PLSC 515 – Public Personnel Administration
Political Science Department
College of Arts & Sciences
Eastern Michigan University
Winter 2014

Gregory K. Plagens
601J Pray-Harrold
(734) 487-2522
gregory.plagens@emich.edu

Class Time: 6:00 to 8:40 PM, Mondays
211 Porter
Office Hours: 2 to 5:30 p.m. Mondays
4 to 6 p.m. Tuesdays (Livonia Center)
and by appointment

Course Description
This course examines contemporary practices and leadership challenges in public sector personnel administration. Since the mission of the MPA Program at EMU is to prepare leaders for public and nonprofit organizations, particularly at the local level, attention is given to both sectors. Practices of the national and state governments are covered since many practices of local personnel administration are guided by federal and state laws or practices.

In constructing this course, two guiding principles have been used purposefully to determine the material covered and the assessments required. I believe that continuous reflection on the concepts of fairness and professionalism are essential for responsible public personnel administration. You will see as the semester unfolds how these ideas can be, and should be, used in designing personnel systems and acting on personnel matters.

Public personnel administrators should understand the mission of the organizations they serve and how a strong personnel system can contribute to achieving organizational goals and objectives. This semester we will take time to learn from one another in group sessions and discussions. You will be asked to learn about and share the practices of the organizations where you currently work. If you are not currently employed, or do not wish to share information from your organization’s personnel department, you may choose a public organization at the national, state or local level about which to learn in detail.

Course Objectives
Students will learn to…
...conceptualize fairness and professional ethics, relating them to public personnel administration;
...relate public personnel administration to the ideas and ideals of public service;
...identify significant historical events in the evolution of public personnel administration;
...identify important legal issues in public personnel administration;
...connect public personnel administration to the mission of an organization;
...identify significant challenges in contemporary public personnel administration;
...think critically about and solve problems in contemporary public personnel administration.
Course Activities to Meet Objectives:
Several assessments will be used to determine progress toward course objectives. Please note that there are some objectives for which there are no clear assessments. The constraints of a 16-week semester require compromises, but I show the additional objectives so you will see what I hope to convey this semester through readings, discussions and assessments.

1. Fairness Exercise (10%)
   - Assigned: Jan. 6
   - Due: Jan. 13
2. Case Study 1: Government Regulation of Sex (15%)
   - Assigned: Feb. 3
   - Due: Feb. 10
3. Best Places to Work Exercise (15%)
   - Assigned: Feb. 17
   - Due: Mar. 3
4. Case Study 2: Mentoring (20%)
   - Assigned: Mar. 17
   - Due: Mar. 24
5. Case Study 3: Personnel Conditions at the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (25%)
   - Assigned: Apr. 7
   - Due: Apr. 21
6. Group Reports (15%)
   - Assigned: Jan. 13, Jan. 27, Mar. 10
   - Due: Whenever you complete them, but must be turned in within two weeks of being assigned.

Course Resources
Required

Course Outline

PART I: INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATION

Week One – Jan. 6
Introduction
Syllabus Review
Fairness Exercise
Ideas and Ideals of Public Service

Recommended

Lecture Resources


Assessment
• Fairness Exercise Assigned

Week Two – Jan. 13

Professional Ethics and the Public Personnel Administrator

Reading


Lecture Resources


Assessment
• Fairness Exercise Due
• Group Report 1 Assigned

Week Three – Jan. 20

MLK Holiday: No classes

Week Four – Jan. 27

Political and Historical Foundations

Required


Lecture Resources

Assessment
• Group Report 2 Assigned

Week Five – Feb. 3
Legal Framework of Public Human Resource Management
Required

Lecture Resources

Assessment
• Case Study 1 Assigned

PART II: CORE PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS

Week Six – Feb. 10
Job Analysis
Required

Lecture Resources

Assessment
• Case Study 1 Due
Week Seven – Feb. 17
Classification and Compensation
Required

Lecture Resources

Assessment
- Best Places to Work Exercise Assigned

Week Eight – Feb. 24
Winter Recess: No Class

Week Nine – Mar. 3
Recruitment and Selection
Required

Lecture Resources

Assessment
- Best Places to Work Exercise Due
PART III: KEY PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT CONCERNS

Week Ten – Mar. 10

Human Resources Planning and Information Technology

Required


Lecture Resources


Assessment

- Group Report 3 Assigned

Week Eleven – Mar. 17

Benchmarking and Metrics

Required


Lecture Resources


Assessment

- Case Study 2 Assigned
Week Twelve – Mar. 24
Performance Management

Required

Lecture Resources

Assessment
- Case Student 2 Due

Week Thirteen – Mar. 31
Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action

Required

Lecture Resources

Week Fourteen – Apr. 7
Diversity in the Workplace

Required

Lecture Resources

Assessment
• Case Study 3 Assigned

Week Fifteen – Apr. 14
Labor and Conflict Management
Required

Lecture Resources

PART IV: MOVING FORWARD

Week Sixteen – Apr. 21
Strategic Human Resource Management
Required

Lecture Resources

Assessment
• Case Study 3 Due

Exam Week – Apr. 28
There will be no final exam. 😊