

PSC 504
Computer Applications in
Public Administration
Summer Session, 2008
Tuesdays, 18:00-22:00
Room 209 Graham

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SYLLABUS

I. Focus of Course

This course will examine information systems management in the public sector. Attention will be paid to specific applications along with a focus on the broader questions of how public organizations can equip themselves to utilize information technology and meeting the challenges associated with information systems.

The emphasis in this course is not on teaching individuals how to use the computer. Rather, the course will prepare current and future public managers with capabilities and strategies to manage information technology in the public sector.

The primary goal of this course is two fold. First, the course will develop student competencies in:

- Oral communication via regular participation in class discussion and a project presentation;
- Written communication via both written assignments and on-line discussions; and,
- Research and problem solving via reviewing current literature and its application to understanding the challenges of information systems.

Second, the course expands upon the student's knowledge of issues surrounding management of information systems. Upon completing the course, the student will have a good understanding of the subject matter including:

- The basic building blocks of information systems (i.e., their planning, acquisition, organization and project management);
- The application of this technology to meet a public organization's operational needs;
- Insights into information system best practices; and,
- Be able to understand information systems within their broader organizational, societal and ethical contexts.

No specific computer skills or knowledge are required for this course, although it is assumed that students are acquainted with basic computer applications, including word processing, spreadsheet use, and the Windows environment. Regardless of skill level, students will find this course useful because of the emphasis on the broader questions of computer use and implementation.

This course attempts to survey a wide range of topics and therefore does not cover any particular topic in great depth. The emphasis is on exposing students to a broad spectrum of materials, raising a variety of questions, and indicating how students can pursue specific subjects in more detail. The written assignments for the course are structured to allow students to focus their attention on topics of greatest interest and relevance to them.

This course is designed for students in the MPA program, but it may be suitable for other graduate or advanced undergraduate students with a strong interest in the subject matter of the course. Those not in the MPA program who wish to enroll in the course should consult the instructor.

II. Readings

For purchase at the bookstore or alternative sources:

Bruce Rocheleau, *Public Management Information Systems* (Idea Group Publishing, 2006)

Additional required readings have been assigned from the following books and periodicals (all on library e-reserve):

Carr, "Geographic Information Systems in the Public Sector", *Public Information Technology: Policy and Management Issues*, G David Garson, Editor (Idea Group Publishing, 2007)

Heckman, "Strategic Information Technology Planning and the Line Manager's Role", *Information Systems Management*, Fall 2003

Irvine, "Cybersecurity: Considerations for Information Systems", *Handbook of Public Information Systems, 2nd Edition*, G. David Garson, Editor (Taylor & Francis, 2005)

Nelson, "Understanding Large-Scale IT Project Failure: Escalating and De-escalating Commitment", *Handbook of Public Information Systems, 2nd Edition*, G. David Garson, Editor (Taylor & Francis, 2005)

Cohen, "Citizen Satisfaction with Contacting Government on the Internet", *Information Polity*, Volume 11, Issue 1, 2006

Prysbly and Prysbly, "Electronic Mail in the Public Workspace: Issues of Privacy and Public Disclosure", *Public Information Technology: Policy and Management Issues*, G David Garson, Editor (Idea Group Publishing, 2007)

Streib and Willoughby, "Exploring Internet Options: The Case of Georgia's Consumer Services", *Handbook of Public Information Systems, 2nd Edition*, G. David Garson, Editor (Taylor & Francis, 2005)

Swiss, "Information Technology as a Facilitator of Results-Based Management in Government", *Public Information Technology: Policy and Management Issues*, G David Garson, Editor (Idea Group Publishing, 2007)

Taylor, *Managing Information Technology Projects* (American Management Association, 2004)

White and Korosec, "Issues in Contracting and Outsourcing Information Technology", *Handbook of Public Information Systems, 2nd Edition*, G. David Garson, Editor (Taylor & Francis, 2005)

III. Assignments and Grading

Your grade in the course will be based on the following:

1. An eGovernment applications paper that examines some use or uses of the Internet or Intranet made by public agencies. Details on this assignment will be distributed separately. This paper is due June 24.
2. A management information systems paper that analyzes either: a) the application of management information systems, decision support systems, or geographical information systems to a public administration problem, or b) the application of information system "best practices," evaluating the system or practice's effectiveness for a public agency. Details on this assignment will be distributed separately. This paper is due July 15.
3. A group project that includes the submission of a collaborative paper and class presentation discussing a current topic in information system management (topics to be provided by the instructor unless otherwise determined). Details on this assignment will be distributed separately. Paper and presentation occur throughout the semester.
4. Participation in On-line discussion forums. The Blackboard based on-line discussion forums will supplement the readings and classroom discussion. Like classroom discussion, the forums will promote the exchange of ideas and experiences among students. However, unlike the classroom, the forums allow for in depth reflection upon the readings and the resulting on-line dialog. Discussion topics may be initiated by either the instructor or students based on the assigned readings for that week. Students are expected to make two posting per week. Students will be graded upon the content of their posts.

Class participation also will be an important component of this course. You will be expected to discuss the assigned readings and your experiences as they relate to the subject matter.

Grading:

1. eGovernment applications paper	20%
2. Management Information systems paper	20
3. Group paper and presentation	20
4. On-line discussions	20
5. Class participation	<u>20</u>
	100%

Research sources:

Your two papers and group project will require you to use diverse research sources. You should use the required readings as a starting point. They should give you important background information. You undoubtedly will have to rely on recent articles, which could be located in any number of publications and periodicals. I assume that all of you are familiar with the electronic search options available through the Jackson Library web site and are comfortable in using them; if not, you should consult with one of the reference librarians. In some cases you can get the full text of an article, but in other cases only titles or abstracts are available. Additionally, you should consider interviewing experts in the local area for information, especially if your research topic is a case study involving a local government or agency. Undoubtedly, your research will include Internet based sources. Care should be given when evaluating the accuracy of these sources. For example, Wikipedia is not a scholarly source for research.

Criteria for Grading Papers:

When grading the three papers (two individual and one group) I base my evaluation on a number of factors. First and foremost, papers should be written with an audience in mind. In crafting your papers presume that this report is going to be delivered to the manager of a public agency who needs to be more informed on your topic. Assume that your reader is faced with a policy issue or possible application of the technology and is relying on your research to guide his decision. Be sure to adhere to this requirement. If your paper is not clear, concise and informative for this audience, then it is not a good paper.

More specifically, I evaluate each paper on five characteristics:

- **Appropriate Topic (20%).** The topic/issue discussed in the paper should be consistent with the scope of the assignment. To get the full 20 points, the paper must be on target with the assignment. If you are unsure if your topic meets this requirement please see me.
- **Depth (20%).** The paper should do more than simply regurgitate what you read. I am not looking for a book report. To get the full 20 points, the paper should display originality of thought, depth of analysis and/or synthesis of competing ideas.
- **Organization (20%).** The paper should have a clear introduction that alerts the reader to what is coming, a body that communicates the material and a summary that wraps up the paper's contents.
- **Readability (20%).** The paper should be concise, flow logically between topics and hold the reader's interest.
- **References (20%).** The paper should draw from a range of quality references that support the message of the paper.

Papers should be 4-6 pages in length (6 pages maximum). Footnoting should follow the style that you are comfortable using and appropriate for academic research. Please include a title page with room for comments.

Papers are due on time. Unless you have made prior arrangements with me regarding alternate due dates, late papers will be penalized for tardiness.

IV. Outline of Topics and Reading Assignments

This course will meet Tuesday evenings, 6:00 to 9:30, on the following dates: Tuesday on May 27, June 3, 10, 17, 24, July 1, 8, 15, 22 and 29. Note that I have arranged for local guest speakers on relevant topics for many class sessions.

Class #1: Course Overview, Background Information, Role of IT (May 27)

Required reading:

None

Ancillary Topic: None

Guest Speaker: None

Group Project Assignments

Class #2: Information System Management (June 3)

Required reading:

Rocheleau, Public & Private Information Systems: Similar/Different Chpt 1)

Rocheleau, Planning for IT in the Public Sector (Chpt 2)

Heckman, "Strategic Information Technology Planning and the Line Manager's Role"

Ancillary Topic: None

Guest Speaker: TBA

Class #3: Information Systems Management (June 10)

Required reading:

Rocheleau, "Procuring IT for Government" (Chpt 3)

Rocheleau, "Evaluation and Information Technology (Chpt 9)

White and Korosec, "Issues in Contracting and Outsourcing Information Technology"

Ancillary Topics: Open Source Software

Guest Speaker: None

Class #4: eGovernment (June 17)

Required reading:

Rocheleau, "Electronic Government" (Chpt 5)

Streib and Willoughby, "Exploring Internet Options: The Case of Georgia's Consumer Services"

Cohen, "Citizen Satisfaction with Contacting Government on the Internet" (optional reading)

Group Presentation: The Digital Divide and its impact on eGovernment

Ancillary Topics: None

Guest Speaker: TBA

Class #5: Organization and Decision Support (June 24)

Required reading:

Swiss, "Information Technology as a Facilitator of Results-Based Management in Government"
Carr, "Geographic Information Systems in the Public Sector"

Ancillary Topic: Management Information Systems
IT and Intergovernmental Relations

Guest Speaker: TBA

Group Presentation: Wi-Fi Networks as publicly own and operated utilities
Paper Due: eGovernment

Class #6: Implementing Information Technology (July 1)

Required reading:

Rocheleau, "Prescriptions for IT in Government: How Do We Know What Works Best?" (Chpt 4)
Nelson, "Understanding Large-Scale IT Project Failure: Escalating and De-escalating Commitment"
Implementation Studies – For group exercise

Ancillary Topics: None

Guest Speaker: Christie Hofer, Director of Enterprise Systems, City of Greensboro

Class #7: Project Management (July 8)

Required/Optional reading:

TBD
Taylor, "Managing Information Technology Projects" (Chpts 2 and 3) – Optional
Irvine, "Cybersecurity: Considerations for Information Systems"

Ancillary Topics: None

Guest Speaker: None

Group Presentation:

Class #8: Legal Issues of Information Systems (July 15)

Required reading:

Prysby and Prysby, "Electronic Mail in the Public Workspace: Issues of Privacy & Public Disclosure"

Ancillary Topics: Copyright Law and Software,
NC Public Records Law
Records Retention

Guest Speaker: Dr. Charles Prysby, UNCG

Paper Due: MIS

Class #9: Information Technology's Role and Impact in Organizations (July 22)

Required reading:

Rocheleau, Politics, Leadership and IT (Chpt 6)
Rocheleau, Governments & IT Sharing (Chpt 10)

Ancillary Topics: Role of IT in Public Policy

Guest Speaker: Mitchell Johnson, City Manager, City of Greensboro

Group Presentation: Organization policies for Blogs in the workplace

Class #10: Ethical and Social Issues of Information Systems(July 29)

Required reading:

Rocheleau "Information Mgmt & Ethical Issues in Government (Chpt 8)

Ancillary Topics: Wrap-up

Guest Speaker: None

Group Presentation: American Disabilities Act and Information Technology