



**SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT  
SCHOOL OF HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY, POLITICAL SCIENCE AND  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**POWER AND BUREAUCRACY - PUBL 206 / POLS 238**

**2005 COURSE OUTLINE (First Trimester Paper – 22 points)**

<b>Course Organiser:</b>	Associate Professor Bob Gregory	<b>Administrator:</b>	Francine McGee
<b>Room:</b>	RH 804, Rutherford House	<b>Room:</b>	RH 821, Rutherford House
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<b>Teaching Fellow:</b>	Ann Walker		
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<b>Lecture Timetable:</b>	Mon, Wed, Thur 9.00 – 9.50 HM LT003		
<b>Tutorials:</b>	Mon, 10-10.50am, MY 403 Wed, 10-10.50am, CO 340 Thurs, 10-10.50am, CO 245		

**TUTORIAL ALLOCATION PROCEDURE**

Tutorial groups will be arranged in the first week of the trimester. Tutorial membership will be posted on the Murphy 2<sup>nd</sup> floor Public Policy noticeboard. Changes can be made only in consultation with the Course Organiser.

**AIM**

The paper aims to develop students' critical appreciation of the organisation context of modern governmental management and administration, with particular reference to the exercise of public power by three (broadly defined) groups of officials – bureaucrats, technocrats, and professionals. A principal focus will be the political and moral dimensions of administrative action, and the dehumanising impact of the organisational context on the ways officials think and act.

## OBJECTIVES

Students who pass the paper should be able to:

- a) understand the central ideas in Max Weber's concept of 'rationalization' as it related to the historical development of Western civilisation; and important differences between Weber and Karl Marx in their interpretation of modern industrial society;
- b) identify the central features of modern bureaucratic organisation, and the sources of bureaucratic organisation, and the sources of bureaucratic power;
- c) contrast traditional bureaucratic forms with contemporary approaches to organising governance for the delivery of public goods and services;
- d) identify and understand important commonalities and differences among concepts of bureaucracy, technocracy, and professionalism in modern governmental systems;
- e) raise challenging questions about the foundations of bureaucratic and professional knowledge and power;
- f) critically examine various approaches to 'overcoming bureaucracy' and 'humanizing' large governmental agencies;
- g) understand the principal dynamics of 'bureaucratic politics';
- h) compare and contrast the different approaches adopted by public choice theory and 'traditional public administration' in interpreting the behaviour of public officials;
- i) distinguish between the ideas of accountability, on the one hand, and responsibility, on the other; and
- j) think reflectively about bureaucracy's capacity to facilitate morally outrageous acts carried out by 'ordinary' people.

## COURSE CONTENT

The paper will begin by throwing students into the deep end. They will confront some reading on the dehumanising dimensions of bureaucracy, and will be invited to think about its validity, with some reference to their own personal experiences.

The early lectures will outline the nature of bureaucratic 'psychopathology' and will discuss the emergence of the modern bureaucratic state, with particular reference to Max Weber's (1864 – 1920) analysis of the historical process of 'rationalisation', which embodies norms and values that are now taken-for-granted in modern society. Reference will also be made to the differences and similarities between Max Weber's interpretation of modern industrial capitalism and that provided by Karl Marx.

Attention will then be focused on the modern bureaucratic organisational form, and its central defining characteristics. Particular attention will be given to the central paradox of bureaucracy – well elaborated by

Ralph Hummel's course textbook – that between *control* and *purpose*, commonly (and misleadingly) referred to as 'goal displacement', whereby means tend to become ends in themselves.

James Q. Wilson's typology of public bureaucracies – production, procedural, craft, and coping organisations – is then used to provide insights into different types of public organisation; and discussion moves to contemporary 'non-bureaucratic' ways of organising the delivery of governmental goods and services, with reference to some aspects of New Zealand's state sector reforms.

From 'structural' dimensions of bureaucratic and technocratic power, the paper will move to an interpretation of organisational authority as a function of language, beliefs, and symbols; and the ways in which 'official realities' are socially/politically – constructed, rather than being objective, concrete, and 'out there'. The concept of reification will be an important aspect of this discussion.

Professionalism, being the search for power, status, and influence based on a claim to specialised theoretical knowledge, will then be scrutinised from a critical perspective. Particular attention will be given to the language, theories, and beliefs of the so-called 'helping' professions, including questions raised by the radical critique of institutional psychiatry, and to problems of professional and organisation learning.

The focus then returns to the insights of James Q. Wilson, and the importance of understanding the culture of public organisations. The bureaucratic politics of the search for autonomy, and the definition of mission, are two central ideas that explain organisational behaviour – for example, the reorganisational history culminating (thus far) in the establishment in 2001 of the Ministry of Social Development. The Wilsonian interpretation of bureaucratic behaviour is compared to that adopted by public choice theorists. Some experiences relating to '11 September 2001' are illustrative.

Attention shifts from the 'upper; reaches of organisational power to the 'micro' encounters at the 'street-level'. A central proposition is that public policy outcomes are shaped at least as much by the discretion of officials at the organisational 'street-level' as by the grand intentions of policymakers at the political level.

The paper may also take a critical view of the theory of 'representative bureaucracy', especially the claim that making a public organisation more socially representative, in terms of the ethnic minorities and gender, will necessarily render it more 'responsive'.

The concluding part will revisit ideas about malevolent (or benevolent) bureaucracy outlined at the start of the course, and will tie together course themes by focusing on the concepts of bureaucratic accountability and official responsibility. The central proposition here is that there are certain 'psychopathological' features of bureaucracy that tend to diminish the official's sense of personal responsibility for the ways in which public power is exercised. Stanley Milgram's famous experiments on obedience will be considered to see what light they throw on bureaucratic behaviour. Reference will be made to the experience of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust, in historical context, and to Hannah's Arendt's concept of 'the banality of evil'.

A detailed lecture and tutorial schedule, with essay topics, will be provided in a separate notice, available at the start.

## TEXT AND READINGS

- a) A set of photocopied readings will be available for purchase from the Student Notes Distribution Centre, at the Kelburn Campus. Price \$25 approx, inc GST. A number of class handouts may also be made available from time to time.
- b) Hummel, R P (1994) *The Bureaucratic Experience: A Critique of Life in the Modern Organization* 4<sup>th</sup> edn.), St Martin's Press. Copies on Closed Reserve.

- c) Wilson, J Q (1989) *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It*, Basic Books. Copies on Closed Reserve.
- d) Hill, M (1997) *The Policy Process in the Modern State*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn., Prentice Hall/Harvester Wheatsheaf. Copies on Closed Reserve.

A list of supplementary references will be provided for discretionary use.

## ASSESSMENT

### Two essays

Essay 1 (2,000 words) due 5pm, Mon, 11 April – 25%

Essay 2 (2,000 words) due 5pm, Thurs, 26 May – 25%

### Final Examination 50%

Essays should be deposited in the Course Organiser's box (no. 30) in the foyer area outside Murphy 220. See advice on essay writing in the separate course notice, Tutorial Schedule and Essay Topics.

**Note: Extensions** for essays may only be granted to those who meet the University's aegrotat rules, viz. medical certificate or personal bereavement, or critical personal circumstances involving the health of a close relative, or exceptional circumstances beyond the student's control.

**Late** essays must be handed to the Course Organiser, or to Francine McGee, Administrator, School of Government (Rutherford House RH821, Reception), who will record the date and time it was received before giving it to the Course Organiser. Essays not handed in by the due date or by the date of extension will have a mark out of 100 reduced by 5% for each late day. Essays handed in more than 5 days after the due date, or after the date of extension, will not normally be accepted.

## MANDATORY COURSE REQUIREMENTS (TERMS)

Students must (a) complete the two essay assignments specified above; **and** (b) attend at least **80%** of the weekly tutorials (one per week). Students who fail to satisfy these mandatory course requirements will receive a Q grade.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### Workload Guidelines

The paper represents on sixth of a normal full-time, yearly load. The assessment provisions for this 200-level course require students to spend approximately (and no less than) **ten** hours per week on paper-related work, in **addition to** the four hours of class attendance.

Students' success will depend on their willingness to read and reflect on the readings specified, to prepare themselves for tutorial discussions, **and** to assimilate the material presented in lectures. There will always be scope for discussion during lectures, which are not to be regarded merely as a one-way note-taking exercise. Any student who is unable to attend lectures regularly (meaning at least two per week) should advise the Course Organiser.

## NOTICES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Announcements will be made at the beginning of lectures; and notices (e.g. tutorial lists, etc) will be posted on the Public Policy noticeboards, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Murphy Building, and on the Mezzanine Floor, Rutherford House. Copies of any material handed out will also be available in the PUBL 206 pigeonhole, in the foyer area outside MY220.

## ELECTRONIC ACCESS

Notices, marks for assignments, and selected course materials will be posted on the Blackboard website. Only students who are registered for PUBL 206/POLS 238 will have access.

**Instructions:** Go to <http://www.blackboard.vuw.ac.nz>

'Login name' is the first six letters of your last name and the first four letters of your first name (typed as one word). 'Password' is your student ID number.

Copies of material handed out in lectures will be made available either on Blackboard (if an electronic version is available) or in the PUBL 206 pigeonhole on the second floor of the Murphy Building (i.e. in the foyer area outside MY220).

## AVAILABILITY OF COURSE ORGANISER

Associate Professor Gregory will be available for student consultation during normal working hours, in his office (Rutherford House, RH 804). If he is not available by phone, please leave a voice message. Alternatively, messages may be left for him with Francine McGee, Administrator, School of Government (Rutherford House, RH821, Reception; Ph 463–6599).

## GENERAL UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND STATUTES

Students should familiarise themselves with the University's policies and statutes, particularly those regarding assessment and course of study requirements, and formal academic grievance procedures.

## STUDENT CONDUCT AND STAFF CONDUCT

The Statute on Student Conduct together with the Policy on Staff Conduct ensure that members of the University community are able to work, learn, study and participate in the academic and social aspects of the University's life in an atmosphere of safety and respect.

The Statute on Student Conduct contains information on what conduct is prohibited and what steps can be taken if there is a complaint. For queries about complaint procedures under the Statute on Student Conduct, contact the Facilitator and Disputes Advisor. This Statute is available in the Faculty Student Administration Office or on the website at: [www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/StudentConduct](http://www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/StudentConduct).

The policy on Staff Conduct can be found on the VUW website at: [www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/StaffConduct](http://www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/StaffConduct).

## ACADEMIC GRIEVANCES

If you have any academic problems with your course you should talk to the tutor or lecturer concerned or, if you are not satisfied with the result of that meeting, see the Head of School or the Associate Dean (Students) of your Faculty. Class representatives are available to assist you with this process. If, after trying the above channels, you are still unsatisfied, formal grievance procedures can be invoked. These are set out in the Academic Grievances Policy which is published on the VUW website: [www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/AcademicGrievances](http://www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/AcademicGrievances).

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND PLAGIARISM

Academic integrity is about honesty – put simply it means **no cheating**. All members of the University community are responsible for upholding academic integrity, which means staff and students are expected to behave honestly, fairly and with respect for others at all times.

Plagiarism is a form of cheating which undermines academic integrity. Plagiarism is **prohibited** at Victoria.

The University defines plagiarism as follows:

Plagiarism is presenting someone else's work as if it were your own, whether you mean to or not.

*'Someone else's work' means anything that is not your own idea, even if it is presented in your own style. It includes material from books, journals or any other printed source, the work of other students or staff, information from the Internet, software programmes and other electronic material, designs and ideas. It also includes the organization or structuring of any such material.*

### **Plagiarism is not worth the risk.**

Any enrolled student found guilty of plagiarism will be subject to disciplinary procedures under the Statute on Student Conduct ([www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/studentconduct](http://www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/studentconduct)) and may be penalized severely. Consequences of being found guilty of plagiarism can include:

- an oral or written warning
- suspension from class or university
- cancellation of your mark for an assessment or a fail grade for the course.

Find out more about plagiarism and how to avoid it, on the University's website at:

[www.vuw.ac.nz/home/studying/plagiarism.html](http://www.vuw.ac.nz/home/studying/plagiarism.html).

## STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The University has a policy of reasonable accommodation of the needs of students with disabilities. The policy aims to give students with disabilities and equal opportunity with all other students to demonstrate their abilities. If you have a disability, impairment or chronic medical condition (temporary, permanent or recurring) that may impact on your ability to participate, learn and/or achieve in lectures and tutorials or in meeting the course requirements, then please contact the Course Coordinator as early in the course as possible. Alternatively you may wish to approach a Student Adviser from Disability Support Services to confidentially discuss your individual needs and the options and support that are available. Disability Support Services are located on Level 1, Robert Stout Building, or phoning 463-6070, email: [disability@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:disability@vuw.ac.nz). The name of your School's disability Liaison Person can be obtained from the Administrative Assistant or the School Prospectus.

## STUDENT SUPPORT

Staff at Victoria want students' learning experiences at the University to be positive. If your academic progress is causing you concern, please contact the relevant Course Coordinator, or Associate Dean who will either help you directly or put you in contact with someone who can.

The Student Services Group is also available to provide a variety of support and services. Find out more at [www.vuw.ac.nz/st\\_services/](http://www.vuw.ac.nz/st_services/) or email [student-services@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:student-services@vuw.ac.nz).

VUWSA employs two Education Coordinators who deal with academic problems and provide support, advice and advocacy services, as well as organising class representatives and faculty delegates. The Education Office is located on the ground floor, Student Union Building, phone 463-6983 or 463-6984, email [education@vuwsa.org.nz](mailto:education@vuwsa.org.nz).

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