

# Government 1521

## Bureaucratic Politics: Government, Military, Social and Economic Organizations

Department of Government  
Harvard University  
Spring Semester 2009  
Lectures: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:00PM - 3:30PM  
Room: Northwest Labs B108

Office hours (Wednesday 3-5 PM) and all student meetings:  
Center for American Political Studies Conference Room, Knafel K430.

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### Course Description

Despite (and perhaps because of) globalization, the internet, and other features of contemporary life, formal bureaucratic organizations continue to shape the world we live in. Government affairs – both domestic and foreign – are still largely the province of public agencies. Where government services are carried out by contract, as with privatization schemes, they are often implemented by large private organizations with bureaucratic forms (think of Halliburton).

In economic affairs, corporations both large and small produce, invest and consume vast shares of resources. Despite the common image of businesses as small, complex, formalized organizations still do most of the work of the contemporary economy, including finance (think of the various banks now receiving funding from the U.S. government, or being nationalized overseas), production of steel and automobiles, software development (Apple, Microsoft, Oracle).

Billions of humans worldwide organize their faith more or less by worshipping in formally organized churches with hierarchical structures, the best example being the Roman Catholic Church. Educational institutions worldwide and at every level of training are characterized by highly formalized structures, as students at Harvard University will doubtless recognize.

Bureaucratic organizations are not always large organizations, but they are characterized by formalized rules and regulations, systematic record-keeping and archiving of past decisions, formalized planning for the future, hierarchies of status, defined career paths (within the organization and across organizations), a concern for organizational identity, and other features. Many of these features vary immensely across organizations, and there is no single epitome of bureaucratic form.

This course has several purposes: to acquaint students with different theories of organization, to learn more about governmental and military organizations in the United States (the executive branch and the American bureaucracy), and to compare different forms of bureaucracy in social, economic, governmental and military spheres. The course focuses upon government agencies, particularly those at the federal level of government in the United States, but it includes powerful lessons for other forms of organization as well.

My aim is to leave the student individually, and the class collectively, with four “products” from the course: (1) a familiarity with several different theoretical approaches and models to studying bureaucratic organizations, (2) a sense of “cutting edge” scholarship on bureaucratic politics and organizations, (3) a sound knowledge of the parameters of the historical development and operation of bureaucracy in the United States, and (4) a theoretical and empirical understanding of selected bureaucratic organizations in the history of the United States.

I do not intend this course to substitute fully for (a) courses in organization 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 25 times, at each of which meetings 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.

## 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.

Gormley and Balla. *Bureaucracy and Democracy* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press).

Chandler, Alfred. *The Visible Hand* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press).

Douglas, Mary. *How Institutions Think* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press).

Jones and Baumgartner, *The Politics of Attention: How Government Prioritizes Problems* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

Halperin, Morton. *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, Second Edition (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2006).

Skowronek, Stephen. *Building a New American State: The Expansion of National Administrative Capacities, 1877-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

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

Keller, Morton. *Making Harvard Modern* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

Coffman, Edward M. *The Regulars: The U. S. Army, 1898-1941* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

**Optional** (highly recommended for those who want to read more):

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

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).

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

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

Articles and Chapters: Other materials are available through the electronic journal services offered through the Harvard University Library [e-journals].

## Course Work

Three (3) papers during the semester, each of 4-6 pages, plus a final paper of 7-10 pages. Occasional in-class quizzes on the readings and concepts. Strong expectation that reading will be thoroughly and punctually completed, and that students will attend and participate in lecture discussions when they occur.

## Schedule of Lectures and Readings

### I. INTRODUCTION AND FOUNDATIONAL THEORY

**Lecture 01 (January 29, 2009): Introductory Lecture**

**Lecture 02 (February 3, 2009): Bureaucracy in Government, Economics, Foreign Affairs and Baseball**

Gormley and Balla, *Bureaucracy and Democracy*, Chapter 1.

Skowronek, *Building a New American State*, Introduction and Chapters 1 and 2

Morton H. Halperin, "Why Bureaucrats Play Games," *Foreign Policy* 2 (Spring 1971): 70-90. [E]

### **Lecture 03 (February 5, 2009): Classic Organization Theory; Weber and Contingency**

Weber, "Bureaucracy, pp. 196-244n *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*.

Arthur Stinchcombe, "Bureaucratic and Craft Administration of Production," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 4 (1959): 168-187. [E]

Woodrow Wilson, "The Study of Administration," *Political Science Quarterly* 2 (1887): 197-222. [E]

Other: 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.

### **Lecture 04 (February 10, 2009): Behavioral Theories of Organization**

Gormley and Balla, *Bureaucracy and Democracy*, Chapter 2

Jones and Baumgartner, *The Politics of Attention*, Chapters 1-3.

Charles Lindblom, "The Science of Muddling Through," *Public Administration Review* 19 (1959): 79-88. [E]

#### Optional Technical Pieces:

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. [E]

Jonathan Bendor, "A Model of Muddling Through," *American Political Science Review* 89 (1995) [E] [partial formalization of Lindblom, both supports and attenuates the original claims]

Sendhil Mullainathan, "A Memory-Based Model of Bounded Rationality," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (2002). [E]

Carpenter, "Adaptive Signal Processing, Hierarchy and Budgetary Control in Federal Regulation," *American Political Science Review* 90 (2) (June 1996) [E]

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

Jonathan Bendor, Terry Moe and Kenneth Shotts, "Recycling the Garbage Can," *American Political Science Review* (2002). [E]

**February 12, 2009: First Paper Questions Distributed: Papers Due Monday, March 2, 2009, 8PM.**

**Lecture 05 (February 12, 2009): Transaction Cost Theories of Organization**

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

Optional (some to be read later): Miller, *Hierarchical Dilemmas*, "Why Have Hierarchy?" Part One, Chapters 1 and 2. (Skim argument of Chapter 3.)

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

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

**Lecture 06 (February 17, 2009): Cultural and Reputational Theories of Formal Organization**

John Meyer and Brian Rowan, "Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony," *American Journal of Sociology* 83 (1977): 340-363. [E]

Douglas, *How Institutions Think*, Introduction, Chapters 1, 4, 5 and 8.

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

John F. Padgett and Christopher K. Ansell, "Robust Action and the Rise of the Medici, 1400-1434," *American Journal of Sociology*, 98 (May 1993):1259-1319.

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

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

## MODULE II. REPUTATION AND ORDER: MILITARY AND SECURITY ORGANIZATIONS

**Lecture 07 (February 19, 2009): The Transformation of the U.S. Army**

Skowronek, *Building a New American State*, Chapters Four and Seven [evolution of U.S. Army]. Skim Introduction and Chapter 1.

Coffman, *The Regulars*, Skim Chapters 1-3, read Chapters 4-5 closely.

For background, be sure to read earlier chapters of Coffman, describing Army in its "premodern" phase; this overlaps somewhat but not entirely with Skowronek, Chapter Four.

**Lecture 08 (February 24, 2009): Organizational Learning between Wars**

Coffman, *The Regulars*, Chapters 6 and 7. (Skim chapter 8.)

**Lecture 09 (February 26, 2009): The Basis of Twentieth Century Organization and Control**

Coffman, *The Regulars*, Chapters 9-10 and postscript.

WRITING ASSIGNMENT: First Paper Due Monday, March 2, 2009, 8PM.
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**Lecture 10 (March 3, 2009): Organizational Power, Cohesion and War**

Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, Part I

David Mechanic, "Sources of Power of Lower Participants in Complex Organizations," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 7 (1962): 31-40. [E]

Edward Shils and Morris Janowitz, "Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 12 (1948): 280-315. [E]

**Lecture 11 (March 5, 2009): Cognition and Politics in Foreign Policy Agencies**

Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, Part II, selections (chapters 8, 9, 13, 14, skim 15).

Allison, G. T. 1969. "Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis," *American Political Science Review* 63(3): 689-718. [E]

"The Pitfalls of Peacetime Military Bureaucracy," interview with Col. Richard T. Reynolds (Ret.), USAF, Harvard PIRP. [E]

Others, not required: 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).

Niall Ferguson, *Empire*, chapter on governance of India.

*Pentagon Papers*, selections

**MODULE III. GOVERNANCE AND POLITICS: GOVERNMENT AGENCIES IN THE CIVILIAN REALM**

**Lecture 12 (March 10, 2009): Selection and Socialization, Recruitment and Retention**

Skowronek, *Building a New American State*, Chapters Three and Six.

Kaufman, *The Forest Ranger*, selections.

### **Lecture 13 (March 12, 2009): Behavioral Rationality, Structure and U.S. Politics**

Jones and Baumgartner, *The Politics of Attention*, Chapters 5 and 6.

Optional (classics):

John F. Padgett, "Bounded Rationality in Budgetary Research," *American Political Science Review* (1980).

Padgett, "Hierarchy and Ecological Control in Budgetary Decisionmaking," *American Journal of Sociology* (1981).

### **Lecture 14 (March 17, 2009): Reputation and Autonomy in the USDA**

Carpenter and Sin, "Policy Tragedy and the Emergence of Regulation: The Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act of 1938," *Studies in American Political Development* (2007) [E]

Kaufman, *Forest Ranger*, selections.

**March 19, 2009: Second Paper Questions Distributed: Papers Due April 3, 2009.**

### **Lecture 15 (March 19, 2009): Reputation and U.S. Pharmaceutical Regulation**

Carpenter, "The Political Economy of FDA Drug Approval," *Health Affairs* (2004). [E]

Carpenter and Ting, "The Political Logic of Regulatory Error," *Nature Reviews Drug Discovery* (2005) [E]

Richard Horton, "Vioxx, the implosion of Merck, and aftershocks at the FDA," *The Lancet* 364 (9450), pp 1995-1996 [E]

Skim Jones and Baumgartner, *The Politics of Attention*, Chapters 8 and 10.

Optional Reading [more technical and historical]:

Carpenter, "Groups, the Media, Agency Waiting Costs and FDA Drug Approval," *American Journal of Political Science* 90 (2) (July 2002): 490-515. [E]

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

*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]

Leonard D. White, selections from *Federalists, Jeffersonians, Jacksonians, The Republican Era*.

## MODULE IV. CONTRACTS AND COALITIONS: FIRMS AND ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION

### Lecture 16 (March 31, 2009): The Pre-History and Revolutionary History of Economic Organization

Chandler, *The Visible Hand*, Parts I and II.

WRITING ASSIGNMENT: Second Papers Due April 3, 2009, 4PM
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### Lecture 17 (April 2, 2009): The Multidivisional Form and Hierarchy – Guest Lecture

Chandler, *The Visible Hand*, Part V and Conclusion

Neil Fligstein, “The Spread of the Multidivisional Form Among Large Firms, 1919-1979,” *American Sociological Review* 50 (1985) 377-91.

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

Optional: Terry M. Moe, “The New Economics of Organization,” *American Journal of Political Science* 28(4) (1984): 739-777. [E]

### Lecture 18 (April 7, 2009): Transformation and Corruption

Richard White, “Information, Markets and Corruption: Transcontinental Railroads in the Gilded Age,” *Journal of American History* 90 (1) (2003) [E]

### Lecture 19 (April 9, 2009): The Internal Politics of the Firm

James G. March, “The Business Firm as a Political Coalition,” *Journal of Politics* 24 (1962): 662-678. [E]

## MODULE V. STATUS AND AUTHORITY: EDUCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL INSTITUTIONS

### Lecture 20 (April 14, 2009): The Modernization of the University

Keller and Keller, *Making Harvard Modern*, Part I, Chapters 1-7.

Background (not required, but perhaps of interest): D. G. Tewksbury, *The Founding of American Colleges and Universities Before the Civil War*.

**Lecture 21 (April 16, 2009): Politics in the Modern University**

Keller and Keller, *Making Harvard Modern*, Part II, Chapters 8 -14

**April 20, 2009: Third Paper Questions Posted: Due Friday, May 1st, 5PM**

**Lecture 22 (April 21, 2009): Dilemmas of the Modern Organizational University**

Keller and Keller, *Making Harvard Modern*, Part III and Epilogue.

**Lecture 23 (April 23, 2009): Status and Survival – Guest Lecture**

Joel Podolny, “A Status-Based Model of Market Competition,” *American Journal of Sociology* 98 (1993): 829-72. [E]

[skim] Michael T. Hannan, and John Freeman, "The Population Ecology of Organizations," *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 82 (1977): 929-964. [E]

WRITING ASSIGNMENT: Third Paper Due Monday, May 4 <sup>th</sup> , 8PM
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**Lecture 24 (April 28, 2009): Loose Coupling in Education and the Modern Hospital**

Charles E. Rosenberg, “From Almshouse to Hospital: The Shaping of Philadelphia General Hospital,” *The Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly – Health and Society* 60 (1) (Winter 1982) 108-154. [E]

[skim following] Karl E. Weick, “Educational Organizations as Loosely Coupled Systems,” *Administrative Science Quarterly* 21 (1976): 1-19 [E]

**Lecture 25 (April 30, 2009): Conclusion and Discussion of the Modern Hospital**

Robert N. Wilson, “The Social Structure of a General Hospital,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* [Vol. 346, Medicine and Society] (Mar., 1963), pp. 67-76 [E]

John E. Harris, “The internal organization of hospitals: some economic implications,” *Bell Journal of Economics* Vol. 8, No. 2 (Autumn, 1977), pp. 467-482 [E]

FINAL PAPER (= take-home exam) DUE May 20 <sup>th</sup> , 8PM
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