

COURSE: MPA 826 Public Sector Ethics

Instructor: Dr. Kathy L. Brock

Email: kathy.brock@queensu.ca

Office: RSH 314

Office Hours: TBA

COURSE OVERVIEW:

Canadians, like citizens in Britain, the US and Australia, are increasingly questioning the ethical standards of elected and permanent public officials. Cynicism and distrust seem to be growing. Yet, Canada, like these other countries, ranks low on international corruption indices. What Canadians are perhaps too quick to dismiss are the remedies in place and being pursued to address instances of unethical or questionable behaviour by public officials. The integrity of the system lies in the very fact that instances of maladministration are brought to public light by an attentive media. The relative lack of deep embedded corruption in the Canadian political system is due to a vigilant public and a generally well-regulated political system.

If the system is well-regulated, then why are examples of bad behaviour, public malfeasance or poor judgment so often in the media and why do they seem to be becoming more common? This course explores this paradox on two levels. First, it examines the nature of ethics and corruption and the safeguards and legislative regime intended to prevent bad behaviour and encourage responsible public guardianship in the Canadian public sector in contrast with other countries, especially the US and Britain. Second, it explores, in theory and practice, what it means to be a responsible public servant in an increasingly complex policy world.

This course is based on student-centred learning. It comprises seminar discussions and small group work on three cases chosen by the student groups as explained below.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Strategic Thinking: This course aims to align with this learning outcome by developing an understanding of the values and principles of Canadian parliamentary democracy with special emphasis on the public sector in a comparative context. It is also designed to help students understand the role of values and ethics in the policy process. Activities: seminar readings and discussions.

Analysis and Application: This course is designed to have the students apply theories to practical examples through three separate case studies for current politics, chosen by their groups. This groups work requires students to think critically about complex ethical and values challenges in public life and to understand how to assess the possible responses on an individual and organizational level given the possible costs and benefits. Activities: problem solving in the cases, briefing notes.

Engagement and Communication: Student skills are developed on two levels. First, the seminar discussions provide an opportunity to engage with a diverse peer group on a range of difficult and sometimes sensitive topics, thus developing their interpersonal, emotive and analytical skills. Second, the case studies provide opportunities for effective collaborative work in a small team and for honing written and oral communication skills. Activities: case negotiations and analysis, joint briefing note and class presentation.

Professionalism, Leadership and Collaboration: Understanding different approaches to ethics and values in the public sector is a core component of professionalism. Moral leadership is critical to organizational health and building inclusive, collaborative communities. The course is built upon achieving these objectives. Activities: course readings, small group work, presentations and class discussions on ethical challenges and solutions.

GRADING SCHEME:

Seminar Participation and Attendance	25%
Case Studies (3 x 25%)	<u>75%</u>
	100%

Note that each case study will involve an oral presentation (10%) and written component (15%). Each case study will be a maximum of 10 pages (approximately 2,500 – 3,000 words max). The course grading scheme will be subject to approval in the first class.

COURSE FORMAT AND REQUIREMENTS

This course will use a combination of student-centred class discussions, guest lectures and case studies for understanding public sector ethics. Students will be expected to discuss the leading theories of public sector ethics and then to engage in small teams to apply this learning to particular situations. Each case study will conclude with students presenting their conclusions to the class and engaging in a general discussion of the case.

Normally classes will be divided into two parts. During the first part of each class, students will discuss the readings and identify topics for further discussion. Guest speakers will attend for this part of the class on designated days. During the second part of each class, students will enter into their break-out rooms and work on their group presentation. The instructor will circulate among the break-out rooms to assist the students. On presentation days, the entire class will be devoted to the presentations and class discussion of each group's work.

PARTICIPATION

The mark for seminar participation will be based upon quality of comments or questions, attendance, evidence of preparation, willingness to challenge accepted ideas, concern for the views expressed by others, solicitation of other people's ideas, ability to respond creatively to criticism, and helpful suggestions for each other's work. The final grade for participation will be based on a combination of self and instructor assessment. If you are unable to attend a class, please let the instructor know in advance.

CASE STUDIES

Students will work on three case studies involving ethical dilemmas during the course. In each case, student groups will select a leading issue involving an ethical issue, conflict of interest, question of integrity,

whistleblowing incident etc. They will research the issue and then apply the course readings, and legislative or regulatory rules as appropriate to the case. In the third week of each case study, students will present their case and answers to the class and conduct a class discussion on the topic. To assist the other students in preparing to hear their case, teams may wish to suggest which course readings are most helpful.

COURSE READINGS:

Canadian Public Administration Vol. 61: S1, May 2018. Selected articles from this special issue will be used throughout the course.

Kenneth Kernaghan and John Langford. 2014. *The Responsible Public Servant*, second edition. Toronto: Institute of Public Administration of Canada. Available through the Campus bookstore and online. This text provides insight into ethics and values in the Canadian public sector.

Dean Geuras and Charles Garofalo. 2011. *Practical Ethics in Public Administration*, third edition. Vienna, Virginia: Management Concepts. Available online through KOBO Books and Indigo/Chapters. This text provides insight into how a public servant can balance personal ethics with organizational values.

Assorted scholarly articles will be included to bring the readings up to date. These will be available online. Relevant legislation and government publications will be included where appropriate.

COURSE PLAN AND SCHEDULE OF READINGS:

The course plan and schedule of readings will be available in December and upon course enrollment once speakers have been confirmed and the most recent academic articles are published.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Academic Integrity is constituted by the five core fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility (see www.academicintegrity.org). These values are central to the building, nurturing and sustaining of an academic community in which all members of the community will thrive. Adherence to the values expressed through academic integrity forms a foundation for the "freedom of inquiry and exchange of ideas" essential to the intellectual life of the University (see the Senate Report on Principles and Priorities www.queensu.ca/secretariat/policies/senate/report-principles-and-priorities).

Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the Academic Integrity Policy of the School of Graduate Studies, available at <http://www.queensu.ca/sgs/forstudents/policiesprocedures/SGSAcademicIntegrityPolicyasofFeb2012.pdf>.

Departures from academic integrity include plagiarism, use of unauthorized materials, facilitation, forgery and falsification, and are antithetical to the development of an academic community at Queen's. Given the seriousness of these matters, actions which contravene the regulation on academic integrity carry sanctions that can range from a warning or the loss of grades on an assignment or the failure of a course to the rescinding of a degree.

ACCOMMODATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

Students with physical and learning disabilities must contact the instructor as soon as possible in

order for accommodations/modifications for course expectations to be made.

Queen's University is committed to achieving full accessibility for persons with disabilities. Part of this commitment includes arranging academic accommodations for students with disabilities to ensure they have an equitable opportunity to participate in all of their academic activities. If you are a student with a disability and think you may need accommodations, you are strongly encouraged to contact Queen's Student Accessibility Services (QSAS) and register as early as possible. For more information, including important deadlines, please visit the QSAS website at:

<http://www.queensu.ca/studentwellness/accessibility-services/>