: Inequality, Tax Policy, and Tax Expenditure Policy
    (November 28)

   Required Reading:
Paul Krugman, “The Laziness Dogma,”

Phillip Rucker, “Romney’s ‘47 percent’ comments aren’t going away,” The Washington Post
http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/decision2012/romneys-47-percent-comments-arent-going-away/2012/10/01/17604654-0be5-11e2-a310-2363842b7057_story.html

https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/income-inequality/data/data-tables.html


14. Expenditure Policy: Inequality, Medicaid, and Medicare
(December 5)

Required Reading:

Paul Krugman, “Zombies Against Medicare,”


Recommended Reading:
Lee, Johnson and Joyce, Public Budgeting Systems, Chapter 4, “Budgeting for Revenues: Income taxes, payroll taxes, and property taxes.”
Mann and Ornstein, It’s Even Worse Than It Looks: How The American Constitutional System Collides with the New Politics of Extremism
Steven Pearlstein, “The Politics of Polarization: A Modern Tragedy of the Commons”
Garrett Hardin, “Tragedy of the Commons”
Medicaid expansion is right for Virginia,
https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/medicaid-expansion-is-right-for-virginia/2014/01/18/6ee58680-7ebe-11e3-9556-4a4bf7bcdb84_story.html