

**PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION & DEMOCRACY**  
**PPA 755-1 Class # 34134**

3 credits

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### **Course Overview**

Public administration is as much an art as it is a science. It requires far more than the rote application of managerial skills. One must understand the political and social context that shapes the practice of public administration, and the ethical and normative issues that public administrators face as they seek to make effective decisions. Given this reality, this course is primarily normative rather than skills-oriented in nature. In contrast to many of the other courses in the public administration curriculum, this course does not teach you how to carry out particular management functions. Rather, it is based on the presumption that only those public administrators who are broad-minded and self-reflective, who are cognizant of the environments in which they operate and of the principles that ought to drive their decisions, can be effective in a truly meaningful way. By the end of the course, you should have developed a greater sensitivity to the social and political context of public administration, and a greater awareness of the principles that ground good public administration practice.

In pursuit of these ends, this course provides you the opportunity to grapple with fundamental questions concerning the relationship between public administration and democracy. Each session is grounded in one or two “big questions”, such as ‘what is democracy’, ‘to whom are public administrators responsible’, and ‘what are the tensions between bureaucracy and democracy’? Each question is seemingly simple, but actually quite complex. Reasonable people can and do disagree on the answers.

In addition to classroom sessions, you will participate in a role-play exercise that offers insight about how your answers to these questions affect the way you practice public administration. In this exercise, you will assume the role of a public administrator who has been convened to develop a proposal on improving education in Afghanistan. The primary goal of this role-play is to enable you to understand, experientially, how the tensions between bureaucracy and democracy manifest in the context of an international public administration network characterized by ambiguity, expectations for collaboration, and organizational politics. More details on the role-play will be provided shortly into the course.