

School of Public Administration
University of Nebraska–Omaha

P.A. 8110 Managing Information in the Public Sector

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Overview of the Course

Information is a critical organizational resource. It should be managed with the same care and concern as financial, human, and material resources. Hence the purpose of this course is to examine ways that information is managed and how it should be managed in public organizations. This involves understanding the nature of information, how information is used to support operational, tactical, and strategic decision making, and how a variety of related computer and information technologies lend support for the proper management of information. This is not a course in computer hardware or software. You will not learn how to operate a computer, write application software for use on a computer, or how to use application software. Instead, this is a course about management issues concerning the use of information in the delivery of public services. In other words, this course is every public manager's guide to managing information and technology.

Learning Objectives

This course provides you with the opportunity to:

1. Appreciate the importance of information as an organizational resource;
2. Acquire an understanding of how information should be managed in public organizations;
3. Explore several major issues about the proper management of information in the public sector;
4. Address some of the ways that the information revolution is transforming the administrative and public policy dimensions of government;
5. Understand some of the broader political, social, economic, and ethical issues related to information management in the delivery of public services and in the enhancement of democracy.
6. Develop an understanding of some of the major technologies that support the management of information.
7. Acquire the language and ability to communicate effectively with information systems professionals.

Topics

The following are some of the topics that will be covered.

E-Governance and E-Democracy
Information System Failures in the Public Sector
Human Issues in Information Systems
Information Systems Design and Implementation
Databases and Database Management
Information Technology for Managerial Decision Making: Decision Support Systems, Expert Systems, etc.
Software Applications, Development, and Implementation
Procurement and Dealing with Contractors
Centralized and Decentralized Information Systems
Networks
Client–Server Technologies and Applications
Ethical and Privacy Issues
Organizational Planning and Design from an Information Technology Perspective
Telecommuting

Conduct

Class sessions will consist of discussions centering on weekly assignments and case studies. While there will be some minor lecturing, emphasis will be placed on discussions. Blackboard will also be used to facilitate the sharing of information and discussion of topics.

Required Material

A set of case studies will be provided on Blackboard. They are being made available from Idea Group Publishing. Since these cases are under copyright, participants will be required to pay for these cases. The cost of providing the cases on Blackboard is substantially lower than providing them on hard copy. When I inform you of the exact cost of the cases you will write a check for that amount made out to “Department of Public Administration, UNO”. Once your check is received you will be provided access to the cases.

The Course Documents section of Blackboard will serve as the textbook for this class. There you will find numerous documents and web sites pertaining to the topics that will be addressed in the course.

Participants are expected to make extensive use of the internet and the World Wide Web in learning about information technology and management. Links to informative websites are on Blackboard. These web sites constitute what would normally be considered as a standard textbook for the course. Participants are also expected to search out other web sites that contain information about information technology and management. If you find an interesting web site please send it to me and I will post it on the external links section of Blackboard.

The website Webopedia will be a major resource for acquiring knowledge of the technical aspects of information technology. It can be found at <http://www.webopedia.com/>. It contains a comprehensive dictionary of computer and information technology terms and concepts. If you are unfamiliar with a technical term it is your responsibility to find its definition.

Requirements

The course has the following requirements: 1) weekly written assignments responding to case studies or assignments (20% of grade); 2) an Agency Management Information System Report (20% of grade); two examinations (50% of grade); and class participation (10% of grade).

All of the requirements will be graded with letter grades. They will be averaged together to calculate the final grade. The grading scheme recommended by the Faculty Senate and adopted by the Board of Regents will be used: A+ = 4; A = 4; A- = 3.67; B+ 3.33; B = 3.00, B- = 2.67; C+ = 2.33; C = 2; C- = 1.67; D+ 1.33; D = 1; D- .67; F = 0.

General Policies

1. Class attendance is essential to your learning and performance in this course. Most of you have career and family responsibilities that may interfere with your attendance. While I am not going to impose a standard of perfect attendance, if you are absent from more than one class session, I will ask you to withdraw from the class or suffer the consequence of having your course grade lowered by one letter grade.
2. It is your responsibility to come to class on time. Arriving late to class or late from breaks interrupts the learning process and shows disrespect for other class participants. Lateness will be penalized by the reduction of final grades.
3. Requirements not completed on time will automatically receive a failing grade unless there is sufficient reason for the lateness, I have been consulted prior to the time the requirement is due, and I agree to the lateness of the requirement and the time the requirement will be fulfilled. The only sufficient reasons for lateness are documented medical emergencies for you or immediate family members or severe weather conditions. All requirements must be completed by the end of the semester. I am very reluctant to assign incomplete grades. On the rare occasion that someone convinces me that they should be given an incomplete grade, the person's grade for the course will be lowered by one letter grade no matter how well they perform on the course requirements. This is simply a matter of equity because other students have managed their time properly in order to get assignments in on time.
4. Participants are required to read and understand the University's policies on Academic Honesty and Plagiarism as contained in the most current Graduate Catalog.
5. Participants with disabilities should contact me, the instructor, so that appropriate accommodations can be made.
6. Outside of class, participants should communicate with me using the telephone or the University's Lotus Notes e-mail system. Appointments can be made to see me in person at a

mutually convenient time. Participants should expect to receive replies from me within a reasonable period of time – usually seventy-two hours unless I am unavailable due to other obligations.

7. Your written work will be evaluated on the basis of content and quality of writing. Points will be taken off for poorly written work. Written requirements should follow the style manual of the American Psychological Association.

8. Your oral presentations will also be evaluated on the basis of content and quality of presentation skills. Points will be taken off for poor presentations.

9. Participants are expected to behave in a professional manner showing politeness and respect to participants and myself.

10. All written homework assignments must be cleanly word processed. Since there are multiple assignments for each week they should be presented to me as follows. Each assignment should be submitted to me separately with the following heading: Your Name, The Title of the Case Study or the Internet Assignment, and the questions for each of the assignments or cases followed by your answers. The submitted assignments should be stapled together separately. For example if an assignment calls for an Internet Assignment and two case studies, then you should submit three separate items with your name on it and the title of the assignment or the case. No covers or folders please.