

# Doing the Public's Business – Syllabus, Fall Quarter 2015<sup>1</sup>

Class Dates: the evening of October 30 and all day October 31 and November 1.

Instructor: Stephen Buxbaum, email: [buxbaums@evergreen.edu](mailto:buxbaums@evergreen.edu)

## Course Description:

This course explores how public programs, projects and services are conceived, approved, funded and financed; using case studies about environmental, infrastructure and affordable housing projects and activities. Students will learn about how resource allocation decisions are made, how public value is determined and how levels of government work with and sometimes against each other as they take action 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.
- Explore methods for assessing the ability and capability of an organization to complete a transaction that is in the interest of the public.
- 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.

## Doing the Public's Business Preliminary Daily Schedule and important deadlines:

### Sunday, October 11, by 5 p.m. - Pre-class work 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 5:00 p.m. October 11.

### Assignment due Sunday, October 25 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 be reflective and descriptive of the students own experience, observations and perceptions about how public programs, projects and services are and should be managed. One of the central questions we will explore during our weekend intensive is whether or not 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? Your first paper will be an examination and self-reflection on these issues.

### Friday, October 30, 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. Assignment handed out in class: short paragraph to be reviewed in preparation of seminar discussion on November 15.

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<sup>1</sup> Our class Canvas site will be open to registered students by September 28, 2015. The final syllabus will be on Canvas.

**Saturday, October 31 and Sunday, November 1, 9a.m to 5 p.m.**

Instructor presentations and class discussion on: 1) Authorizing environments, 2) practical guide to framing a managers 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. On Saturday, instructions will be provided for completing a short writing assignment that is due Sunday, November 1<sup>st</sup>.

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 28, 2015.

**Course Material Overview (this list is preliminary and will be updated by September 2015):**

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)

Case Study: Town of Tieton and the Cowiche Sewer District; newspaper articles and handouts.

*Some Issues Concerning the Control of Human Behavior*, A Symposium presented by Carl R. Rogers and B.F. Skinner; 30 November 1956, Volume 124, Number 3231 Science.

**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 1970's and '80's. 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 Masters of Public Administration Program. In November 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 and assumed office on January 3, 2012 (term ending December 31, 2015).