

# Politics of Bureaucracy

Political Science 349  
Washington University in St. Louis  
Fall 2021

Instructor: Dan Gibbs

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Temporary course website: [www.daniel-gibbs.com/bureaucracy.html](http://www.daniel-gibbs.com/bureaucracy.html)

Class time: T&R 2:30-3:50

Room: Simon Hall 018

## COURSE TOPICS

This course provides an overview of the political science literature on bureaucratic politics. We will focus primarily on bureaucracy in a democratic political system, particularly the United States, although space is available in the schedule for a section on comparative bureaucracy if students are interested. The works we are scheduled to examine are grouped into seven core topic areas.

1. *Delegation* (September 2-14)
  - When, why, and how do politicians grant policy authority to government agencies?
2. *Bureaucratic structure* (September 16-30)
  - How and why do competing political interests influence the way that government agencies are internally organized and incorporated into the political and legal system?
3. *The Civil Service* (October 5-14)
  - How, why, and when do the formal systems of rules governing the relationship between politicians and the bureaucratic workforce change over time? How and do these rules influence what government agencies do and why they do it?
4. *Oversight* (October 19-26)
  - When, why, and how do politicians attempt to control government agencies? What structural factors limit the ability of politicians to control the bureaucracy and why?
5. *Politicization* (October 28-November 4)
  - When, why, and how do politicians—particularly executives—assert political influence over an agency by staffing an agency with political allies? How does this influence what government agencies do and why they do it?

6. *Bureaucrats* (November 9-16)

- What motivates bureaucrats? When, why, and how do political, organizational, and operational factors influence their actions?

7. *Interest Group Influence* (November 18-23)

- How do interest groups—particularly representatives of industries that an agency regulates—attempt to influence the agency? When and why are agencies susceptible or resistant to these efforts?

These seven topics and our first class meeting are scheduled to take up 24 of our 28 meetings. I have left the final two weeks open to allow us to complete the core course curriculum in the event that the semester is disrupted. If we are fortunate and the semester proceeds without disruption, several additional topics are available for us to choose from. I will ask you for topics that are of interest to you once we get close to the end of the semester and will select those that garner the most interest. We can spend all four meetings going into detail on one topic or cover multiple topics in less depth. Possible topics are listed below.

*Possible Topics for the Final Two Weeks of Class* (November 30-December 9)

- Rulemaking
- Courts and the bureaucracy
- Comparative bureaucracy
  - Autocratic bureaucracy
  - Communist/Socialist Bureaucracy
  - Bureaucracy and development
  - Corruption
  - International/multinational bureaucracy (e.g. EU Commission)
- Bureaucratic structure: internal hierarchy
- Strategic information sharing
- Niskanen (1971) and the budget-maximizing bureaucrat
- Empirical methods for estimating agency ideal points
- Bureaucratic reform
- Central banks
- Public management
- Organization theory

## **CLASS MEETING STRUCTURE AND GUIDELINES**

Although our class size is sufficiently small to facilitate group discussion of assigned readings under normal circumstances, masking and social distancing requirements will make this difficult. Accordingly, class meetings will primarily be lectures. If it is necessary to move to a virtual format or if in-person health and safety policies loosen, I may incorporate more discussion into our class meetings if there is sufficient student interest.

An hour and a half of live lecture in the afternoon is taxing on even the most interested audience member's attention. To help provide you with an environment that allows you to remain engaged and attentive throughout our time together, we will pause after the first 45 minutes of class at 3:15 for a ten-minute break and resume at 3:25 for the final 25 minutes of lecture. Class will end promptly at 3:50. I will not keep you over—anything we do not cover can be taken up at the beginning of the following lesson. In return I ask that you arrive on time and be prepared to begin class at precisely 2:30, return on time and be prepared to resume class at the end of the 10-minute break period, and wait to pack to leave until after class ends at 3:50.

To summarize, we will observe the following schedule and guidelines during our meetings:

- 2:30 PM. Class begins.
  - Please be prepared to focus your attention on the lesson promptly at 2:30.
- 3:15 PM. Break begins.
  - Check your phone, send an email, get some fresh air, etc.
- 3:25 PM: Class resumes.
  - Please be prepared to focus your attention on the last 25 minutes of the lesson promptly at 3:25.
- 3:50 PM. Class ends.
  - I will end class on time. Please wait to pack up your belongings until 3:50.

## ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES

I expect you to attend class regularly and complete required readings prior to each class meeting. On the class schedule below you will find readings relevant to each class meeting. I list *required* and *recommended* readings. You are responsible for reading the works marked as *required* prior to class. *Recommended* readings are suggestions for further reading if you find a particular topic interesting and want to know where to start learning more about it.

Your grade will be determined by your completion of and performance on four categories of assignments: four individual meetings with me, seven reading quizzes, three short papers, and a term paper. Your final grade is weighted as follows.

### **Grade Breakdown**

- Individual meeting attendance 10%
- Reading quizzes 15%
- Short papers 45%
- Term Paper 30%

### **Assignment Schedule**

- September 1-10. First individual meeting.
- October 4-15. Second individual meeting.
  - Be prepared to discuss ideas for your term paper.
- October 14. First short paper due.
- November 1-12. Third individual meeting.
  - Be prepared to discuss the type of paper you plan to write, what work you've done so far, any problems you've encountered, and what argument you anticipate making in your term paper.
- November 9. Second short paper due.
- November 30. Third short paper due.
- December 1-9. Fourth individual meeting.
  - Be prepared to discuss the outline of your term paper and specific tasks you need to complete to finish it.
- December 22. Term paper due.

Each category of assignment is described below.

### **Individual Meetings**

I would like to meet with you each individually on a semi-regular basis throughout the semester to discuss your progress in the course, hear from you about what you like and don't like about the materials we cover or the course, talk about your final paper, ideas or questions you may have about the readings, etc. Meetings will be conducted over Zoom and shouldn't take more than ten minutes but I'll schedule in 30 minute blocks in case our conversation goes longer. Below is a schedule of the periods during which each of our four meetings will be held.

1. September 1-September 10
2. October 4-October 15
3. November 1-November 12
4. December 1-December 9

Meeting attendance comprises 10% of your final grade.

### **Reading Quizzes**

To encourage you to complete the readings and attend class regularly, I will occasionally give you a short pop quiz at the beginning of class that covers the required reading for that day.

Each quiz will consist of 3 questions. The questions will be easy if you have completed the reading and difficult if you have not. For example, “McNollGast (1987) discuss several mechanisms through which administrative procedures allow Congress to control the bureaucracy. Briefly describe two of these.” Or, “Volden (2002) empirically evaluates the theoretical claims of which canonical theory of delegation? According to Volden, what do his results suggest about the veracity of the theory?”

Reading quizzes make up 15% of your final grade. In total there will be 7 quizzes. Each quiz will contain 3 questions. To receive full credit for the reading quiz portion of your final grade, you must answer at least 14 questions correctly out of the 21 total over the course of the semester. Essentially, each individual quiz is worth two points and you can earn a bonus point each quiz if you answer all three correctly.

If you know in advance that you will miss a lesson, please email me ahead of time. Otherwise, if you are absent on a day that a pop quiz is given, you receive a zero for that quiz.

### **Short Papers**

You will be responsible for writing three short papers. In each short paper, you will select one reading to critically analyze. You may select either a required reading, a recommended reading, or a reading that interests you that is not listed on the syllabus. Readings not on the syllabus must be approved by me ahead of time.

The paper should be 3 to 5 pages in length and have three parts.<sup>1</sup>

First, you should concisely summarize the reading, including a concise presentation of its theoretical argument, the implications of its argument, and, if applicable, its research design, empirical strategy, and empirical findings. You will receive full credit for this portion of the paper if you accurately and concisely summarize the paper.

Second, you should relate the paper to the other readings *from the same topic area*. You are required to discuss your reading’s relationship to each required *and* one recommended reading

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<sup>1</sup> These three parts loosely resemble the components of a referee report.

from the same topic area as your reading (if you choose to analyze a recommended reading or a reading not on the syllabus you do not need to include an additional recommended reading in this section of the paper).<sup>2</sup> The general idea here is to write this section of the paper as if you are rewriting the literature review section from the reading you select. In doing so you must demonstrate an understanding of the other readings and present a clear and thoughtful analysis how these readings relate to yours.

Third, you should go on to discuss the reading from other perspectives. How you do this is up to you, but you might want to address logical extensions of the theory, unexplored further implications of the theory, the adequacy of the paper's research design or the tightness of the link between theory and data, its relation to readings from previous weeks or readings from your other courses, its applicability or adaptability to other research areas, empirical cases you are familiar with that challenge or substantiate the veracity of the paper's claims, and so on. In short, in the third part of your paper should try to say something interesting and analytical about the reading. You will receive full credit for this portion of the paper if you articulate a clear idea and provide a thoughtful argument to support your idea.

Due dates are arranged so that you will have two choices of topic for each paper.

- First short paper.
  - Due October 14.
  - Topic: Delegation or Bureaucratic Structure.
- Second short paper.
  - Due November 9.
  - Topic: Civil Service or Oversight.
- Third short paper.
  - Due November 30.
  - Topic: Politicization or Bureaucrats.

### **Term Paper**

You are responsible for writing a term paper worth 30% of your final grade. You have several options for what type of paper you write. Your options include a research paper, research proposal, policy paper, white paper, review article, or some other format related to political science that you clear with me. The paper should demonstrate your understanding of the material covered in the course and apply what you have learned to some problem or question that interests you.

The term paper is due December 22 and should not exceed 10,000 words. I will post more detailed grading criteria and format-specific guidelines as we progress through the course and you develop your ideas about what you want to write.

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<sup>2</sup> For example, if you choose to analyze Epstein and O'Halloran (1999), you must discuss how it relates to all other required readings from the *delegation* section (Huber & Shipan 2002; Volden 2002; Gailmard 2012; and Hill 2015) and one recommended reading from the *delegation* section (e.g. Dixit 1996; Lowi 1987; Marshaw 1985; Williamson 1973, etc.).

I expect you to work on the term paper throughout the course of the semester. How you go about this is largely up to you. You may choose to prioritize reading, exploring empirical strategies, developing a theoretical argument, identifying policy problems, etc. Accordingly, you are not required to submit drafts or written progress reports to me during the semester although I am more than happy to read a rough draft or a sketch of an idea and give you feedback. I only require that you be prepared to discuss your progress at each of our individual meetings. Ideally, we should be able to discuss specific ideas you've had for your term paper at our October meeting, some concrete things you've been working on and what you anticipate your paper will argue at our November meeting, and the outline of your paper and the final steps necessary to finish it at our December meeting.

## **SCHEDULE OF CLASSES**

### **August 31. Introduction to the Study of Public Bureaucracy.**

#### *Recommended*

- Wilson, James Q. *Bureaucracy*, Chapters 1-2.
- Moe, Terry. 2012. "Delegation, Control, and the Study of Public Bureaucracy."

## **TOPIC 1: DELEGATION**

### **September 2. The Principal-Agent Framework**

#### *Required*

- Gailmard, Sean. 2012. "Accountability and Principal Agent Models." *Oxford Handbook of Public Accountability*.

#### *Recommended*

- Laffont and Martimort. 2002. *The Theory of Incentives: The Principal-Agent Model*.

### **September 7. Transaction Costs and Information**

#### *Required*

- Epstein, David and Sharyn O'Halloran. 1999. *Delegating Powers*. Chapters 1-3.

#### *Recommended*

- Epstein, David and Sharyn O'Halloran. 1999. *Delegating Powers*. Chapter 4.
- Williamson. 1973. "Markets and Hierarchies: Some Elementary Considerations." *AER*.
- Coase. 1937. "The Nature of the Firm." *Economica*.
- Dixit. 1996. *The Making of Economic Policy: A Transaction-Cost Politics Perspective*. Chapter 2.



## **September 9. Legislative and Bureaucratic Capacity.**

### *Required*

- Huber and Shipan. 2002. *Deliberate Discretion*. Chapter 4
- Volden, Craig. 2002. “Delegating Power to Bureaucracies: Evidence from the States.”

### *Recommended*

- Huber and McCarty. 2004. “Bureaucratic Capacity, Delegation, and Political Reform.”

## **September 14. Delegation and Accountability.**

### *Required*

- Hill. 2015. “Does Delegation Undermine Accountability? Experimental Evidence on the Relationship Between Blame Shifting and Control.”

### *Recommended*

- Fox and Jordan. 2011. “Delegation and Accountability.” *JOP*.
- Lowi. 1987. “Two Roads to Serfdom.” *American University Law Review*.
- Marshaw. 1985. “Prodelegation: Why Administrators Should Make Political Decisions.” *JLEO*.
- Sasso and Morelli. 2020. “Bureaucrats Under Populism.”

## **TOPIC 2: BUREAUCRATIC STRUCTURE**

### **September 16. Administrative Procedures**

#### *Required*

- McCubbins, Mathew, Roger Noll and Barry Weingast. 1987. "Administrative Procedures as Instruments of Political Control of Agencies." *Journal of Law, Economics and Organization* 3: 243-77.
- Balla, Steven. 1998. "Administrative Procedures and Political Control of the Bureaucracy," *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 92, No. 3. (Sep., 1998), pp. 663-673.

#### *Recommended*

- McCubbins, Mathew, Roger Noll and Barry Weingast. 1989. "Structure and Process, Politics and Policy: Administrative Arrangements and the Political Control of Agencies." *Virginia Law Review* 75: 431-82.
- Bawn, Kathleen. 1995. "Political Control Versus Expertise: Congressional Choices about Administrative Procedures" *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 89, No. 1. (Mar., 1995), pp. 62-73.

### **September 21. Agency Design I**

#### *Required*

- Moe, Terry. 1989. "The Politics of Bureaucratic Structure." Pages 267-285.

#### *Recommended*

- Moe, Terry. 1995. "The Politics of Structural Choice."

### **September 23: Agency Design II**

#### *Required*

- Lewis. 2003. *Presidents and the Politics of Agency Design*.

#### *Recommended*

- Lewis and Selin. 2015. "Political Control and the Forms of Agency Independence."

## September 28. Autonomy I

### *Required*

- Maggetti and Verhoest. 2014. “Unexplored aspects of bureaucratic autonomy: a state of the field and ways forward.” *International Review of Administrative Sciences*.
- Fukuyama. 2013. “What is Governance?”
- Ellinas and Suleiman. 2012. *The European Commission and Bureaucratic Autonomy*. Chapter 2, “The Autonomy of National and Transnational Bureaucracies.” Pages 6-12.

### *Recommended*

- Weber, Max. 1948. “Bureaucracy.” In *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. London: Routledge, 166-244.
- Weber, Max. 1948. “Politics as Vocation.” In *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. London: Routledge, 77-128.
- Wilson, Woodrow. 1887. “The Study of Administration.”
- Selin, Jennifer. 2015. “What Makes and Agency Independent?” *AJPS*.
- Olsen. 2005. “Maybe it’s time to rediscover bureaucracy.” *JPART*.

## September 30. Autonomy II

### *Required*

- Carpenter, Daniel. 2001. “The Political Foundations of Bureaucratic Autonomy: A Response to Kernell.” *Studies in American Political Development* 15: 113-122.
- Kernell, Samuel. 2001. “Rural Service Delivery as a Critical Test of Alternative Models of Political Development.” *Studies in American Political Development* 15: 103-112.

### *Recommended*

- Conti-Brown, *The Power and Independence of the Federal Reserve*. Chapter 1, “The Three Foundings of the Federal Reserve.”
- Carpenter, *The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy*. Chapter 1, “Entrepreneurship, Networked Legitimacy, and Autonomy.”
- Skowronek, Stephen. 1982. *Building a New American State*. Introduction and Chapter 6, “The Expansion of National Administrative Capacities: 1877-1920.”

### **TOPIC 3: THE CIVIL SERVICE**

#### **October 5. Introduction to Civil Service Systems**

##### *Required*

- Johnson, Ronald and Gary Libecap. 1994. *The Federal Civil Service System and the Problem of Bureaucracy*. Chapter 1.
- Nigro, Lloyd and J. Edward Kellough. 2014. *The Public Personnel Administration*. Chapter 2, “Civil Service Reform in the United States.”
- Peters, B. Guy and Jon Pierre. 2015. “Governance and Civil Service Systems: From Easy Answers to Hard Questions.”

##### *Recommended*

- Dilulio, John. 2014. *Bring Back the Bureaucrats: Why More Federal Worker Will Lead to Better (and Smaller) Government*. Chapters 1-5.
- Condrey and Battaglio. 2007. “A Return to Spoils? Revisiting radical civil service reform in the United States.”

#### **October 7. Explaining the Adoption and Reform of Civil Service Rules**

##### *Required*

- Folke, Hirano, and Snyder. 2011. “Patronage and elections in US States.”
- Ting, Snyder, Hirano, and Folke. 2012. “Elections and reform: adoption of civil service systems in US States.”

##### *Recommended*

- Ujhelyi. 2014. “Civil Service Reform.” *JPubE*.
- Huber and Ting. 2021. “Civil Service and Patronage in Bureaucracies.” *JOP*.
- Forand, Ujhelyi, and Ting. 2021. “Equilibrium Administrations.”

## **October 14. Civil Service Systems and Policy Outcomes**

### ***\*First Short Paper Due.***

#### *Required*

- Rauch. 1995. "Bureaucracy, Infrastructure and Economic Growth." *AER*.
- Ujhelyi. 2014. "Civil Service Rules and Policy Choices: Evidence from U.S. State Governments." *AER: Economic Policy* 6(2): 338-380.

#### *Recommended:*

- Forand, Jean. 2019. "Civil Service and the Growth of Government." *JPubE*.
- Gibbs, Daniel. 2020. "Civil Service Reform, Self-Selection, and Bureaucratic Performance." *Economics & Politics*.

## **TOPIC 4: OVERSIGHT**

### **October 19. Control Strategies I**

#### *Required*

- McCubbins and Schwartz. 1984. "Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols versus Fire Alarms." *AJPS* 28(1): 165-179.

#### *Recommended*

- Lupia, Arthur and Mathew McCubbins. 1994. "Learning from Oversight: Fire Alarms and Police Patrols Reconsidered." *Journal of Law, Economics and Organization* 10:96-125

### **October 21. Control Strategies II**

#### *Required*

- Lowande and Potter. 2021. "Congressional Oversight Revisited: Politics and Procedure in Agency Rulemaking." *JOP* 83(1).
- Lowande. 2018. "Who Polices the Administrative State?" *APSR*.

#### *Recommended*

- Bawn, Kathleen. 1997. "Choosing Strategies to Control the Bureaucracy: Statutory Constraints, Oversight, and the Committee System." *JLEO*.

## **October 26. Limitations on Oversight**

### *Required*

- Clinton, Lewis, and Selin. 2014. "Influencing the Bureaucracy: The Irony of Congressional Oversight." *AJPS*.
- Bolton, Potter, and Thrower. 2016. "Organizational Capacity, Regulatory Review, and the Limits of Political Control." *JLEO* 32(2): 242-271.

### *Recommended*

- Balla, Stephen. 2000. "Legislative Organization and Congressional Review." *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization*.
- Arnold, R. Douglas. 1979. *Congress and the Bureaucracy*. Chapters 1-2.

## **TOPIC 5: POLITICIZATION**

### **October 28. Politicization Strategies I.**

#### *Required*

- Lewis, David. 2008. *The Politics of Presidential Appointments*. Chapters 1-3.

#### *Recommended*

- Terry Moe. 1985. The Politicized Presidency. In *The New Direction in American Politics* (Chubb and Peterson, eds.). Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution. Pages. 235-271.
- Suleiman, Ezra. 2003. *Dismantling Democratic States*. Chapter 9.

### **November 2. Politicization Strategies II.**

#### *Required*

- Hollibaugh, Horton, and Lewis. 2014. "Presidents and Patronage." *AJPS*.
- Ellinas and Suleiman. 2012. *The European Commission and Bureaucratic Autonomy*. Chapter 5.

#### *Recommended*

- Chen and Johnson. 2014. "Federal employee unionization and presidential control of the bureaucracy: Estimating and explaining ideological change in executive agencies." *Journal of Theoretical Politics*.

#### **November 4. Effects of Politicization.**

##### *Required*

- Lewis, David. 2008. *The Politics of Presidential Appointments*. Chapter 7.
- Lowande. 2019. "Politicization and Responsiveness in Executive Agencies." *JOP*.

##### *Recommended*

- Richardson, Mark. 2019. "Politicization and Expertise: Exit, Effort, and Investment." *JOP*.

### **TOPIC 6: BUREAUCRATS**

#### **November 9. Motivation.**

##### ***\*Second Short Paper Due***

##### *Required*

- Golden, Marissa. 2000. *What Motivates Bureaucrats? Politics and Administration During the Reagan Years*. Pages 16-32.
- Wilson, James Q. 1989. *Bureaucracy*. Chapter 4.

##### *Recommended*

- Golden, Marissa. 2000. *What Motivates Bureaucrats? Politics and Administration During the Reagan Years*. Chapters 1 and 7.
- Prendergast, Canice. 2007. "The Motivation and Bias of Bureaucrats." *AER*.
- Cameron, Charles and John de Figueiredo. 2020. "Quitting in Protest: Presidential Policymaking and Civil Service Response." *QJPS*.
- Niskanen, William. 1971. *Bureaucracy and Representative Government*. Chapters 1-4.

## **November 11. Motivation and Expertise.**

### *Required*

- Gailmard, Sean and John Patty. 2013. *Learning While Governing*. Chapter 2.
- Gailmard. 2010. "Politics, Principal-agent problems, and public service motivation." *International Public Management Journal*.

### *Recommended*

- Clinton et al. 2012. "Separated Powers in the United States: The Ideology of Agencies, Presidents, and Congress." *AJPS*.
- Francois. 2000. "Public service motivation' as an argument for government provision." *JPubE*.

## **November 16. Street-Level Bureaucrats.**

### *Required*

- Lipsky. 1980. "Street-Level Bureaucracy." Pages 4-18.
- Kogan. 2017. "Administrative Centralization and Bureaucratic Responsiveness: Evidence from the Food Stamp Program." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*.

### *Recommended*

- Wilson. 1989. *Bureaucracy*. Chapter 3.
- Zacka, Bernardo. 2017. *When the State Meets the Street: Public Service and Moral Agency*. Introduction and Chapters 1-2.
- Brehm and Gates. 1997. *Working, Shirking, and Sabotage: Bureaucratic Response to a Democratic Public*. Chapters 1-3.



## **TOPIC 7: INTEREST GROUP INFLUENCE**

### **November 18. Regulatory Capture.**

#### *Required*

- Posner. 2014. “The Concept of Regulatory Capture: A Short Inglorious History.”
- Wilson. 1989. *Bureaucracy*. Chapter 5.
- Cuellar. 2014. “Coalitions, Autonomy, and Regulatory Bargains in Public Health Law.”

#### *Recommended*

- Carpenter. 2004. “Protection Without Capture.” *APSR*.
- Gordon and Hafer. 2005. “Flexing Muscle: Corporate Political Expenditures as Signals to the Bureaucracy.” *APSR*.
- McCarty, Nolan. 2017. “The Regulation and Self-Regulation of a Complex Industry.”
- Boehmke, Gailmard, and Patty. 2005. “Whose Ear to Bend? Information Sources and Venue Choice in Policy-Making.” *QJPS*.

### **November 23. Revolving Doors.**

#### *Required*

- Lucca, Seru, and Trebbi. 2014. “The Revolving Door and Worker Flows in Banking Regulation.”

#### *Recommended*

- Che. 1994. “Revolving Doors and the Optimal Tolerance for Agency Collusion.”
- Dal Bo. 2006. “Regulatory Capture: A Review.” *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*.

**STUDENT-SELECTED TOPICS**

**November 30. TBD**

***\*Third Short Paper Due***

**December 2. TBD**

**December 7. TBD**

**December 9. TBD**