

PUAD 520 ORGANIZATION THEORY AND MANAGEMENT BEHAVIOR

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

Instructor:

Qian Hu, Ph.D., Professor
Shar School of Policy and Government

Fall Semester 2025

Online asynchronous course

Office: GMU Arlington Campus, VM 635

Hours: Online Monday 10:00 AM-12:00 PM, Or By Appointment

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Required Texts:

Rainey, Hal G. (2021). *Understanding and Managing Public Organizations*. 6th Edition. San Francisco, C.A.: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. (Free ebook through Mason's library)

Additional readings are located on the course website.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines the structure and function of organizations and the behavior of individuals in organizations. Students will gain a foundational understanding of key concepts, theories, and practical techniques in organizational behavior and management. Core topics include behavior and motivation, group and team behavior, power, leadership, communication and decision-making, organizational design and structure, and organizational change and development. This course focuses on managing traditional public sector organizations as well as rapidly evolving nonprofit organizations.

COURSE GOALS AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the semester, students will gain a comprehensive understanding of the factors that enhance or hinder the effective functioning of public organizations. Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Analyze and discuss foundational concepts and theories of organizational management and behavior.
- Apply theoretical frameworks to assess and address management challenges in real-world organizational settings.
- Integrate organizational theory with practical applications to enhance management practices.

- Develop leadership skills to effectively navigate and manage relationships within diverse networks of stakeholders.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Study Hours

Students are expected to set aside **at least 6 hours** to complete the coursework.

Group Work

This class includes group projects. Requiring you to work in groups helps prepare you for real-world management practices. If you have concerns about working in/with a group, please see me as soon as the problem arises.

Late Assignment

Late assignments are accepted but will be reduced 25% for every day late. The only exception for not having a late penalty is if you notify in advance (2 days at least) and the reason is due to a University or School sponsored event, religious observation, jury duty, military obligation, or doctor's note for an illness. Retroactive notices will not be considered in any case.

Email

Check your Blackboard announcement and e-mail frequently. When you upload your assignments, please ensure your assignment file has an assignment title and your full name (last name, first name) (Assignment 1 Hu, Qian). Generally, two business days are considered a reasonable amount of time to receive a reply. Do not expect an immediate response when you send a message, given the large number of e-mails the instructor receives every day.

CLASS PARTICIPATION AND COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Participation and Assignment Overview

Assignment	Total Points
⊗ Module Assignments (5 points x 8)	40
⊗ Midterm Essay	20
⊗ Paper Proposal	5
⊗ Paper Draft	10
⊗ Peer Evaluations	5
⊗ Final Paper	20
Total Points	100

Assignments

1. Module Assignments (5 points for each assignment, 35 points in total)

Students must read the course module and complete the specified assignment listed

in the module. The module assignments **may be** short essay questions, case analyses, and quizzes.

2. Midterm Essay (20 points)

Students will answer one essay question. Students will draw primarily on class lectures, discussions, and readings for answers. Quality essays are characterized by the following:

- (1) Breadth: They discuss all relevant concepts, theories, and issues while constructing an argument.
- (2) Analytical Depth: They engage relevant material meaningfully; that is, they do more than repeat what is said in lectures and readings. They provide an argument, not a summary.
- (3) Clarity: They make sense; they are not characterized by vagueness.
- (4) Justification: Assertions are backed up with evidence from the readings and lectures.
- (5) Organization: They are well-organized and free of egregious spelling and grammar errors.
- (6) Connections: They make connections between different sections of the course.
- (7) Concreteness: They bring in examples from the real world to illustrate theoretical concepts.
- (8) Technical proficiency: they do not make mistakes when discussing key theoretical concepts (e.g., they do not attribute a key theoretical concept to the wrong individual; they do not misinterpret a theoretical proposition).
- (9) Aesthetics and Intangibles: they are well written; they display insight and sustained critical thinking.

3. Group Research Paper

You will sign up for a group (4-6 students) based on your research interest and work on a group research paper. Your group will use the organization theory and organizational behavior literature to answer a question that interests you.

3.1. Paper proposal (5 points)

The paper proposal should be no longer than two pages long (double-spaced, 12 pt. font, one-inch margins, Times New Roman font). It should include the following: (1) your question, (2) an explanation of why it's important, (3) and at least five scholarly sources, all from peer-reviewed journals.

3.2 Paper Draft (5 points)

A paper draft will be required to allow for comments and feedback.

3.3 Peer Evaluation (5 points)

Students will be asked to evaluate fellow classmates' contributions to the project.

3.4 Final Paper (20 points)

The final paper/draft should be about 12 pages long (double-spaced, 12 pt. font, one-inch margins, Times New Roman font), not counting references. Additional guidelines for the paper assignment are at the end of the syllabus. The paper draft and final paper will be graded based on the following criteria:

- (1) Organization and structure: The paper employs a logical framework and analyzes a critical issue.

- (2) Depth of analysis: The paper demonstrates a thorough consideration of relevant issues. (3) Information is gathered from appropriate sources and is presented persuasively.
- (4) Creativity and insight: The material is presented in an original, engaging, and interesting manner.
- (5) Integration with course readings, lectures, and discussions: To the extent possible, the assignment draws on, applies, and seeks to extend the concepts covered in class.
- (6) Style: The paper is smoothly and professionally written, using appropriate grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
- (7) Timeliness: The assignment is turned in on time. Late assignments will be penalized.

Final Grade Scale

100	97 =	A+
96	93 =	A
92	90 =	A-
89	87 =	B+
86	83 =	B
82	80 =	B-
79	77 =	C+
76	73 =	C
72	70 =	C-
69	67 =	D+
66	63 =	D
62	60 =	D-
59	0 =	F

GMU POLICIES

Academic Standards

Academic Standards exist to promote authentic scholarship, support the institution's goal of maintaining high standards of academic excellence, and encourage continued ethical behavior of faculty and students to cultivate an educational community which values integrity and produces graduates who carry this commitment forward into professional practice.

As members of the George Mason University community, we are committed to fostering an environment of trust, respect, and scholarly excellence. Our academic standards are the foundation of this commitment, guiding our behavior and interactions within this academic community. The practices for implementing these standards adapt to modern practices, disciplinary contexts, and technological advancements. Our standards are embodied in our courses, policies, and scholarship, and are upheld in the following principles:

- **Honesty:** Providing accurate information in all academic endeavors, including communications, assignments, and examinations.
- **Acknowledgement:** Giving proper credit for all contributions to one's work. This involves the use of accurate citations and references for any ideas, words, or materials created by others in the style appropriate to the discipline. It also includes acknowledging shared authorship in group projects, coauthored pieces, and project reports.
- **Uniqueness of Work:** Ensuring that all submitted work is the result of one's own effort and is original, including free from self-plagiarism. This principle extends to written assignments, code, presentations, exams, and all other forms of academic work.

Violations of these standards—including but not limited to plagiarism, fabrication, and cheating—are taken seriously and will be addressed in accordance with university policies. [The process for reporting, investigating, and adjudicating violations is outlined in the university's procedures here](#). Consequences of violations may include academic sanctions, disciplinary actions, and other measures necessary to uphold the integrity of our academic community.

The principles outlined in these academic standards reflect our collective commitment to upholding the highest standards of honesty, acknowledgement, and uniqueness of work. By adhering to these principles, we ensure the continued excellence and integrity of George Mason University's academic community.

Student responsibility: Students are responsible for understanding how these general expectations regarding academic standards apply to each course, assignment, or exam they participate in; students should ask their instructor for clarification on any aspect

that is not clear to them.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to upholding the letter and spirit of the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. Under the administration of University Life, Disability Services implements and coordinates reasonable accommodations and disability-related services that afford equal access to university programs and activities. Students can begin the registration process with Disability Services at any time during their enrollment at George Mason University. If you are seeking accommodations, please visit the [Disability Services website](#) for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: ods@gmu.edu. Phone: (703) 993-2474.

Student responsibility: Students are responsible for registering with Disability Services and communicating about their approved accommodations with their instructor in advance of any relevant class meeting, assignment, or exam.

FERPA and Use of GMU Email Addresses for Course Communication

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) governs the disclosure of education records for eligible students and is an essential aspect of any course.

Students must use their GMU email account to receive important University information, including communications related to this class. Instructors will not respond to messages sent from or send messages regarding course content to a non-GMU email address.

Student responsibility: Students are responsible for checking their GMU email regularly for course-related information, and/or ensuring that GMU email messages are forwarded to an account they do check.

Title IX Resources and Required Reporting

As a part of George Mason University's commitment to providing a safe and non-discriminatory learning, living, and working environment for all members of the University community, the University does not discriminate on the basis of sex or gender in any of its education or employment programs and activities. Accordingly, **all non-confidential employees, including your faculty member, have a legal requirement to report to the Title IX Coordinator, all relevant details obtained directly or indirectly about any incident of Prohibited Conduct** (such as sexual harassment, sexual assault, gender-based stalking, dating/domestic violence). Upon notifying the Title IX Coordinator of possible Prohibited Conduct, the Title IX Coordinator will assess the report and determine if outreach is required. If outreach is required, the individual the report is about (the "Complainant") will receive a communication, likely in the form of an email, offering that person the option to meet with a representative of the Title IX office.

For more information about non-confidential employees, resources, and Prohibited Conduct, please see University Policy 1202: [Sexual and Gender-Based Misconduct and Other Forms of Interpersonal Violence](#). Questions regarding Title IX can be directed to the Title IX Coordinator via email to TitleIX@gmu.edu, by phone at 703-993-8730, or in person on the Fairfax campus in Aquia 373.

Student opportunity: If you prefer to speak to someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason's confidential employees in [Student Support & Advocacy \(SSAC\)](#), Counseling and [Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#), [Student Health Services \(SHS\)](#), and/or the [Office of the University Ombudsperson](#).

Diversity Statement

Our Schar School promotes and maintains an inclusive and just work and learning environment. We welcome and value individuals and their differences including race, economic status, gender expression and identity, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin, first language, religion, age, and disability.

COURSE CALENDAR

Weeks	Topics	Readings	Assignments & Due Date
Module 1	Course Introduction Key topics	Syllabus Skim Rainey, Ch. 1, 2.	Assignment 1: Self-Introduction on Blackboard Syllabus Quiz
Module 2	What Makes Public Organizations Distinctive	Rainey, Ch. 1, 3 & 4	Assignment 2 Due by 11:59 PM on Sunday Group Formation
Module 3	The Study of Organizations	Rainey, Ch. 2 Additional readings on Canvas	Assignment 3 due by 11:59 PM on Sunday
Module 4	Behaviors & Motivation (I)	Rainey, Ch. 9, 10. Additional readings on Canvas	Research Paper Proposal due by 11:59 PM on Sunday
Module 5	Behaviors & Motivation (II)	Rainey, Ch. 9, 10 Additional readings on Canvas	Assignment 4 due by 11:59 PM on Sunday
Module 6	Group and Team Behavior	Rainey, Ch. 12 Additional readings on Canvas	No assignment due this week.
Module 7	Power	Rainey, Ch. 5 & 7 Additional readings on Canvas	Assignment 5 Due by 11:59 PM on Sunday
Module 8	Midterm	Review Module 1-7	Midterm Short Essay Due by 11:59 PM on Sunday
Module 9	Leadership (I)	Rainey, Ch. 11 Additional readings on Canvas	No assignment due this week.
Module 10	Leadership (II)	Rainey, Ch. 11 Additional readings on Canvas	Assignment 6 Due by 11:59 PM on Sunday
Module 11	Organizational Structure and Design	Rainey, Ch. 8 Additional readings on Canvas	No assignment due this week.

Module 12	Goals, Communication, and Decision Making	Rainey, Ch. 6, 7 Additional readings on Canvas	Assignment 7 Due by 11:59 PM on Sunday
Module 13	Organizational Culture, Change, and Learning	Rainey, Ch.11, 13 Additional readings on Canvas	Group Research Paper Draft Due by 11:59 PM on Sunday
Module 14	Thanksgiving Holiday, No Class		
Module 15	Collaborative Governance	Rainey, Ch.14 Additional readings on Canvas	Peer Evaluation Due by 11:59 PM on Sunday Assignment 8 Due by 11:59 PM on Sunday
Module 16 Final week	Final Week	No readings	Group Research Paper Due by 11:59 PM on 12/10.

Disclaimer Statement: Please note this is a tentative syllabus, and the instructor reserves the right to make any changes that may be necessary to meet the objectives of the course.

Appendix: Research Paper Assignment

Purpose

The purpose of the paper is to answer a question that is relevant to the organizational theory/organizational behavior fields. There are many relevant questions. For example, you may address the following question:

- **Performance-Based Pay System**
 - How does performance-based pay impact employee motivation, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment in the public sector?
 - How does performance-based pay influence the overall effectiveness and efficiency of public sector organizations?
 - What are the key challenges in designing and implementing performance-based pay systems in public sector organizations?
- **Public Service Motivation**
 - Does PSM correlate with job satisfaction and organizational commitment across different levels of government?
 - What organizational practices effectively enhance PSM among public employees?
 - Are there differences in PSM levels between employees in nonprofit versus public-sector organizations?
- **Leadership**
 - How does collaborative leadership influence organizational performance?
 - How can collaborative leadership address conflicts and competing priorities in cross-sector partnerships?
 - What are the barriers to implementing collaborative leadership in hierarchical public sector structures?
 - What are the key challenges facing women and minority leaders in public sector organizations, and how can these be addressed?
 - How do crisis leaders in the public sector manage communication and misinformation during emergencies?
- **Organizational Structure and Design**
 - How do public sector organizations adapt their structures in response to changing policy priorities or crises?
 - How can organizational design in the public sector promote diversity, equity, and inclusion?
- **Organizational Culture, Change, and Learning**
 - How can public sector organizations reconcile traditional bureaucratic values with the need for agility and adaptability?
 - How do public sector organizations develop and sustain a learning culture?

Content Guidelines

1. The paper should explain why your question is important. Why does what you're writing about matter? In other words, it should answer the "So what?" question.
2. The paper should be grounded in theory. For example, suppose you ask, Does the public sector outperform the nonprofit and for-profit sectors? In addition to reviewing what relevant existing studies have found, you should also discuss why we would expect—in theory—public and private sector organizations to perform differently.

Another example: suppose you ask, how does goal ambiguity affect organizational performance? In addition to reviewing what existing studies have to say, you should also discuss why—in theory—we would expect goal ambiguity to affect organizational performance.

3. The paper should evaluate the quality of evidence offered by the existing empirical literature. Basically, do you believe what the studies you're looking at say? Are they good or bad? While you may not be an expert in research design, common sense goes a long way in this area. Common problems include studies not accounting for important factors (omitted variables) and measuring things strangely (measurement validity). For example: if a study claims to offer some evidence about teacher performance, does it measure teacher performance reasonably?

4. The paper should offer a (perhaps tentative) answer to the question it's examining. Given the research you've reviewed, what do you think the answer to your question is? How confident are you in that answer (this will depend a lot on the quality of the evidence)? Would you feel comfortable/confident acting on the research you've reviewed?

5. The paper should cite a minimum of ten peer-reviewed journal articles.

Formatting

The paper should be no longer than 12 double-spaced pages (one-inch margins, 12 pt. Times New Roman font), not including references. Please use in-text citations (Author, Year) to cite references, not footnotes or endnotes. [For the works cited section, please use the APA citation style.](#)

Grading

In addition to assessing whether the paper meets the content guidelines described above, I will grade the paper based on the following criteria (also noted in the body of the syllabus):

- Organization and structure: The assignment employs a logical framework and analyzes a critical issue.

- Depth of analysis: The assignment demonstrates a thorough consideration of relevant issues. The information is gathered from appropriate sources and is presented persuasively.
- Creativity and insight: The material is presented in an original, engaging, and interesting manner.
- Integration with course readings, lectures, and discussions: To the extent possible, the assignment draws on, applies, and seeks to extend the concepts covered in class.
- Style: The assignment is smoothly and professionally written, using appropriate grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
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