Doing the Public’s Business in Washington State – Pre-class
Syllabus
Fall Quarter 2021

CRN – 10389
Credits – 2-credits
Level – Evergreen Graduate Students
Faculty – Stephen H. Buxbaum, MPA
Email: buxbaums@evergreen.edu

First Meeting – Friday, November 5, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. – via Zoom

Course Description:
This course explores the special considerations that public managers in Washington State must give to implementing programs, projects, and services. We will draw from examples of current environmental, public infrastructure, and housing challenges that local governments face daily as we learn how public administrators go about conducting the public’s business. Students will examine how resource allocation decisions are made; how public value is determined; and how local, state, and federal levels of government work with and sometimes against each other as public managers attempt to meet public needs.

Learning Objectives:

☐ Investigate where the authority to act resides when carrying out the public's business.
☐ Investigate how public projects, services and programs are determined to be ready to proceed.
☐ Consider methods for making resource allocation decisions using concepts that assess need, capacity, agreement, and results.

This course is intended for graduate students who are pursuing professions in public management, non-profit management, and public policy in Washington State. The course was conceived as part of a series of MPA electives focusing on local governance in Washington State. This class has been successfully delivered to Evergreen MPA students six times since 2009, with full enrollment for every class. The material has been refined and modified to adapt to current issues; the basic structure remains. Your faculty’s primary course objective is to add value to your academic and professional work by enhancing your understanding of civic life in Washington State. The course is crafted from a practitioner’s point of view and based upon thirty-five plus years of direct experience working at the local, state, and federal levels of governments, doing the public’s business on behalf of Washington State.

For this year’s version of Doing the Public’s Business we will draw upon current issues related to the resource allocation and operational challenges related to homelessness and flood control. Our discussions on housing and homelessness will draw from recent news articles that have been produced for the Seattle Times’ Project Homelessness reporting. Our discussions regarding infrastructure and flood control will draw from information and reports about the twenty-plus year effort to resolve the future of the Deschutes Estuary that was impounded in the 1950s to form Capitol Lake in Olympia, Washington.
We will also take advantage of the opportunity to follow and critically examine the work of the Washington State Redistricting Commission, which is responsible to deliver a plan for redrawing the State’s Legislative and Congressional voting district boundaries by November 15, 2021. This year’s work of the Commission will be consequential in determining outcomes for the 2022 midterm elections, with the result of producing highly competitive battles for several Congressional seats.

The central questions we will explore during our weekend intensive will include:

- Whether or not public managers have unique responsibilities.
- How does a public manager determine value?
- Should the value propositions that are supported and proposed by public managers primarily be 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?

In advance of class, you will examine and reflect upon these questions in a short paper due the week prior to our on-line sessions (see below for more information). The pre-class reading and writing will set us up for a meaningful weekend of sharing, discussion and skill building.

**Communication with Faculty:**

The best way to contact me is by email: buxbaums@evergreen.edu

You are welcome to schedule individual Zoom sessions with me – appointment by request, including evening and weekend hours if that works best for your schedule. I appreciate the opportunity to speak directly (through the medium of Zoom) about your professional and academic interests.

**Methods of Instruction:**

Remote Learning platforms will be used to deliver all instruction for this course. We will use Canvas to deliver assignments, course materials and to receive student work. Online class meetings will be conducted using Zoom. You must be able to access and use both Zoom and Canvas to take part in this class.

Students should be prepared – either using their own or the College’s electronics/computers – to access the internet for the purposes of research and reading assignments. Assignments will include reading from public access internet-based sources, newspapers and journals and web sites in addition to materials posted directly to the course Canvas site. Audio and video files will also be used as part of our instructional materials.

To successfully participate in this program, students will need a quiet, personal workspace, and a computer with internet access and audio/video capability.
Advertised Schedule

Students should check their calendars to be certain that they can be available for class sessions via Zoom, plus independent (asynchronous) work within the time parameters of the schedule below. Our online class time will fall within the advertised schedule – online classes (conducted using Zoom) will not take-up the entirety of the listed times (read on past the advertised schedule for more specific information about scheduling).

Online Zoom sessions will last approximately 40 minutes per sitting – with stretch breaks and at least one longer 15-minute break during every morning, afternoon, and evening instruction period. Saturday sessions will include a one-hour lunch break.

- Friday, November 5, 6 pm - 9 pm
- Saturday, November 6, 9 am - 4 pm
- Sunday, November 7, 9 am – 12:30 pm

See further below for a summary of assignment due dates and reading and writing that is required to be completed prior to our online class sessions. Complete information about times for online class sessions will be posted to our Canvas web site which will open on Monday, September 27, 2021, by 5:00 p.m. for enrolled students.

Location

Class sessions will be on-line. Your faculty is based in Olympia, Washington near the Capitol Campus. Internet disruptions due to weather or other issues may impact delivery of course materials. In the unlikely event of a disruption, every effort will be made to notify students of alternative plans via text, email, and phone.

Overview of Assignments and Class Activities – including pre-class work

The schedule below serves as a close approximation of our online Zoom session meeting times and assignment due dates – times and assignment due dates will be posted to Canvas well in advance. Anticipate that our meeting times will generally fall within the parameters outlined below – we will not be going "overtime." Our final schedule will be posted to Canvas when our site is opened.

Canvas Site Opens – Our class Canvas site will be opened to all enrolled students by 5:00 p.m. on Monday, September 27, 2021. Canvas will be our primary venue for delivering course materials, conveying assignments, and uploading work.

First Written Assignment Due – A short, one-page or less, introduction explaining your background and interest in the course material is due by 10:00 p.m. Monday, October 4, 2021. Instructions will be provided on Canvas for this assignment. I use information from this assignment to refine program materials to match the issues and interests that are most important to you.

Second Written Assignment Due – A short, 3-to-5-page paper is due by 10:00 p.m. Sunday, October 31, 2021. Complete instructions for this assignment will be available on Canvas when our site is opened on September 27.
The purpose of this paper assignment is to help us collectively apply information from the assigned readings to events and issues that local governments across the state are currently facing. The information that you will be gathering for this assignment in advance of our weekend sessions will help provide context for our seminar discussions, exercises, and presentations. Papers should make use of the assigned readings combined with BRIEF internet research using the web site links as provided on Canvas. Papers will include insights about the pre-class reading combined with reflections and observations from the student's own experience and perceptions about how public programs, projects and services are and should be managed.

This is not meant to be an exhaustive research assignment – the primary purpose is to introduce you to a few valuable tools for analyzing the viability and potential challenges of implementing successful public programs, projects, and services that you will be able to use in your own present and future work. As will be more completely explained on Canvas, your assignment is to write a "structured paper" – you will be briefly answering a short list of very specific questions.

Students will initially conduct research independently for this assignment, and then will work in triads to share insights and questions when we convene as a class. Another purpose of this assignment is to help us to establish a common basic awareness and understanding of the challenges inherent in doing the public's business in Washington State.

**Pre-class Reading** – In addition to the on-line research and reading you will complete for your written assignment due October 31; you will need to complete the required course reading prior to the start of our first class. All required reading material will be available electronically on or through links posted to Canvas.

**Weekend On-line Zoom Sessions** – We will convene as a class for our first session together via Zoom. *Our session will start at 6:00 p.m. on Friday, November 5, 2021.* On Saturday, November 6 we will convene at 9:00 a.m. and end at or before Noon; reconvening at 1:00 p.m. and ending at or before 4:00 p.m. We will meet for a morning session on Sunday, November 7, starting at 9:00 a.m. and ending at or before 12:30 p.m. Some of our time will be spent in small group work sessions. Other online activities will include viewing short video clips, facilitated all-class discussions, and presentations by your instructor.

**Final Assignment and Evaluations Due** – A written final summation of your learning, consisting of responses to a series of short questions provided to you in advance, is due by **10:00 p.m. Sunday, November 7, 2021.** Your self-evaluation is also due at that time. An evaluation of your faculty should be posted electronically to the college’s web site by the end of evaluation week on December 17, 2021. The due dates for evaluation materials listed are meant to be final deadlines. You are encouraged to complete your evaluations as soon as possible after the course is complete. Evaluation Conference – On-line evaluation conferences are welcomed, but optional. Dates for short Zoom session conferences will be available online via Canvas. Students interested in an online evaluation conference need to schedule their meeting prior to the end of the day on Sunday, December 12, 2021. Conferences may be scheduled for a mutually agreeable time between November 15 and December 17. Students who are enrolled in another class of mine during fall quarter are welcome to combine conference times and topics. Conference sessions are frequently used for discussing professional and academic interests.
Required Reading and Other Course Materials:

There are no textbooks that need to be purchased for this course. Our primary reading will include articles and reports all of which will be available to download from our Canvas site. Our reading will include:

The New Yorker, February 13, 2006 - Million-Dollar Murray - Why problems like homelessness may be easier to solve than to manage.


Case Study: Sitting with Books – blog posts and comments from Participation Nation; a National Public Radio (NPR) Program; August 18, 2012.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "Danger of a Single Story" TED Talk, originally filmed July 2009 at TED Global 2009 (video link with transcript provided).

Web Sites – a wide selection of online sources will be used for this class. Primary web sites include the following:


Municipal Research Services Center (MRSC) - http://mrsc.org/Home.aspx


Seattle Times – Project Homeless - https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/homeless/

Credit Requirements:

Two credits will be awarded to students who successfully fulfill program expectations. To receive full credit, students will be expected to:

Fully participate in all Zoom and Canvas discussions and activities. Be prepared to discuss key ideas from the readings during our online Zoom class meetings.

If you anticipate that you may have a problem fully participating in all the online sessions, please contact your faculty in advance to see if there is the possibility for compensating for a missed session.

Complete all online Canvas assignments throughout the quarter.

Meet basic expectations for each assignment as outlined in assignment descriptions.
Complete all assignments in a timely manner – if a deadline must be missed, students should notify and consult with faculty prior to the date/time due unless they are prevented to do so by an extreme situation. Notification to faculty of missed due dates must be accompanied by a proposed new date due. It is up to your faculty to approve alternative due dates for late work.

Participate fully and support our learning community and actively engage in all group activities. (See section below on participation.)

Submit a written self-evaluation and faculty evaluation after the course is complete (see deadlines on Canvas). Students have an option to attend an end-of-quarter evaluation conference (via phone or Zoom).

Building Our Online Learning Community:
Evergreen’s Master of Public Administration program tends to attract a vibrant mix of students with a wide range of life experiences, skills, interests, and commitments. Learning communities work best when students get to know one another. Building relationships with peers outside of class can be especially rewarding; but finding appropriate ways to connect during the pandemic makes relationship-building especially challenging.

Please consider creative ways to use technology to collaborate on projects, study with peers, exchange work, or just chat while on break between interactive sessions. Technology training and online tutorials are available for Zoom, Canvas, and Microsoft 360 (see links on Canvas).

Our online interactive time will generally be kept to a maximum of about 40 minutes at a single sitting. Breaks will be short, and types of activities will vary to keep us engaged and alert. In addition to short stretch breaks, every morning and afternoon and evening weekend session will have a 15-minute break falling approximately at the midpoint of our online program. Your faculty welcomes your ideas to make the most of our class time to connect with your peers and develop our learning community.

Participation and Engagement: Your participation will be evaluated based on the depth of your own engagement with class material and how well you support other students’ learning and contribute to a collaborative spirit of investigation. This means moving a discussion forward by both sharing your questions and reflections and by listening well to other students and following up with additional questions, reflection, and elaboration. If you find yourself struggling to find ways to contribute, please talk to your faculty about strategies for increasing your participation (we all need support in online learning skills). Students enter our learning community with differing perspectives and experiences. These differences are a strength if we remember that the collective goal is to develop a deeper understanding of the material and our world. We do not need to agree with one another, but we do need to hear each other’s thoughts and questions.

Personal Note from Your Faculty: I believe we should recognize that life during the COVID-19 Pandemic is unique. I want us all to do our very best to practice patience, grace, and compassion. Despite the Pandemic, I am very confident that we will be able to learn a lot together. I view learning as a relational pursuit – it takes a community. I am grateful for this opportunity to come together as a learning community.
The Evergreen State College and Other Course/Program Policies You Should be Aware of:

COVID-19:
Please refer to canvas and email for up-to-date information and refer to https://evergreen.edu/covid19 for additional information regarding The Evergreen State College.

Communicating:
Email and Canvas are our primary means of communication. Students are responsible for checking their Evergreen email and Canvas regularly.

No incompletes will be awarded for this course.
Full loss of credit decisions will be made by the faculty. Plagiarism (i.e., using other peoples' work as your own) may result in total loss of credit for the class and may result in dismissal from the MPA program. See the MPA Handbook and College statement on academic honesty for more information. Failing to meet course requirements (ex. not completing one or more assignments, completing one or more assignments late, or multiple absences) may constitute denial of total credit at the discretion of the faculty. Students at risk of losing credit will receive written notification prior to the end of the quarter.

Reasonable Accommodation: Reasonable accommodations will be provided for any student who qualifies for them through a working relationship with Access Services. To request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact the office of Access Services for Students with Disabilities (867-6348 or 6364). If the student is already working with the office of Access Services the faculty should have received aletter clearly indicating the student has a disability that requires academic accommodations. If any student has a health condition or disability that may require accommodations to effectively participate in this class, please do the following: Contact faculty before class and Contact Access Services to receive a letter of accommodation. Information about a disability or health condition will be regarded as confidential. Please refer to TESC’s Students with Disabilities Policy.

Conduct and conflict resolution: Discuss any problems involving others in the learning community directly with the individuals involved (so long as the concerned party feels safe doing so). Possessing respect for others is fundamental to an open, free, and educational dialogue. All students are expected to support and contribute to a well-functioning MPA classroom and learning community. Behavior that disrupts the learning community may be grounds for disciplinary action, including dismissal from the MPA program. All students will be held accountable for maintaining the highest of academic standards.

We will abide by:

College Social Contract: WAC 174-121-010 College philosophy.
Student Conduct Code (including academic integrity and plagiarism): Chapter 174- 123 WAC, Student Conduct Code & Grievance/Appeals Process.
College’s Non-discrimination Policies and Procedures.