

Political Science 381: Administration and Society

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Draft Syllabus

Lawrence H. Nitz, Professor

633A Saunders. Tel: 956-8665; lnitz@hawaii.edu

Classroom Location: Time: Office Hours:

About:

This is a course on the executive structures of government—the organizations and offices that actually deliver work—and on their relationship with the American public. Perhaps the most often voiced complaint about government in America is that there is “too much bureaucracy.” Whenever we say this, we have to stop and tell ourselves to wait a minute and consider delivering services without bureaucracy. Let’s propose going to a county office to renew our driver’s license absent a bureaucracy. We arrive at the office, push and shove a bit to get into line, and as we approach the window for service, the clerk calls up somebody from the side of the room to take our place, and 6 or 7 people are served in front of us. Without bureau rules, there is no instruction, let alone guarantee that citizens will be served in the order they arrive. Or, we arrive at the window, and are told that we have not brought a document to certify where we live—no power bill, no rent receipt, at best a cell phone bill which has only our internet address. We will not get our license renewed-but without rules, can we complain that the office failed to notify people of the documentation required? One office posts a sign at the outside door, another posts it in 10 point type on the counter at the service window, another says nothing.

It is clear that we do not want to be served by the non-bureaucratic office when it issue is something personally important to us. But what if that is your cousin at the service window? Won’t that be OK?

Organization:

Many years ago college libraries had somewhat limited access to and archival of journals—scientific, opinion, policy—the whole picture of commentary on society which we accept today as normal. It became fashionable to draw commentary and criticism together into readers, collections of articles of varying levels of complexity, typically targeted at beginning English courses, where some amount of tutoring in reading and analysis skills was expected. JSTOR, unfortunately, has never back-filled all of the academic literature of the 40s and 50s in most cases, so the source of the article entitled “Education by Books” is long lost. Its sense has not.

This is a course of “education by books.” We shall move through a set of books that address government organization, the running of bureaus and agencies, interactions of government with citizens, ideologies that affect how people view and work with government. Our books are drawn from diverse areas of politics, sociology, and history. We sample observations, theories and occasionally data. We will engage them to the best of our abilities. We hope to come out on the other side well read, analytic, and well-spoken.

We shall allocate a selection of challenging, and possibly funny books across the weeks of the semester. Each book will capture a set of questions about the arguments, the application, and the extensiveness of its implications. These will serve as the basis for weekly essays. The books will be supplemented with contemporary news coverage and analytic articles on today’s bureaus, offices, and public policies.

The Books:

Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law*

Thomas Frank, *What’s the Matter with Kansas?*

Jonathan Metzl, *Dying of Whiteness: How the Politics of Racial Resentment is Killing America.*

Michael Lewis, *The Fifth Risk.*

Michael Lipsky, *Street Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services*

Hacker and Pierson. *American Amnesia: How the War on Government led us to Forget What Made America Prosper.*

Brian J. Cook, *Bureaucracy and Self-Government: Reconsidering the Role of Public Administration in American Politics*, second edition.

Articles:

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1981/06/m-16-a-bureaucratic-horror-story/545153/>

https://resources.hms.com/sdoh-white-paper-030419?utm_campaign=Governing%20SDOH%20WP&utm_source=Governing

<https://www-jstor-org.eres.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/stable/pdf/2774140.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A6b04f673cb42f6cbb4734df0406bf3db>

Copies available:

<http://academic.udayton.edu/RichardGhere/POL%20307/weber.htm>

<https://iedunote.com/bureaucratic-management-theory-max-weber>

