

The Politics and Behavior of Bureaucratic Organizations

Department of Government
Harvard University
Fall Semester 2006

Wednesdays, 4-6PM
Knafel (CGIS-North) N-107
14 sessions

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Course Description

This course is an intensive graduate-level introduction to the study of bureaucratic organizations through organization theory (in political science, in sociology and in economics). The course focuses upon government agencies, particularly those at the federal level of government in the United States. I have chosen this focus because it reflects my area of relative specialization. It is not necessarily the case that the readings, narratives and theoretical principles discussed in this course apply to bureaucracies in other geographical, cultural or historical settings. I have attempted to include relevant readings from other historical periods, from other nations and cultural contexts, and from “local-level” bureaucratic institutions. These include the evolution of English, Prussian and Ottoman bureaucracy, the contemporary operations of public agencies in Japan, Sweden, France and other nations. Still, the limitations of the following syllabus and the course undoubtedly remain.

My aim is to leave the graduate student individually, and the class collectively, with four “products” from the course: (1) a familiarity with several different theoretical approaches to studying bureaucratic organizations, (2) a sound knowledge of the parameters of the historical development and operation of bureaucracy in the United States, (3) a good sense of “cutting edge” scholarship on bureaucratic politics, and (4) a research idea (matured more or less) on which the student can work further, with an eye toward maturation and publication. For this reason, this course is quite reading-intensive and will require a final research paper for credit.

I do not intend this course to substitute fully for (a) courses in organization theory and/or principal-agent theory, (b) courses in public management, or (c) courses on bureaucracy in economic, social or religious settings. Still, it is my hope that much about organization theory, public management and non-government bureaucracies can be learned from taking this course.

The class will meet officially fourteen times, at which I will present a lecture-based survey of the readings and relevant theoretical materials. By resorting to lecture, I do not intend to limit student participation; indeed I hope the opposite. Questions and spontaneous or scheduled discussions are very much the intent. The lecture will simply provide a structure for discussion.

In addition, I will at several junctures during the semester hold a “break-out” session for particularly technical readings such as stochastic models of organizations and game-theoretic models. These will be scheduled at the mutual convenience of the professor and the students, and none of these sessions will be in any way mandatory.

Requirements: I will require consistent and informed participation, including a familiarity with all of the required readings. Five or six times during the semester, I will require a short paper (2-3 pages) and/or a problem set. I hope to keep the technical material sufficiently accessible so that the problem sets can be completed without extensive new study of mathematics, stochastics or game theory. In addition, I will also require a final research paper in progress from graduate students taking the course for credit. My hope is less that the student produces a “completed” research paper than a theoretical argument (interpretive, inductive or deductive) and a detailed program for its empirical assessment (historically, statistically, or otherwise). Preliminary results would be welcomed but not required. I expect such papers to be 25-30 pages in length.

Readings:

The following books are required for the course. Copies are available at the Harvard Coop, and you may also purchase your own through other means. To my awareness all of these books should be available in paperback form. Apologies for assigning my own book; for what it’s worth, I waived all royalties with Princeton University Press on the first 1,000 copies (though now it has sold enough that I get royalty checks). I’ll treat the class to a dinner or something with any proceeds realized from these sales.

Weber, Max. [1958] *From Max Weber: Essays on Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press).

Wilson, James Q. 1989. *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and How They Do It* (New York: Basic Books).

March, James G., and Simon, Herbert A. *Organizations*, Second Edition (New York: Blackwell, 1993).

Simon, Herbert A. 1951. *Administrative Behavior*, Second Edition (Macmillan).

DiMaggio, Paul, and Walter W. Powell, *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

Miller, Gary J. *Managerial Dilemmas: The Political Economy of Hierarchy* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1992).

David Epstein and Sharyn O'Halloran, *Delegating Powers: A Transaction-Cost Approach to Policymaking under Separate Powers* (Cambridge, 1999).

Crozier, Michel. *The Bureaucratic Phenomenon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964).

Carpenter, Daniel. *The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy: Networks, Reputations and Policy Innovation in Executive Agencies, 1862-1928* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001)

Kaufman, Herbert. *The Forest Ranger* (Washington, D.C.: Resources for the Future).

Kerwin, Cornelius. *Rulemaking: How Government Agencies Write Law and Make Policy* (Washington, D.C., CQ Press, 1999).

Barkey, Karen. *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997). Paperback.

Rosen, Stephen. 1993. *Winning the Next War: Innovation and the Modern Military* (Cornell U.P.).

Articles and Chapters: Other materials are available through the electronic journal services offered through the Harvard University Library [J-STOR], or available via packet [available at the Coop].

Schedule of Lectures, Readings and Technical Break-Out Sessions

Foundational Theory (2 weeks)

Classic Organization Theory

Weber, "Bureaucracy" and related essays on discipline and charismatic domination, pp. 196-266 in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. As background, it would also help to have an understanding of Weber's two seminal essays, "Politics as a Vocation" and "Science as a Vocation."

March and Simon, *Organizations*, Chapters 1 and 2.

Simon, *Administrative Behavior*, Introduction to the Third Edition and Chapters 1 and 2.

Hierarchical Theories and Principal-Agent Theories:

Alchian, Armen A., and Harold Demsetz, "Production, Information Cost, and Economic Organization," *American Economic Review* 58 (1950): 777-795. [J-STOR]

Miller, *Hierarchical Dilemmas*, "Why Have Hierarchy?" Part One.

Oliver Williamson, "The Economics of Organization: The Transactions Cost Approach," *American Journal of Sociology* 87: 548-77. [J-STOR] See more generally. *Markets and Hierarchies* (New York: Free Press, 1975).

Avinash K. Dixit, "Incentives and Organizations in the Public Sector: An Interpretative Review." *Journal of Human Resources* 37(4)(2002): 696-727. [available through Harvard e-journals]

Terry M. Moe, "The New Economics of Organization," *American Journal of Political Science* 28(4) (1984): 739-777. [J-STOR]

William G. Ouchi, "Markets, Bureaucracies and Clans," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 25 (1980): 129-41 [J-STOR or e-journals]

Cultural and Reputational Theory:

DiMaggio and Powell, "Introduction," and Chapters 1-5 in *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*.

March, James G., Michael D. Cohen, and Johan P. Olsen. 1972. "A Garbage Can Model of Organizational Decision Making." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 17(1): 1-25. [J-STOR]

John Padgett, "Managing Garbage Can Hierarchies," *Administrative Science Quarterly* (1980) [J-STOR]

Jonathan Bendor, Terry Moe and Kenneth Shotts, "Recycling the Garbage Can," *APSR* (2002). [J-STOR]

Crozier, *The Bureaucratic Phenomenon*, Introduction, and Chapters Six and Seven.

Carpenter, *The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy*, Introduction and Chapter One, Conclusion. Skim sections on organizational reputation.

Other reading: Chester Barnard, *The Functions of the Executive* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968 [1938]). Selection.

Emergence of Bureaucracy in Great Britain, continental Europe and the Mediterranean, and the United States (2 weeks)

Note: This segment not to be confused with the massive literature on the emergence of the “state” in these nations, although there are overlaps. See Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions* (Cambridge, 1979) for a classic and informative argument about state formation.

G. Aylmer, *The King's Servants: The Civil Service of Charles I* (1961), selections. [Packet.]

- Optional background reading: Mark Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed* (Penguin).
- Also, for further reading, see Aylmer's books on Civil Service during the Republic and under Charles II.

Rosenberg, Hans. *Bureaucracy, Aristocracy, and Autocracy: The Prussian Experience, 1660-1815* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958). Selections.

Barkey, Karen. *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization*, (New York: Columbia University Press), Chapters 1 and 2.

Godfrey Goodman, *The Court of King James the First* (London: Richard Bentley, 1839). [Selections, packet.]

Daniel Baugh, *British Naval Administration in the Age of Walpole* (Princeton, 1965) [Selections, packet]

- Optional background reading: Baugh, *Naval Administration, 1715-1750* (Publications of the Navy Records Society, 1977). This is a collection of quite illustrative primary source materials on British naval administration. Makes for an excellent compliment to Baugh's book.

Geoffrey Holmes, *British Politics in the Age of Anne*, (London: Macmillan, 1967), selections [packet].

J. H. Plumb, “Robert Walpole's World: The Structure of Government,” Chapter VI in *Aristocratic Government and Society in Eighteenth-Century England*, ed., Geoffrey Holmes. [Packet]

Sir Norman Chester, *The English Administrative System, 1780-1870* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1981), Part I, “The Administrative System in 1870.” Pages. 1-70. Also read Preface. [Packet]

- Optional background reading: *Party Ideology and Popular Politics at the Accession of George III*. Author, details.
- Optional background reading:

Federalist essays (relevant ones to executive and administration).

Richard R. John, “Governmental Institutions as Agents of Change: Rethinking American Political Development in the Early Republic, 1787-1835,” *Studies in American Political Development*, 11 (Fall 1997): 347-380. [e-journals]

- Background and a much more extensive argument in: John, *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).
- See also: Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism*.

Leonard D. White, selections from *Federalists, Jeffersonians, Jacksonians, The Republican Era*. [Selections, packet.] Also available on reserve.

- Background: Sidney Aronson.

Stephen Skowronek, *Building a New American State*, Introduction, Chapters 1 and 2. [text, required]

D. Carpenter, “The Development of National Bureaucracy in the United States,” Chapter Two in *Institutions of American Democracy* (Oxford U.P., 2005).

D. Carpenter, *The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy*, Chapter 2. [text, required]

Optional background reading:

- Scott C. James, *Presidents, Parties and the State* (Cambridge, 2000).
- Sanders, Elizabeth. *Roots of Reform: Farmers, Workers and the American State, 1877-1917* (Chicago, 1999).

Bureaucratic Behavior: Learning, Culture and Structure (4 weeks)

Behavior and Culture (1-2 weeks):

Kaufman, *The Forest Ranger*, passim.

March and Simon, *Organizations*, Chapter 3.

Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, Parts II (“Operators”), III (“Managers”) and IV (“Executives”), pages 31-231.

John Brehm and Scott Gates, “Donut Shops and Speed Traps: Evaluating Models of Supervision on Police Behavior,” *American Journal of Political Science* 37 (1993): 555-81. [J-STOR] Background and much more extensive material in: Brehm and Gates, *Working, Shirking and Sabotage* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1998).

Crozier, *Bureaucratic Phenomenon*, Chapters 8, 9 and 11.

Additional Readings for this segment, of particular interest to students of government organization and the U.S. federal bureaucracy:

Maass, Arthur. *Muddy Waters: The Army Engineers and the Nation's Rivers* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1951). This is a good model for an early and quite intensive archivally-based study of federal agencies.

Kaufman, *The Administrative Behavior of Federal Bureau Chiefs* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press).

Huber, Gregory. *Interests, Influence, and Bureaucratic Behavior*. Selections from book ms.

DiIulio, John, J., Jr. *Governing Prisons*, (New York, Free Press, 1987).

Kettl, Don. *Leadership at the Fed* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1986).

Learning and Information-Processing (1-2 weeks):

Simon, *Administrative Behavior*, Chapters 3-6, 10, 12.

March and Simon, *Organizations*, Chapters 1 and 6.

John F. Padgett, "Bounded Rationality in Budgetary Research," *American Political Science Review* 1980 [J-STOR]

Padgett, "Hierarchy and Ecological control in Federal Budgetary Decision-Making," *American Journal of Sociology* 1981 [J-STOR]

Carpenter, "Adaptive Signal Processing, Hierarchy and Budgetary Control in Federal Regulation," *American Political Science Review* 90 (2). [E]

Carpenter, "Protection without Capture: Dynamic Product Approval by a Politically Responsive, Learning Regulator." *American Political Science Review* 98 (4) (November 2004) 613-31 [E].

Charles Lindblom, "The Science of Muddling Through," *Public Administration Review* 19 (1959): 79-88. [J-STOR or packet] Classic statement of disjointed incrementalism.

Bendor, Jonathan. 1995. "A Model of Muddling Through," *APSR* (December 1995). [J-STOR] Formalization of Lindblom. Lots of meaty research questions here, both formal and empirical.

BREAK-OUT SESSION: STOCHASTIC MODELS OF ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING AND SEARCH (prob 2 hours)

Organizational Structure, Redundancy and Bureaucratic Arrangements (1 week):

Simon, *Administrative Behavior*, Chapters 7-8, 10-11.

Hierarchy: Miller, *Hierarchical Dilemmas*, Parts II and III.

Bendor, Jonathan. 1985. *Parallel Systems: Redundancy in Government* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press).

Heimann, C. F. Larry. 1993. "Understanding the Challenger Disaster: Organizational Structure and the Design of Reliable Systems," *American Political Science Review* 87(2): 421-435. [J-STOR]

Ting, Michael M. "A Strategic Theory of Bureaucratic Redundancy," *American Journal of Political Science* 47(2): 274-292. [J-STOR or e-journal].

BREAK-OUT SESSION: STOCHASTIC MODELS OF REDUNDANCY (prob
2 hours)

Policymaking, Rulemaking and Bureaucratic Autonomy (2 weeks)

Carpenter, Daniel P. *The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy*, Introduction and Conclusion, Chapters 4, 5, and 8.

Terry M. Moe, "Political Control and the Power of the Agent," *Journal of Law, Economics and Organization* 2006 [E]

Padgett, John F. and Christopher K. Ansell, "Robust Action and the Rise of the Medici," *American Journal of Sociology* (1993). [J-STOR]

Kato, *The Problem of Bureaucratic Rationality*, selections.

Kerwin, *Rulemaking*, passim.

Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, Chapter 18, "Rules."

Steven J. Balla, "Administrative Procedures and Political control of the Bureaucracy," *APSR* 92 (September 1998): 663-673. [J-STOR]

McNollgast, "Administrative Procedures as Instruments of Political Control," *Journal of Law, Economics and Organization* 3 (Fall 1987): 243-277. [J-STOR or e-journals]

Other:

Derthick, Martha. *Policymaking for Social Security* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1979).

The Creation and Termination of Agencies, and Appointments/Staffing (1 week)

Moe, "The Politics of Bureaucratic Structure," in *Can the Government Govern?.*, ed. Chubb and Paul E. Peterson (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1989). [Packet]

Howell, William G., and David Lewis, "Agencies by Presidential Design," *Journal of Politics* [J-STOR]

David Lewis, "The Politics of Agency Termination: Confronting the Myth of Immortality," *Journal of Politics* [J-STOR]

Carpenter and Lewis, "Political Learning from Rare Events: Poisson Inference, Fiscal constraints and the Lifetime of Bureaus," *Political Analysis* 12 (3) (Summer 2004) 202-235. [E]

Gormley, William T., Jr. "A Test of the Revolving Door Hypothesis at the FCC," *AJPS* 23 (November 1979): 665-683.

McCarty, "The Appointments Dilemma," *AJPS* July 2004. [E]

Carpenter, *The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy*, Chapter 6.

Optional background reading: Herbert Kaufman, *Are Government Agencies Immortal?* (Washington, D.C., Brookings Institution Press, 1976). See also Amy Zegart, *Flawed by Design* (Stanford University Press).

Light, Paul. *Thickening Government: Federal Hierarchy and the Diffusion of Accountability* (Brookings Institution Press, 1995).

Ronald H. Johnson, and Gary D. Libecap. *The Federal Civil Service System and the Problem of Bureaucracy: The Economics and Politics of Institutional Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

Delegation and the Theory of Political Control (1 week)

David Epstein and Sharyn O'Halloran, *Delegating Powers: A Transaction-Cost Approach to Policymaking under Separate Powers* (Cambridge, 1999). [Required text, passim]

John Huber, Charles Shipan and Madeleine Pfahler. "Legislatures and Statutory Control of the Bureaucracy," *American Journal of Political Science* 45: 330-45. [J-STOR]

Craig Volden, "A Formal Model of the Politics of Delegation in a Separation of Powers System," *AJPS*, January 2002 [J-STOR]

Ting, Michael M. "A Theory of Jurisdictional Assignments in Bureaucracies." *American Journal of Political Science* 46(2): 364-378. [J-STOR]

Gailmard, Sean and John W. Patty, "Slackers and Zealots: Civil Service, Policy Discretion, and Bureaucratic Expertise," working paper.

BREAK-OUT SESSION: FORMAL MODELS OF DELEGATION (prob 2 hours)

Earlier work (not required):

McCubbins, "The Legislative Design of Regulatory Structure," *American Journal of Political Science*, November 1985. [J-STOR] [Probably the classic statement of legislative oversight, worth a careful read if in fact you are studying the formal-theoretic bases of congressional dominance predictions]

Randall Calvert, Mathew McCubbins and Barry Weingast. "[A Theory of Political Control and Bureaucratic Discretion](#)," *American Journal of Political Science*, August 1989. [J-STOR or McCubbins' website.]

External Control of Bureaucracy (Empirical Studies of Political Control) (1 week)

McCubbins, Mathew, and Thomas Schwartz. 1984. "Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Fire Alarms vs. Police Patrols." *American Journal of Political Science* 28(1): 165-179. [J-STOR]

Terry M. Moe, "Control and Feedback in Economic Regulation: The Case of the NLRB," *American Political Science Review* (1985) [J-STOR]

- Weingast and Moran, "Bureaucratic Discretion or Congressional Control? Regulatory Policymaking at the Federal Trade Commission," *Journal of Political Economy* (1983) 91(5): 765-800. [J-STOR]
- Moe critique of Weingast, in "An Assessment of the Positive Theory of Congressional Dominance," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 12 (November 1987): 475-520.
- Balla, Steven R., and John R. Wright, "Interest Groups, Advisory Committees, and Congressional Control of the Bureaucracy," *AJPS* 45 (October 2001): 799-812. [J-STOR]
- Carpenter, "Groups, the Media, Agency Waiting Costs and FDA Drug Approval," *American Journal of Political Science* 46 (3) (July 2002) 490-505. [J-STOR]
- Canes-Wrone, Brandice. "Bureaucratic Decisions and the Composition of Lower Courts." *American Journal of Political Science* 47 (2003): 205-214 [J-STOR]
- Carpenter, Adaptive Signal Processing, Hierarchy and Budgetary Control in Federal Regulation." *American Political Science Review* (June 1996) [J-STOR]; For another look at the data, examining a different hypothesis, see Charles R. Shipan, "Political Regimes and the FDA," *APSR* (November 2004).
- Gordon, Sanford. 2004. "On the Political Strength of Regulated Industries and the Conditional Nature of Regulatory Autonomy," manuscript, New York University. [Available on Gordon's web page.]

BREAK-OUT SESSION: COMMON PROBLEMS AND ISSUES IN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF POLITICAL CONTROL (prob 1 hour, maybe more)

Background and Optional:

- Lawrence S. Rothenberg, *Political, Organizations and Regulation: Interstate Trucking Regulation at the ICC* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press).

Military and Intelligence Bureaucracy (1 week)

- "Posen versus Rosen":** Rosen, *Winning the Next War*. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*. See also Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).
- Niall Ferguson, *Empire*, chapter on governance of India.
- Skowronek, *Building a New American State*, Chapters Four and Seven [evolution of U.S. Army].
- Edward Shils and Morris Janowitz, "Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 12 (1948): 280-315 [J-STOR]
- Pentagon Papers*, selections
- Allison, G. T. 1969. "Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis," *American Political Science Review* 63(3): 689-718.

Others, not required [ask Tim Chafos]:

David A. Armstrong, *Bullets and Bureaucrats: The Machine Gun and the United States Army, 1861-1916* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982).
Baugh, *British Naval Administration in the Age of Walpole* (Princeton).
James Q. Wilson, *The Investigators: Managing FBI and Narcotics Agents* (New York: Basic Books, 1978).

Other Non-U.S. Cases (1 week)

Crozier, *The Bureaucratic Phenomenon*, Part IV, "Bureaucracy as a Cultural Phenomenon: The French Case," pp. 213-313.
Orru, Biggart and Hamilton, "Organizational Isomorphism in East Asia," Chapter 15 in Powell and DiMaggio, *New Institutionalism*.
Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Experience of State-Building* (Columbia University Press).
Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, Chapter 16, "National Differences."
Silberman, Bernard S. "Bureaucratic Development and Bureaucratization: The Case of Japan," *Social Science History* 2 (1978): 385-98. [packet]
Weber, "The Chinese Literati," pp. 416-444 in *From Max Weber*.

Other (optional):

Ezra Suleiman, *Power, Politics and Bureaucracy in France: the Administrative Elite* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974).
Kelman, *Regulating America, Regulating Sweden* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1981).
Nice comparison of U.S. and Sweden in occupational safety regulation.