

**Course Information**

Thursdays 5:15 to 8:00 Central Time (CT)  
Bowling Green Campus: JRH 249  
Ft. Knox Campus: B1174 0101  
Owensboro Campus: 0201

**Instructor Information**

Dr. Shannon K. Vaughan  
Email: [shannon.vaughan@wku.edu](mailto:shannon.vaughan@wku.edu)  
Phone: (270)745-2908  
Office: Grise Hall 315  
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30 to 11:00; Thursdays 3:30 to 4:30;  
and by appointment

If you have questions or concerns about the course, please call or visit me during office hours or schedule an appointment if my posted office hours are not convenient. You can generally expect to receive a response from email or voicemail messages within 24 hours, except for weekends, holidays, or Fall break. If you do not receive a response to an email message within 2 business days, please resend the message.

**Course Objectives**

After completing this course, you should be able to:

1. Explain how ethics contribute to good public governance (1.1)
2. Describe the ethical aspects of public policymaking (2.1)
3. Define the four dimensions of ethics – duties, virtues, principles, and benefits to society – and apply them to facilitate ethical decisions on public issues (3.1, 5.1)
4. Explain the importance of ethics in fostering professionalism and maintaining an ethical culture in organizations (4.2)
5. Demonstrate improvement in your oral and written communication skills (5.2)

(Numbers in parentheses refer to the corresponding identification number for the most relevant Mission-Specific Learning Outcomes for the WKU MPA program which are posted on the MPA bulletin board and on the MPA program website.)

**Texts**

The following texts are required for the course and are available through the WKU bookstore or can be purchased from the source of your choice. Please note that you will need the edition specified, not an earlier one.

1. *The Ethics Primer for Public Administrators in Government and Nonprofit Organizations* by James Svara ISBN 978-1-4496-1901-5 Second edition, copyright 2015 by Jones & Bartlett Learning, LLC
2. *Getting Things Done with Courage and Conviction: Principles and Cases in Public Management* by Dwight Ink and Kurt Thurmaier ISBN 978-0-99923592-8, copyright 2018 by Melvin & Leigh, Publishers

In addition to the text, supplemental readings will also be assigned. These will be available on the course site on Blackboard, will be given to you in class, or put on my [Pinterest board](https://www.pinterest.com/shannon3666/ethics-and-leadership/) (<https://www.pinterest.com/shannon3666/ethics-and-leadership/>).

Movies, television programs, and/or other audio/visual media will also be assigned (as noted on the Course Outline below); I will post clips on the Blackboard site or put copies on reserve at the library when possible, but you may want to consider subscription to a service such as Netflix or plan to rent the video material.

### **Grade Scale**

The Grade Scale for the course is:

A	90-100
B	80-89
C	70-79
F	Below 70

### **Graded Elements**

Your grade in the course will be calculated as follows:

Class Participation	15%
Assignments	30%
Final Exam	25%
Research Paper	30%

*Many of the graded elements for the course must be submitted via Blackboard. If you are not familiar with the assignment feature (or other aspects of Blackboard), I encourage you to complete the Blackboard Student Training (instructions available at <https://www.wku.edu/online/orientation/using-bb.php>).*

### **Class Participation**

You are expected to come to *every* class, to read all the assigned materials, to complete assignments, and to participate in the class discussions. **Please note:** You earn class participation points through consistent, demonstrated engagement in the class; therefore your presence in class is *necessary*. Showing up for class, however, is not *sufficient* to earn class participation points. You must be prepared and speak up, i.e. *participate*, in the class discussion.

### **Assignments**

There are six assignments for this class as noted on the Tentative Course Outline and Reading Schedule below. For each assignment, you should produce a paper that is 1200 to 1500 words in length (typed, double-spaced, 1-inch margins and 12-point font, with **appropriate and consistent citing of sources**). I expect the papers to be well-written, so make sure that, among other necessary grammatical elements, that: 1) your paragraphs have only one main topic – a single paragraph should not be a page in length; 2) all sentences have a noun and a verb – no fragments; and 3) you avoid run-on sentences. All assignments should be submitted via Blackboard by 5:15 CT on the due date unless otherwise specified.

**Final Exam**

The final exam is comprehensive. The final exam will be a timed exam, given via Blackboard using the Respondus Lockdown Browser, and will be due by 11:59p.m. on December 13<sup>th</sup>. Additional information about the exam will be provided in class. You will be given a study guide by November 29<sup>th</sup> to help you prepare for the exam.

**Research Paper**

You are required to complete a research paper on a topic from the list attached to this syllabus and posted on Blackboard. I will need to approve your topic, so please submit a brief summary (no more than one page, typed) of your area of research interest. If you wish to do your paper on a topic other than one on the list, please talk with me about your ideas as soon as possible. Your summary must include a brief description of your topic, an explicitly stated research question, and correctly formatted citations for five (5) peer-reviewed sources that you will use in your paper (NOT websites). It must be submitted via Blackboard **by 5:15p.m. September 20<sup>th</sup>**.

I expect that most papers will be organized as a review and discussion of the relevant literature to answer your proposed research question, but if you wish to incorporate data analysis and findings, that is also appropriate. Papers should be typed, double-spaced, use 1-inch margins and 12-point font, and use **appropriate and consistent citing of sources**. **No fewer than 8 of your total sources should be books and/or articles from peer-reviewed journals; sources such as popular press or websites are not counted toward the 8** and should be used as supplemental information or data to support your conclusions. The paper should be approximately 20 pages in length (**a minimum of 6,000 words**) and **must be submitted to me via Blackboard by 5:15p.m. (CT) on November 8<sup>th</sup>**. Late papers will be accepted *only with a valid excuse* and will be subject to a penalty of 5 points per day late, including weekend days and/or holidays.

I encourage each of you to contact me for assistance with choosing a topic, conducting your research, and/or writing the paper. In addition, Rosemary Meszaros is a member of the WKU library faculty and is an excellent resource for assistance with research; you can contact her via email at: [rosemary.meszaros@wku.edu](mailto:rosemary.meszaros@wku.edu).

You will be required to present the results of your research to the class; PowerPoint (or similar presentation software) may be used but is not required. Presentations should be at least 8 minutes but no longer than 10 minutes. I have randomly assigned presentation times as noted on the Course Outline and Reading Schedule below; if you wish to negotiate with your classmates to exchange presentation times, you are free to do so, just let me know if any changes are to be made.

**Electronic Devices**

Out of respect for me and your fellow classmates, please turn off your cell phone during class. If work or family obligations necessitate leaving your phone on, please put it on vibrate and if you feel you must use your phone for any reason during class, please leave the room. Since leaving and re-entering class is an obvious disruption, please avoid this except in cases of emergency and the obvious case of illness. Frequent disruption of class will significantly affect your class participation grade.

Please do not use your laptop or iPad or other tablet devices to take notes during class. I refer you to this article from *The Washington Post*:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/04/28/why-students-using-laptops-learn-less-in-class-even-when-they-really-are-taking-notes/>

At no time during class should you check email or access social media.

**Academic Integrity**

Plagiarism is completely unacceptable and will result in a grade of F on the assignment in question and may result in a grade of F for the course. The following statement is taken directly from the WKU Graduate Catalog:

“To represent written work taken from another source as one’s own is plagiarism. Plagiarism is a serious offense. The academic work of a student must be his/her own. One must give any author credit for source material borrowed from him/her. To lift content directly from a source without giving credit is a flagrant act. To present a borrowed passage without reference to the source after having changed a few words is also plagiarism.”

I encourage you to read the entire statement regarding academic offenses in the [Graduate Catalog](#) (available online at:

[http://www.wku.edu/graduate/prospective\\_students/catalog.php](http://www.wku.edu/graduate/prospective_students/catalog.php)).

**WKU Center for Literacy Assistance**

The WKU Center for Literacy is located in Gary A. Ransdell Hall 2066. At the Center for Literacy, students can receive assistance in developing strategies to help **reading/studying to learn** and **writing for evidence and argument**. The Center for Literacy offers both individual and small group sessions throughout the semester. More information about the [WKU Center for Literacy](#) can be found on the website:

<http://www.wku.edu/literacycenter/>

**WKU Writing Center**

WKU students on all campuses have access to the resources of the [WKU Writing Center](#) (accessible online at: [www.wku.edu/writingcenter](http://www.wku.edu/writingcenter)) and you are strongly encouraged to utilize them. Students can visit the Writing Center in 123 Cherry Hall and the Commons at Cravens Library on the Bowling Green campus. All students can utilize the services of the [Online Writing Center](#) (accessible at <http://www.wku.edu/owl/>.) Please note that the tutors at the Writing Center have been trained to help students at all phases of a writing project, including assisting with brainstorming ideas, structuring the assignment, and editing for clarity and correctness; however, they will NOT revise or edit the paper for you.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

In compliance with University policy, students with disabilities who require academic and/or auxiliary accommodations for this course must contact the Student Accessibility Resource Center located in Downing Student Union, 1074. SARC can be reached by phone number at 270-745-5004 [270-745-3030 TTY] or via email at [sarc.connect@wku.edu](mailto:sarc.connect@wku.edu) . Please do not request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without a faculty notification letter (FNL) from The Student Accessibility Resource Center.

**Title IX, Discrimination, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy**

Western Kentucky University (WKU) is committed to supporting faculty, staff and students by upholding [WKU's Title IX Sexual Misconduct/Assault Policy](https://www.wku.edu/eoo/documents/titleix/wkutitleixpolicyandgrievanceprocedure.pdf) (accessible at <https://www.wku.edu/eoo/documents/titleix/wkutitleixpolicyandgrievanceprocedure.pdf>) and [Discrimination and Harassment Policy](https://www.wku.edu/policies/docs/251.pdf) (<https://www.wku.edu/policies/docs/251.pdf>). Under these policies, discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct based on sex/gender are prohibited. If you experience an incident of sex/gender-based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator, Andrea Anderson, 270-745-5398 or Title IX Investigators, Michael Crowe, 270-745-5429 or Joshua Hayes, 270-745-5121. Please note that while you may report an incident of sex/gender based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct to a faculty member, WKU faculty are "Responsible Employees" of the University and MUST report what you share to WKU's Title IX Coordinator or Title IX Investigator. If you would like to speak with someone who may be able to afford you confidentiality, you may contact WKU's [Counseling and Testing Center](#) at 270-745-3159 or <https://www.wku.edu/heretohelp/>.

**Tentative Course Outline & Reading Schedule**

For each of the class periods identified by date below, you should have read and/or watched the assigned materials and be prepared to discuss them in class. Most of the video material should be watched at least twice in order to be able to take adequate notes to be prepared for class discussion. While I expect that the movies and video clips will be entertaining, their purpose is to provide ethical scenarios that will help illustrate the concepts from your text and stimulate thoughtful discussion in the class.

**(8/30) Course Introduction****(9/6) Topic 1 – Ethics and Public Service Values**

- Svara Chapters 1 & 2 (pp. 1-32)
- Excerpts from John C. Maxwell. 2003. *There's No Such Thing as 'Business' Ethics*, posted on Blackboard
- "Law and Manners" by the Right Honorable Lord Moulton, *The Atlantic Monthly*, July 1924. Accessible from the Pinterest Board or at:  
<http://www2.econ.iastate.edu/classes/econ362/Hallam/NewspaperArticles/LawAndManners.pdf>
- "The Problem of the Commons: Free-Rider Problem" excerpt from *Urban and Regional Economics* by John P. Blair. 1991. pp. 383-384.
- Watch clips from the television series *The West Wing*, which are posted on the course Blackboard site in the Topic 3 folder. Consider how the three concepts of legality, ethics, and morality are reflected in the scenario portrayed.
- **Consider this question:** What do littering, road rage, and cyberbullying have in common?

**(9/13) Topic 2 – Leadership and Duty**

- Svara Chapter 3 (pp. 33-57)
- Excerpts from "Principal-Agent Models: An Expansion?" by Richard W. Waterman and Kenneth J. Meier, *Journal of Public Administration Research & Theory*, 1998. pp.173-77 and 183-85.
- Watch *Captain America: Civil War* (2016); the trailer for this movie is available via YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mKScYV9jzG0>

**Assignment #1** is to complete a 4 to 6 page paper in which you discuss how this movie facilitated (or failed to enhance) your understanding of the concepts from the assigned readings. Pay particular attention to ethics involved in the relationships between principals and agents, the ethical dimensions of the performance of duty, and the responsibilities that public administrators have to the promotion of the public interest. The characters of Captain America, Natasha Romanov, Sam Wilson, Lt. James Rhodes, Sharon Carter, and Sec. of State Thaddeus Ross (among others) are written to be government employees/public administrators.

- **Consider this quote from Margaret Mead:** Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.



**Tentative Course Outline & Reading Schedule (cont.)****(9/20) Topic 3 – Institutional Review**

**Assignment #2:** Go to <http://www.wku.edu/compliance/training.php> and complete the Collaborative IRB Training Initiative (CITI) Course. This is a web-based ethics training course that must be completed by anyone at WKU who does research with human or animal subjects. You should read the instructions, then go to [www.citiprogram.org](http://www.citiprogram.org) and complete – [1] Social/Behavioral Research Course (live human beings) & [2] Social and Behavioral Responsible Conduct of Research Course (RCR) (The two modules have been reported to take roughly a minimum of 2-3 hours each to complete). **Submit copies of the certificates of completion of the training via Blackboard by 5:15p.m. CT.**

- **Consider this quote from Mahatma Gandhi:** The greatness of a nation can be judged by the way its animals are treated.

**(9/27) Topic 4 – Theories and Dimensions of Ethics**

- Svava Chapter 4 (pp. 59-86)
- Ink & Thurmaier, ix-xiv, 1-44
- Watch *Philosophical Frameworks for Ethics* accessible via YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tGPhRcDTaxs>

**Assignment #3:** Use the four dimensions of Svava's ethics triangle to analyze and discuss The Case: From Classroom to the Real World (pp.23-40 in Ink & Thurmaier). Using examples from the case study, identify and discuss instances in which you saw each different dimension of Svava's ethics triangle illustrated in an action taken or decision made by one of the actors. Explain how using all of the dimensions in making an ethical decision can provide a different result than when only one or two dimensions are considered.

- **Consider this statement:** We cannot govern if we do not win the election.

**(10/4) Topic 5 – Professionalism**

- Svava Chapters 5 (pp.87-103) and Appendices 1-6 (pp.201-230)
- "Who Are the Keepers of the Code? Articulating and Upholding Ethical Standards in the Field of Public Administration" by James Svava; "Calling the Question: The need for an ASPA Code of Ethics" by James M. Grant; and "Codes, Damn Codes, and Laws: Continuing Controversies in Public Administration Ethics" by Stuart C. Gilman, *Public Administration Review*, 2014. pp. 561-572.
- The Pirates' Code by James Surowiecki, July 9, 2007 issue of *The New Yorker* accessible at <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/07/09/the-pirates-code>

**Assignment #4:** What is the purpose of a code of ethics? Identify and discuss the criticisms of codes of ethics (i.e. why codes of ethics are viewed negatively) by some scholars. Which of the criticisms do you find the most valid? The least relevant? Explain why. Choose one of the eight (8) principles contained in the ASPA Code of Ethics and explain how/why you think it would be useful to you in making decisions as a public administrator.

- **Consider this quote from John Wooden:** The true test of a man's character is what he does when no one is watching.

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**Tentative Course Outline & Reading Schedule (cont.)**

**(10/11) Fall Break – Class does not meet**

**(10/18) Topic 6 –Challenges to Ethical Behavior**

- Svara Chapter 6 (pp.105-129)
- Ink & Thurmaier, 45-114
- *Reciprocity, Honesty, and Trust*, in *Bowling Alone* by R. Putnam (pp.134-147)
- **Consider this quotation from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.:** The ultimate measure of a man or woman is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.

**(10/25) Topic 7 – Making Ethical Decisions**

- Svara Chapters 7 & 8 (pp.131-159)
- “Exit, Voice, and Loyalty’: Further Reflections and a Survey of Recent Contributions,” by Albert O. Hirschman, Summer 1980, *The Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly/Health and Society*, 58(3): 430-453.
- Ink & Thurmaier, 115-186

**Assignment #5:** In the cases presented in the Ink & Thurmaier readings, Dwight Ink describes the difficulties created by conflicting responsibilities when the issue of management could have a major impact on a political decision. How can the policy-making *process* conflict with responsibilities of public officials? Using an example (or examples) from the cases presented in the Ink & Thurmaier readings, identify ways in which public officials face a dilemma in choosing between legal requirements of their positions and the politics involved in the situation, and then discuss how the officials should proceed in those instances. Discuss how the concepts of exit, voice, and loyalty were/could have been demonstrated by the characters involved in the dilemma.

- **Consider this statement:** First, do no harm.

**(11/1) Topic 8 – Ethical Culture**

- Svara Chapter 9 (pp.161-180)
- Ink & Thurmaier, 187-258
- *Louisiana’s Ethical Culture and Its Effect on the Administrative Failures Following Katrina* by Carole L. Jurkiewicz, *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 67 (December 2007): 57-63.
- Watch *How Can You Interact with Others to Promote Ethical Practices*, which is accessible via YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nLpux9KF7gU>
- **Consider this quotation from Luke 16:10 (NCV):** Whoever can be trusted with a little can also be trusted with a lot, and whoever is dishonest with a little is dishonest with a lot.



**Tentative Course Outline & Reading Schedule (cont.)****(11/8) Topic 9 – Ethics and Public Policy**

- “An Open Letter to ‘Dirty Hands’ Theorists from a Public Manager (or, The Pitfalls of Divorcing Theory from Practice)” by Jonathan Anderson *Public Integrity* Summer 2014 16(3): 305-315.
- Ink & Thurmaier, 259-326
- *Lincoln* (2012) chronicles the work of President Abraham Lincoln (played by Daniel Day-Lewis) to convince Congress to pass the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution to end slavery throughout the U.S. A trailer for the movie is accessible on YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KJVuqYkl2jQ>

**Assignment #6:** The film illustrates several ethical dimensions of the policy making process. Identify three examples – one each involving President Lincoln, Secretary of State Seward, and Congressman Thaddeus Stevens – that illustrate some of the ethical issues involved in the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Using those examples, describe and discuss how the individuals both compromised and upheld their ethical values. How do your examples illustrate why ethics should be a primary concern at every stage of policy development as well as how that can be a challenge.

- **Consider Miles’ Law (Rufus E. Miles, Jr.):** Where you stand depends on where you sit.

**\*\*\* Paper is due via Blackboard by 5:15p.m. CT\*\*\***

**(11/15) TBD**

**(11/22) Thanksgiving \*\*\*Class does not meet\*\*\***

**(11/29) Topic 10 – Ethics and Good Governance**

- Svara Chapters 10-11 (pp.181-199)
- *Searching for Virtue in the City: Bell and Her Sisters* by George Frederickson and Jack Wayne Meek, *Public Integrity* 19:234-249, 2017
- Ink & Thurmaier, 327-348
- Describe the difference between external control mechanisms and internal control mechanisms of facilitating ethical behavior. Which is more important? Why?
- *The Promise of Administrative Conservatorship vs. the Threat of Administrative Evil in the Mission of Public Service* by Kate McGovern, *Public Integrity*, 14(1): 51-65, 2012.
- Consider this quote from William K. Black: ***The best way to rob a bank is to own one.***

**(12/6) Paper Presentations**

**(12/13) Final Exam due by 11:59 p.m.**

**Suggested Topics for PS 538 Research Paper**

*Please note:* This is not an exclusive, exhaustive, or even comprehensive list of possible topics for the PS 538 research paper. This is a list designed to stimulate your thinking regarding possible issues related to ethics that you could explore in depth for your research paper requirement. You may choose one of the following, a combination of the following, or a topic of your own development that is not on this list.

**Ethics and Public Service Values**

- Ethics Compliance Officer (ECO) – how common are these positions in the public, for-profit, and nonprofit sectors? What differentiates organizations with ECOs from those without?
- Internal and External Controls – what are the common types of controls used in public/nonprofit organizations? Which are most effective? Under what circumstances?
- Public Service Ethics – how has our understanding and application of ethics in the public sector evolved? How do ethics relate to and promote the public interest?
- Defining Ethics – are there differences between administrative ethics, business ethics, public service ethics, and just plain ethics? How do the terms ethics, morality, and law relate to our overall understanding of public service ethics?

**Leadership and Duty**

- Principal-Agent Theory – what are the ethical implications of the principal-agent relationship inherent in public and nonprofit organizations?
- Accountability – to whom/what are public administrators accountable?
- Ethics Commissions – how prevalent are ethics commissions? What differentiates cities/states with such commissions from those without? How effective are ethics commissions at facilitating a strong culture of ethics in public and nonprofit organizations?
- Leadership – what exemplifies ethical leaders?

**Professionalism**

- Composition of Codes of Ethics – through systematic analysis, compare and contrast the codes of ethics of several public and/or nonprofit organizations. What elements are present/absent in each? What constitutes a “good” code of ethics?
- Enforcement of Codes of Ethics – how do organizations differ in their enforcement mechanisms? Which ones are the most effective?
- Unethical Conduct – what explains unethical choices by public administrators?

**Theories and Dimensions of Ethics**

- For any of the theories on ethics discussed in your readings, explore:
  - how the theory (or theories) was developed
  - how two or more theories compare/contrast with one another
  - how theories inform the application of ethical behavior

### Institutional Review Board (IRB)

- What constitutes an effective IRB?
- How does the use of an IRB process facilitate the public interest?
- How does an IRB facilitate transparency and accountability?

### Making Ethical Decisions

- What are bounded rationality, bounded ethicality, ethical fading, and motivated reasoning, and what is the implication/applicability of each to ethical behavior? How does an understanding of each facilitate/hinder ethical decision making?
- What is the most appropriate way to express dissent, i.e. challenge behavior deemed unethical, in a public and/or nonprofit organization?

### Ethical Culture

- How pervasive is corruption/unethical behavior in public and/or nonprofit organizations? What are the implications for public governance?
- What are the elements of a strong, positive ethical culture in organizations?
- How do public and/or nonprofit organizations promote a culture of ethics?
- What is the responsibility of the leadership/management in facilitating ethical culture?

### Ethics and Public Policy

- How do cities and states differ in their open meetings laws? How important are open meetings/ "sunshine" laws to issues of accountability and transparency?
- What are the ethical aspects of public policymaking?
- Who are Inspectors General and how do they promote ethical behavior?
- Why is it important for nonprofit organizations to establish conflict of interest policies?
- Why is it important for elected officials to be ethical?

### Ethics and Good Governance

- Why is it important for public administrators to be ethical?
- How do ethics contribute to good governance?
- How does a commitment to accountability and transparency by public and/or nonprofit organizations promote the public interest?

*For additional ideas, I encourage you to explore the articles posted to my Ethics and Leadership board on Pinterest: <https://www.pinterest.com/shannon3666/ethics-and-leadership/>.*

**WKU** Department of  
**Political Science**  
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