

Doing the Public's Business – Pre-Class Syllabus, Fall Quarter 2017¹

Class Dates: the evening of October 27 and all-day October 28 and 29.

Location: All classes will be held in the Seminar 2 Complex, Building E, Room 2109.

Instructor: Stephen Buxbaum **Email:** buxbaums@evergreen.edu **Office phone:** 360.867.6708

Course Description:

This course explores how public programs, projects and services are conceived, approved, funded and financed. We will use case studies about the environment, public infrastructure and affordable housing to explore how public administrators go about conducting the public's business. Students will learn about how resource allocation decisions are made; how public value is determined; and, how local, state and federal levels of government work with and sometimes against each other as public managers attempt to meet public needs.

Learning Objectives:

- Investigate the political systems and processes used to decide how public resources are allocated.
- Examine the role of the public administrator in determining how the public's resources are deployed at different stages in carrying out the public's business.
- Explore methods used to articulate the need for public resources.
- Investigate how public projects, services and programs are determined to be ready to proceed.
- Investigate how the performance of a public investment is measured.
- Consider and practice using a framework for making resource allocation decisions using concepts that assess need, capacity, agreement and results.

Preliminary Daily Schedule and important deadlines:

Sunday, October 14, by 6 p.m. - Pre-class assignment:

Write a short paragraph (*no more than one page*) describing your background and interests relative to the course material. Email due to Stephen by 6:00 p.m. October 14.

Assignment due Sunday, October 22 to Stephen via email:

Three to six-page paper that discusses the skills, knowledge and abilities that are required of successful public managers. Papers should draw from the pre-class reading combined with reflections and observations from the student's own experience and perceptions about how public programs, projects and services are and should be managed. Some of the central questions we will explore during our weekend intensive is whether public managers have unique responsibilities. How does a public manager determine value? Is the value proposition for a public manager primarily about efficiency, or public benefit, or social justice? Who is a public manager most responsible to? How do public managers work with the sometimes conflicting, yet necessarily overlapping realities of politics, operational needs and value? In advance of class you will examine and reflect upon these questions in your short paper. The pre-class reading and writing will set us up for a meaningful weekend of sharing, discussion and skill building that will include hearing directly from experienced public administrators.

¹ Our class Canvas site will be open to registered students by September 24, 2017. The final syllabus will be on Canvas.

Frist Class: Friday, October 27, 6-10 p.m.

Introductions, subject overview and expectations presented by instructor. Instructor presentation: Defining terms and becoming familiar with the landscape of public programs, projects and services.

Saturday and Sunday, October 28 and 29, 9a.m to 5 p.m.

Instructor presentations and class discussion on: 1) Authorizing environments, 2) practical guide to framing a manager's responsibility in assessing need, capacity, agreement and results; 3) case study discussions and in-class written assignments. Guest presentations about the politics of state, local and federal programs, projects and services are scheduled throughout this weekend.

PLEASE NOTE: topics and timeframes may change to accommodate the scheduling of guest speakers. All case studies will be available electronically to class participants on Canvas. Final Syllabus and Canvas access will be provided to registered students by or before end of the day September 24, 2017.

Course Material Overview (this list is preliminary and will be updated and posted to Canvas by September 24, 2017):

Spartina Case Study – Invasive Species in Willapa Bay: newspaper articles, Department of Ecology brief and Legislature white paper.

The New Yorker, February 13, 2006 - *Million-Dollar Murray* - Why problems like homelessness may be easier to solve than to manage.

Excerpts: Mark H. Moore, *Creating Public Value: Strategic Management in Government*. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995) – plus other short articles by Moore.

Other short case studies and videos to be determined. The reading selections for this class are directly related to our learning objectives. The reading (and video viewing) is intentionally limited so as to provide time for reflection and analysis.

About the Instructor:

Stephen Buxbaum has more than thirty years of management experience in the non-profit and public sectors focusing on community and economic development programs and policy. His background includes extensive work on farmland preservation, sustainable agriculture and water conservation beginning in the 1970s and '80s. He has worked at local, state and federal levels of government both in Washington State and Washington, D.C. As an executive manager for the state of Washington, he oversaw financing of hundreds of affordable housing, community facilities and public works projects. During his career, he has managed some of Washington State's most successful grant and loan programs, including the Housing Trust Fund and the Community Development Block Grant program. In 2005, he received a fellowship to attend Harvard University's program for senior executives in state and local government. In 2006, he was appointed to chair the Governor's Interagency Council on Homelessness. Now, in addition to managing his consulting business, he teaches part-time for Evergreen's Grays Harbor Program, the Evening and Weekend Studies Program and the Masters of Public Administration Program. In 2009, he was elected to serve on Olympia, Washington's City Council. He was elected by his peers to serve as Olympia's Mayor Pro Tem (Deputy Mayor) from April 2010 to December 2011. He was elected Mayor of Olympia in the 2011 General Election (term ended December 31, 2015).