

Updated Syllabus as of 12/11/07—Final Version Will Be
Available in mid-January 2008

**George Mason University
School of Public Policy**

PUBP 503.003 Culture, Organization, and Technology

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Spring Semester, 2008

Time: Tuesday Evenings 7:20-10:00

Room: Arlington Room 269

Overview

Effective policy analysis and implementation often depend on understanding cultures, organizations and technologies and how they interact with one another. Whether considering the culture of political groups, military or business organizations, religions, the old or the young, farm or non-farm, or any other differentiation scheme, significant issues must be considered. Failing to take note of cultural aspects in society can cause even the most carefully crafted public policy plans to fail. This course aims to provide insights and skills to assess and understand such failures, and also to determine preconditions for success. We focus on the role of culture in the context of groups, organizations and societies together with culture-related economic and technological processes at several levels of impact: organizational, regional, national and international. There is significant emphasis on the culture of teams and team approaches to learning. The objectives of the course include greater competence in these areas:

- Understanding how policy questions are framed in the context of cultural considerations
- Observing and describing the manifestations of culture at micro and macro levels
- Observing and describing the joint roles of technology and culture in a global context
- Clarifying the role of culture in the practice of leadership in a technological age
- Identifying both cultural enablers and barriers in the context of effective policy development and program implementation
- Examining some of the tools used to measure cultural issues, like polling, interviewing and other assessment techniques
- Learning other skills like leveraging high performance teams, recognizing and evaluating culture-related statistics, etc.
- Using teaming and class participation to sharpen understanding of culture's role in public policy analysis

Note—as a warmup, students are encouraged to visit the website of the *New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy* (<http://www.bartleby.com/59/>) and browse among almost two dozen captions. Perhaps try your cultural literacy on some topic like “idioms” (NIMBY, AWOL, life of Riley, *hoi polloi*, gild the lily, etc). Then shift perhaps to politics, technology, etc

Assignments, Grades and Examinations

There are three main requirements for the course: four short written assignments, a final exam (take home), and extensive participation in class discussions and team projects.

Short written assignments (4)	45%
Final examination (take home)	25%
Weekly class discussions and team projects	30%

Written assignments (45%) there are four short written assignments, each consisting of a suggested 400-700 words plus appropriate diagrams or footnotes. These assignments will be given by the instructor about every three weeks. See detailed requirements for submission of written work at end of this syllabus. **Note: in this course, many students choose to write considerably more than the suggested number of words in this assignment and that is definitely permitted.**

The final examination (25%) will be a take-home test with about five questions. It will be distributed in mid-April. It will require about 10-12 hours of your time to be completed successfully, and will consist of a suggested 1500 words plus diagrams, footnotes, etc. **Note: in this course, many students choose to write considerably more than the suggested number of words in this assignment and that is definitely permitted.**

Class discussion and team projects (30%)

Team projects (15%) A teamwork culture is highly valuable. In most class sessions two 3 or 4 person teams will reflect on selected weekly assignments and present an 8 minute summary, synthesis and commentary on one of the readings, using 5 or fewer slides or some other presentation technique. These presentations should stimulate discussion by the rest of the class. By semester’s end each member of the class will have been part of three team presentations. Each presentation should be accompanied by a simple 1 or 2 page handout.

Class participation (15 %) This covers all aspects of interaction from the first class to the last, like sharing information or perspectives consistently in class discussions, emails, weekly “did you see” contributions and other interaction.

Note: Working with groups can be a challenge and is an essential part of academic and work life. Some ideas about how to gain effectiveness in working with groups are contained in: Connery, Brian A. and John L. Vohs, "Group Work and Collaborative Writing," University of California, Davis, Writing Center and Dept. of Rhetoric and Communication, which can be downloaded from <http://trc.ucdavis.edu/trc/papers/vohs/index.html>

Missed class sessions

Missing class is discouraged but sometimes is necessary. More than two absences will jeopardize your participation in class and can impact your grade. Please talk to the instructor if you must miss a class and agree on a way to demonstrate that you have done the required assignments for the week. (Normal procedure is a 500--600 word summary of assigned weekly readings or streaming video lectures)

Required Textbooks

Lawrence Harrison and Samuel Huntington, *Culture Matters-How Values Shape Human Progress* (CM)(Basic Books, 2000)

Edgar Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership, 3rd edition* (OCL) (Jossey-Bass, 2004)

U.S. Government Accounting Office, *Ethnographic Studies Can Inform Agencies Actions*, GAO-03-455, March 2003 (Will be provided in class) (ES)

James Surowiecki, *The Wisdom of Crowds*, (WC) Anchor Books 2005

Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel—The Fates of Human Societies*, (GG) (Norton, 1999 for paperback and 2005 for hardcover)

Optional Reading

Jim Mann, *Beijing Jeep: A Case Study of Western Business in China*, (Westview Press, 1997)

Thomas Friedman , *The World is Flat A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century Release 3.0* (Will not be available until August or September 2007)

Steven D. Levitt, and Steven D. Debner, *Freakonomics*, (Morrow, 2005)

Robert Fuller, *All Rise--Somebodies, Nobodies, and the Politics of Dignity*, (Berrett Kohler 2006)

Gladwell, Malcolm, *blink The Power of Thinking Without Thinking* (Little Brown, 2005)

Gladwell, Malcolm, *The Tipping Point—How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* (Back Bay Books 2002)

Read, Herbert, *To Hell With Culture* (Schocken Books, 1963)

Class Schedule

January 22 Week 1: Introduction, orientation, initial team selection **Watch streaming CD lecture** at <http://www.gmutv.gmu.edu/ruthlectures.asp> “Culture: an International and Organizational Perspective”

January 29 Week 2: read **CM** essays 1,2,22; read **OCL** Chapters 1-4

Lecture Topics: OC concepts, levels and cases; basic elements of change, attitudes, values, beliefs. culture and progress, comparative advantage, clusters of productivity

Cultural focus: Regional/national/international

Assignment: Class discussion of assigned readings

February 5 Week 3: read **CM** essays 4.5; read **ES**

Lecture Topics: Cultural typologies; behavior of elites, ethnographic studies, dependency, cultural change

Skills: Organizational and cultural observation and analysis

Cultural focus: Technology

Assignments: Class discussion of assigned readings, Team 1 discusses essay 1; Team 2 discusses essay 22

February 12 Week 4: read **GG** Part 1; read **OCL** Chapters 5-9;

Lecture Topics: OC assumptions; populism, media, culture and Africa

Skills: Open-ended interviewing

Cultural focus: Religion

Assignments: Class discussion of assigned readings, Team 3 discusses essay 4; Team 4 discusses essay 2; class paper 1 due

February 19 Week 5: read **CM** essays 7,8,9; read **OCL** Chapters 10-11; class handout: corruption indices

Lecture Topics: Cultural typologies and deciphering culture; culture and democracy, social capital, corruption, culture and Latin America

Cultural focus: Family

Assignments: Class discussion of assigned readings, Team 5 discusses essay 7; Team 6 discusses essay 8

February 26 Week 6: read **CM** essay 10; read **GG** Part 2; read **OCL** Chapters 12-15;

Lecture Topics: Linking Technology to Culture (and vice versa); Leadership’s role in OC; assessing traditional beliefs; Yali’s question—cultural aspects

Cultural focus: “The World Is Flat” (T. Friedman)

Skills: polling and questionnaires

Assignments: Class discussion of assigned readings, Team 1 discusses GG 1; Team 2 discusses GG 2; Class paper 2 is due

****March 4 Week 7: read CM essays 11 and 12; read selections from *WDR 2007*; WC**

Skim Part 1; Watch streaming CD lecture at

<http://www.gmutv.gmu.edu/ruthlectures.asp> “Technology and Culture”

Lecture Topics: Culture and childhood, moral maps; collective wisdom

Cultural focus: Government

Skills: Social network analysis

Assignments: Review CD tutorials on polling and questionnaire development (will be provided in class)

March 11 Week 8 University Holiday—no class, no assignments

March 18 Week 9: read GG Part 3; OCL Chapters 16-19;

Lecture Topics: managed culture change, interventions. cases, learning cultures; food production and culture

Cultural focus: Globalization

Skills: Teamwork 1—Leveraging virtual teams

Assignments: Class discussion of assigned readings, Team 3 discusses essay 10; Team 4 discusses essay 12

****March 25 Week 10: read CM essays 13-14; readings from *HDR 2008* (including gender equality index)**

Lecture Topics: Culture, gender and human rights, gender inequality

Cultural focus: Ethnicity

Skills: Teamwork 2—knowledge management

Assignments: Teams 1 through 6 select project for presentation in November-- This will be the third team presentation for each person and will reflect students’ choices of focus, not instructor’s

April 1 Week 11 read CM essays 15, 16; readings from *HDR 2008*

Lecture Topics: Cultural issues among American minorities, disaggregating culture

Cultural focus: Business

Assignments: Class discussion of assigned readings, Team 5 discusses GG part 3; Team 6 discusses GG part 4; Class paper 3 is due

April 8 Week 12 November 7 Week 11: read GG Part 4; readings from *WDR 2007*;

Optional: Watch streaming CD lecture at <http://www.gmutv.gmu.edu/ruthlectures.asp> “SPQR”

Lecture Topics: Guns, germs and steel review

Cultural focus: Education

Assignments: Class discussion of assigned readings,

April 15 Week 13: read CM essays 17-19; WC Skim Part 2; Final exam distributed and explained

Lecture Topics: East Asian Cultural issues-family, law, modernity

Cultural focus: Internet, blogs and connectivity

Assignments: TBA

April 22 Week 14: Thanksgiving holiday

Lecture Topics: N/A

Assignments: Team presentations on student-selected topics

April 29 Week 15: read CM essays 20, 21;

Lecture Topics: National change, prosperity, mental models

Assignments: Team presentations on student-selected topics; Class paper 4 is due

****May 6 Week 16: No assignments**

May 13—Final examination (take home) due

Grading: The grade of A or A minus is reserved for a very high level of achievement. B and B plus grades indicate good mastery of the material and excellent mastery of assigned writing. Grades of B minus and below indicate incomplete achievement of the assignment's requirements. On a 100% scale, A is equal to 95%, B 85%, C 75%, etc.

	Jan	Feb		Mar	Apr		May
	22						13
Team tasks	XX	X X	X X	X X	XX	XX	XX
First paper	XX	X X	X X				
Second paper				X X	X		
Third paper					X XX		
Fourth paper					XX	X	
Final exam						XX	XX

Autodidact Approaches in this Course--Exchanging some class time for technology

and other interventions This course takes advantage of new findings about university teaching, particularly the technique called “blended learning”. Many students, especially those who have full-time jobs, appear to be quite willing to exchange some class hours on campus for assignments that can be completed in other locations through the use of technology available to them. Studies indicate that it is possible for a student to learn as much or more in many courses if the traditional 40 hours per semester of "face time" in class with a teacher (contact hours) are partially replaced with specially designed assignments that do not require face-to-face meeting. This work can be more independent, discovery-oriented and difficult, but, if planned properly, can replace some contact hours. By experimenting with this concept in close to a dozen courses, we have found that many students enthusiastically support the approach--as long as close contact

with the instructor and class colleagues is maintained throughout and the content is challenging and in the mainstream of the subject involved. In this course there will be two or possibly three normal class meetings that may be designated as optional because of autodidact content provided throughout the course. The decision to eliminate any of the normally assigned classes will be made by the instructor based on class progress through the semester. Two or three classes will involve the use of streaming lectures instead of actual class meetings.

Ethical Conduct--GMU Honor Code GMU shares in the tradition of an honor system that has existed in Virginia colleges since 1842. The Honor Code is an integral part of university life. Students are responsible for understanding the provisions of the code. In the spirit of the code, a student's word is a declaration of good faith acceptable as truth in all academic matters. Therefore, attempted cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing of academic work and related work constitute Honor Code violations. All work must be your own. Inappropriate use of the work of others without attribution is plagiarism and a George Mason University Honor Code violation punishable by expulsion from the University. All students should familiarize themselves with this honor code provision (<http://www.gmu.edu/facstaff/handbook/aD.html>). To guard against plagiarism and to treat students equitably, written work may be checked against existing published materials or digital data bases available through various plagiarism detection services. Accordingly materials submitted to all courses must be available in electronic format.

SPP Policy on Plagiarism--The profession of scholarship and the intellectual life of a university as well as the field of public policy inquiry depend fundamentally on a foundation of trust. Thus any act of plagiarism strikes at the heart of the meaning of the university and the purpose of the School of Public Policy. It constitutes a serious breach of professional ethics and it is unacceptable. Plagiarism is the use of another's words or ideas presented as one's own. It includes, among other things, the use of specific words, ideas, or frameworks that are the product of another's work. Honesty and thoroughness in citing sources is essential to professional accountability and personal responsibility. Appropriate citation is necessary so that arguments, evidence, and claims can be critically examined.

Plagiarism is wrong because of the injustice it does to the person whose ideas are stolen. But it is also wrong because it constitutes lying to one's professional colleagues. From a prudential perspective, it is shortsighted and self-defeating, and it can ruin a professional career.

The faculty of the School of Public Policy takes plagiarism seriously and has adopted a zero tolerance policy. Any plagiarized assignment will receive an automatic grade of "F." This may lead to failure for the course, resulting in dismissal from the University. This dismissal will be noted on the student's transcript. For foreign students who are on a university-sponsored visa (eg. F-1, J-1 or J-2), dismissal also results in the revocation of their visa.

To help enforce the SPP policy on plagiarism, all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit student's work without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. The SPP policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace it or substitute for it. (<http://www.gmu.edu/facstaff/handbook/aD.html>)

Disability Accommodation If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see instructor and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the DRC.

"New Voices in Public Policy: Instructor will consider nominating the very best papers in this course for publication in *New Voices in Public Policy*. *New Voices* is a student- and faculty-reviewed journal that shares SPP's finest student work with the rest of the world

Importance of Good Writing Skills. Students in this course will be expected to do several short writing assignments, a normal requirement in graduate courses in public policy. From the outset, the highest standard of writing will be expected. Here are some of the criteria that will be used to measure submitted written work:

- **Quality of Content:** analytical clarity/persuasiveness; objectivity; quality of source material; use of evidence/methodology.
- **Tone, Structure and Organization:** focused introduction, thesis, conclusion; use of transitions, headings and other cohering strategies; logical paragraphing in support of main points.
- **Mechanics:** Correct citation and documentation; required elements like title page, works cited, page numbering; grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc. All work will be submitted in MS Word Times New Roman 12 or 14 pt. format single or double spaced, depending on the style guide selected
- **Structure:** The normal breaks between paragraphs will be observed, using any style guide you choose. A popular choice in SPP is Diana Hacker, *A Pocket Manual of Style*, (New York, St. Martin's Press, latest edition). Work should be neatly arranged with clear demarcation of sub- units. (The four criteria above were developed by Dr. Jonathan Gifford.)
- **Grammar:** Impeccable word usage and grammar will be expected in all submitted work. Students may wish to show early work to someone else--a friend or colleague--for a review of style, grammar and other details. Papers with more than a very small number of errors in grammar and word usage will be returned.

- Method of submission: All papers will be submitted to the instructor by email as MS Word attachments using a clear description in the subject line of the message. For example: Julia Jones, Assignment 1-Segment 3.