

## **DRAFT**

# **“IMPROVING GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS THROUGH OVERSIGHT & ACCOUNTABILITY”** SYLLABUS

**Course Description:** This course is designed to give students knowledge and skills to gain an understanding of government oversight and accountability, including the different types and roles of oversight bodies, the benefits provided by oversight, the limitations of oversight, the interactions and interplay among the oversight bodies, and the challenges facing oversight bodies. The course will draw upon case examples of oversight reports and reviews. [Guest speakers may be invited to provide various perspectives in particular subject-matter areas.]

**Prerequisites:** XXX

**Professor:** Jay N. Lerner

**Required Readings:** Charles A. Johnson, Kathryn E. Newcomer, *U.S. Inspectors General: Truth Tellers in Turbulent Times* (2020), Brookings Institution Press.

Daniel L. Feldman, David R. Eichenenthal, *The Art of the Watchdog: Fighting Fraud, Waste, Abuse, and Corruption in Government* (2013), Excelsior Editions, State University of New York.

Supplemental readings and materials, as assigned.

### **Student Learning Objectives:**

Through the course discussions, readings, and assignments, students will develop knowledge and skills to enable them to:

- 1) Understand the context and landscape for oversight and accountability within the government/public sector;
- 2) Understand the roles for oversight bodies in the government/public sector;
- 3) Understand the complex interactions and nuances between and among oversight bodies in the government/public sector;

- 4) Construct a plan to investigate, audit, and evaluate programs within government agencies; and
- 5) Engage with diverse stakeholders to use oversight reports in order to lead change and improvements in the government/public sector.

### **Classroom Expectations:**

Higher education works best when it becomes a vigorous and lively marketplace of ideas in which all points of view are heard. Free expression in the classroom is an integral part of this process and works best when all of us approach the enterprise with empathy and respect for others, irrespective of their ideology, political views, or identity. We value civility because that is the kind of community we want, and we care for it because civility permits intellectual exploration and growth.

### **Respect for Diversity:**

It is my intent that students from all backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. I strive to create an inclusive classroom and present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity including gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, culture, and political affiliation. Your suggestions on how to help me succeed with this are encouraged and appreciated.

### **Assignments:**

1. **Class Participation: Attendance is required for successful completion of this course.** Students are expected to have completed required readings prior to the class meeting. Class discussion on the required readings will be expected. [40 percent of grade.]
2. **Case Study -- Paper and Presentation.** Students will work in pairs with another student to write a paper during the course of the semester, and present the material.

The paper will be on a topic selected by the students regarding the Role of Oversight. The students will select a particular case study (or report) by an Inspector General, Congressional Oversight, Commission, or other oversight body, and get approval by the Professor by XXX (date), the end of Session 5. The paper will be approximately 5-7 pages in length (double-spaced, normal margins), and it will be due to the Professor by the end of Session 8. The students will then present the material for discussion during Sessions 9 or 10 of the course. [30 percent of grade.]

3. **Final Paper:** The Final Paper will focus on the coordination among the various oversight bodies and components that have been discussed in the course. The Professor will provide the topic/question for the Final Paper at the end of Session 8. Each student will individually submit their own original Final Paper. The Final Paper will be approximately 10-12 pages in length (double-spaced, normal margins), and it will be due to the Professor on XXX (date). [40 percent of grade.]

### **Class Schedule**

#### **Session 1 -- Introduction to Course on “Improving Government Operations Through Oversight & Accountability.”**

##### ***Topics for Discussion:***

- Why do we need government oversight? Goals.
- Role of oversight within the public policy domain.
- Roles for government oversight bodies.

#### **Sessions 2 and 3 – Inspectors General.**

##### ***Topics for Discussion:***

- Historical development and context of Inspectors General. How to become an Inspector General.
- Dual-reporting requirements. Relations with the agency and Congress.
- Structure of Offices of Inspectors General.
- Values: Independence, Accountability, Objectivity, Access, Transparency.
- Challenges facing Inspectors General.

##### ***Reading:***

- *Truth Tellers in Turbulent Times*, pages 17-58 [Session 2]
- *The Art of the Watchdog*, pages 97-116 [Session 3]

#### **Sessions 4 and 5 -- Investigations.**

##### ***Topics for Discussion:***

- Criminal Investigations.
  - Investigative Techniques (arrests, interrogations, searches, rights and protections);
  - Privacy Concerns;
  - Pre-trial Procedures;
  - Trial Considerations;
  - Sentencing;

- Administrative Misconduct.
  - Expectations of privacy by government employees.
  - Warnings provided to personnel.
- Penalties and discipline.

**Reading:**

- *Truth Tellers in Turbulent Times*, pages 93-120

**Session 6 – Audits and Evaluations.**

**Topics for Discussion:**

- Compliance and performance audits and evaluations.
- Making recommendations, and process for resolving.
- Agile products and hybrid reviews.

**Reading:**

- *Truth Tellers in Turbulent Times*, pages 163-193

**Sessions 7 -- Congressional Oversight.**

**Topics for Discussion:**

- Authorities.
- Purpose, role.
- Parallel proceedings; immunity.
- Government Accountability Office (GAO) oversight.

**Reading:**

- *The Art of the Watchdog*, pages 53-96

**Session 8 – State and Local Inspectors General, and Other Oversight Bodies.**

**Topics for Discussion:**

- Office of Government Ethics.
  - Financial disclosures.
  - Reporting requirements.
- Office of Special Counsel.
  - Whistleblower rights and protections.
  - Remedies.
  - National security context.
- Good Governance Organizations.

**Reading:**

- *The Art of the Watchdog*, pages 139-152; 179-198.

## **Session 9 and 10 – Student Presentations on Inspectors General.**

## **Sessions 11 and 12 – Commissions and Special Counsels.**

### ***Topics for Discussion:***

- Historical context.
- Case Examples.

## **Session 13 – Watching the Watchdogs.**

### ***Topics for Discussion:***

- IG Community.
  - Standards.
  - Committees.
  - Integrity Committee.
- Reporting requirements. Disclosure principles.
- Budget; Counsel.
- Reliance on agency.
- Vacancies.
- Special Inspectors General.

## **Session 14 – How Does It All Fit Together?**

### ***Topics for Discussion:***

- How to measure success?
- Looking ahead. What comes next.

### ***Reading:***

- *Truth Tellers in Turbulent Times*, pages 195-206

## **Policies in Course:**

1. **Incompletes:** A student must consult with the instructor to obtain a grade of “I” (incomplete) no later than the last day of classes in a semester. At that time, the student and instructor will both sign the CCAS contract for incompletes and submit a copy to the School Director. Please consult the TSPPPA Student Handbook or visit our website for the complete CCAS policy on incompletes.
2. **Submission of Written Work Products Outside of the Classroom:** It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that an instructor receives each written assignment. Students can submit written work electronically only with the express permission of the instructor.
3. **Submission of Written Work Products after Due Date: Policy on Late Work:** All work must be turned in by the assigned due date in order to receive full credit for that assignment, unless an exception is expressly made by the instructor.
4. **Academic Honesty:** Please consult the “policies” section of the GW student handbook for the university code of academic integrity. Please note especially the definition of plagiarism: “intentionally representing the words, ideas, or sequence of ideas of another as one’s own in any academic exercise; failure to attribute any of the following: quotations, paraphrases, or borrowed information.” All examinations, papers, and other graded work products and assignments are to be completed in conformance with the George Washington University Code of Academic Integrity. See the GW Academic Integrity Code (<http://www.gwu.edu/~integrity>).
5. **Changing Grades After Completion of Course:** No changes can be made in grades after the conclusion of the semester, other than in cases of clerical error.
6. **Syllabus:** This syllabus is a guide to the course for the student. Sound educational practice requires some flexibility and the instructor may therefore, at her/his discretion, change content and requirements during the semester but only to give students more, not less, time. Excused absences will be given for absences due to religious holidays as per the university schedule, but please advise the instructor ahead of time.

## **University Policies**

### **University Policy on Religious Holidays**

1. Students should notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance.
2. Faculty should extend to these students the courtesy of absence without penalty on such occasions, including permission to make up examinations.
3. Faculty who intend to observe a religious holiday should arrange at the beginning of the semester to reschedule missed classes or to make other provisions for their course-related activities.

### **Support for Students Outside the Classroom**

#### **Disability Support Services (DSS)**

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Rome Hall, Suite 102, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information, please refer to: [gwired.gwu.edu/dss/](http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/)

#### **Mental Health Services 202-994-5300**

The University's Mental Health Services offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include: crisis and emergency mental health consultations confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals. [counselingcenter.gwu.edu/](http://counselingcenter.gwu.edu/)

### **Academic Integrity Code**

Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information. For the remainder of the code, see: [studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity](http://studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity)

### **Out of Class Learning**

Average minimum amount of independent, out-of-class, learning expected per week: Students are expected to spend approximately XXX minutes of out-of-class work for every XXX minutes of classroom instruction.