

Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration

Fall 2020

PPPA 8190: Philosophical Foundations of Policy and Administrative Research

CRN: 52354

Thursday, 6:10PM-8PM (Meeting information posted on Blackboard)

Professor: Sanjay K. Pandey, PhD
Shapiro Professor of Public Policy and Public Administration

Email: skpandey@gwu.edu

Office location: 601R, MPA Building, 805 21st Street NW

Office phone: 202-994-1084

Office hours: Thursday 3PM-6PM and by appointment

About the Professor:

Professor Pandey has a number of research interests and is widely published in leading public policy and administration journals. At George Washington University, Professor Pandey, in collaboration with colleagues from GWU and other universities, has convened conferences bringing together leading scholars from US and abroad on the intersection of public management and nonprofit management, and developing insights from behavioral public administration to address bureaucratic red tape and administrative burden. He is co-organizer of a symposium on race and gender to be held at GWU in Fall 2020. He is co-founder and convener of the Mixed Methods Research Interest Group at the George Washington University. For more on the professor, please see his Trachtenberg School website (<http://tspppa.gwu.edu/sanjay-k-pandey>) or his profiles on Google Scholar (<https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=KjmhYp4AAAAJ&hl=en&oi=ao>) and ResearchGate (https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Sanjay_Pandey15).

Course Description (from bulletin):

PPPA 8190. Philosophical Foundations of Policy and Administrative Research. 3 Credits.
Philosophy of science as applied to research in public policy and public administration. Topics include the nature and current problems of epistemology, development and role of theories, and relationships among theory, methodology, and empirical data.

Focus of Course and Learning Objectives

Some philosophers contend that whether you know it or not, you are a philosopher! You are a philosopher in the sense that you subscribe to key assumptions about the nature of reality, appropriate ways of understanding, and developing knowledge about social reality. Where the “rubber hits the road” is the level of self-awareness you may have about your philosophical leanings. Most mature social sciences informing research on public policy and public administration (e.g., economics, political science, psychology, sociology, anthropology etc.) proceed with social inquiry about individuals and collectivities without significant reference to philosophical underpinnings. Philosophers argue that even as areas of inquiry mature and move into their own, they must relegate thorny concerns about reality and knowledge to philosophy. Thus, this course will examine philosophical foundations as well as important debates that endure. The **learning objectives** for this course are:

1. To stimulate and raise your awareness of the relation between philosophical concerns and social science research
2. To surface implicit assumptions that underlie different scholarly traditions
3. To develop your ability to engage in critical and reflective appreciation of public policy and administration scholarship and to provide opportunities for assessing what this awareness means for race, gender, and social justice.

Readings:

Two required books for the course are listed below. To accomplish the learning objectives, you are expected to go beyond the required readings. Although suggestions on additional readings and resources may be provided, you are expected to display initiative and energy in compiling and selecting relevant readings to complete course requirements.

Kuhn, Thomas, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. University of Chicago Press.

Rosenberg, Alexander. 2015. *Philosophy of Social Science, Fifth Edition*. Westview Press

Course Requirements and Grading:

GRADING:

Grades will be based on completing following activities (specific details on each requirement provided below):

- Readings and Participation – 40%
- Book Review – 20%
- Course Project/Final Paper – 40%

Grades and Expectations:

A (Excellent): Exceptional work for a graduate student. Shows a strong command of the material.

A-(Very Good): Very strong work for a graduate student. Shows signs of a strong understanding of appropriate analytical approaches and meets professional standards.

B+ (Good): Sound work for a graduate student. This grade indicates the student has fully accomplished the basic course objectives.

B (Adequate): Competent work for a graduate student with some evident weaknesses. Demonstrates competency in the key course objectives but the understanding or application of some important issues is less than complete.

B- (Inadequate): Weak work for a graduate student. Understanding of key issues is incomplete. A cumulative GPA of B- will lead to academic probation.

Grades of below B- indicate extremely weak performance and insufficient grasp of the material.

Specific detail on course requirements:

1) Readings and Participation (40% of the grade)

Most sessions will have the following structure:

1. Opening remarks setting the context for the week's readings
2. 1 (or 2) students leading discussion on key reading(s)
3. Deliberation on a philosophical concern to be considered in juxtaposition with the session's theme (I intentionally frame this as a deliberation, rather than debate, so that you are able to listen to other perspectives and work together to advance common/shared understanding).

If you use text from a reading, be sure to put this text within quotation marks and note the page number(s).

-As a discussion leader you will prepare a report on the assigned reading, post your report on the discussion board for the respective week, and present it in class. Please be sure to review and follow guidelines provided in the syllabus addendum titled, "PhD Seminar Presentation & Participation Guidelines".

- You will prepare a 2-4 page written report for one deliberation prompt, present it in class, and post it to Blackboard discussion board for the respective week (Be sure to cite sources consulted). Deliberation prompts are open-ended and allow you to explore a variety of literatures in different strands of philosophy and social sciences. Use this as an opportunity to choose readings that serve learning objective #3 for the course. Your written report needs to be grounded in scholarship. Therefore, you are expected to conduct research, identify, and draw from a select few scholarly sources. In addition to usual bibliographic databases you use, I encourage you to explore sources identified in GWU library's subject guide for philosophy available at <https://libguides.gwu.edu/philosophydatabases>. Two useful open access resources are *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (available at plato.stanford.edu) and *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (available at iep.utm.edu). Please consult and pay heed to Peter Horban's advice in writing your written report, available at <http://www.sfu.ca/philosophy/resources/writing.html>

Your grade on this part of the course will be based on your attendance, participation, and performance in the following roles:

- a) Discussion leader (15%)
- b) Deliberation participant (15%)
- c) Participation in class conversations (5%)
- d) Other assigned analyses and presentations (5%)

2) *Book Review (20% of the grade)*

You will read a philosophy of social science book and write a review. In choosing a book, you should be guided by your interests. Identify a few candidate books and choose the one that offers a moderate level of intellectual challenge. Keep learning objective #3 in mind as you choose a book to review. I am happy to provide suggestions or to help you choose from a list of books you are considering.

Good book reviews provide an accessible summary and a thoughtful evaluation. Your review should summarize core arguments of the book and also discuss its relevance for public policy and administration research. The review should be no longer than 10 pages. Writing good book reviews is a craft – you will find Edwin Battistella’s **advice on writing a book review** helpful; it is available at <https://blog.oup.com/2015/08/how-write-book-review/>.

3) *Course Project (40% of the grade)*

You will do a course project on which you will write a report and make an oral presentation in class. Your overarching goal for this project is to learn philosophy of science relevant to public policy and administration research broadly defined. I want this project to engage and excite you and therefore I will work with you so that you have a significant role in framing and choosing a project.

You should take advantage of consultations offered to do the best work you can! A typical course project is a literature review. To get the most out of consultations, prepare according to the document titled, “Course Project/Final Paper Consultation Guidelines”.

I am open to considering and approving alternate student-initiated projects that will serve your learning aspirations.

To sum up, you are expected to:

- 1) When serving as a **discussion leader**, prepare and share an outline for the assigned reading (Due the day you make a presentation; **post** to Blackboard discussion board for the respective week)
- 2) When serving as a **deliberation participant**, prepare a written paper (Due the day of the deliberation; **post** to Blackboard discussion board for the respective week)
- 3) Choose a book to review by the second week of the semester and submit the review on Blackboard (choose book by Tuesday, **September 8**; Book review due **October 8**)
- 4) Work on a course project all through the semester, submit a written report, and make a class presentation on it (non-graded deliverables for providing developmental feedback due on **October 8** and **November 12**; paper due on **December 17**)

Course Schedule (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

Notes:

1. Please review and follow guidelines provided in the syllabus addendum titled, "PhD Seminar Presentation and Participation Guidelines".
2. Deliberation prompt guidelines on pp. 3 (you are welcome to review your choice of readings with me).

Session 1 – September 3, 2020

Introduction and Overview

→ select a book to review and email to skpandey@gwu.edu by Tuesday of second week

Session 2 -- September 10, 2020 – Normal Science; Role of Philosophy

Kuhn, Chapter 1 to 6

Rosenberg, Chapter 1

Deliberation Prompt: Philosophical insights and analyses have clear benefits for public policy and administration scholarship.

On Logical Empiricism, see:

Creath, Richard, "Logical Empiricism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/logical-empiricism/>.

You may also be interested in the SEP entry on Vienna Circle.

Session 3 -- September 17, 2020 – Revolutions; Naturalism versus Interpretation

Kuhn, Chapter 7 to 13

Rosenberg, Chapter 2

Deliberation prompt: To be truly effective, public policy and administration scholarship needs to embrace critical theories that aspire to serve practical goals of human emancipation.

On Relativism, see:

Swoyer, Chris, "Relativism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2014/entries/relativism/>.

Session 4 – September 24, 2020 – Human Action, Intentionality, and the Mind-Body Problem

Rosenberg, Chapter 3, 4

Deliberation prompt: The quest for universal laws in public policy and administration, applicable to all times and all places, deny the importance of history and context and are misguided at best.

Session 5 – October 1, 2020 -- Behaviorism and Rational Choice

Rosenberg, Chapter 5, 6

Deliberation prompt: Confusing causal description with causal explanation has serious implications for developing usable knowledge in public policy and public administration.

Session 6 – October 8, 2020 – Course Project Consultations (1-on-1 meetings)

➔ Book review due

Session 7 – October 15, 2020 – Interpretive theories and perspectives

Rosenberg, Chapter 7, 8

Deliberation Prompt: The potential of Weber's idea of *verstehen*, empathic capacity to understand other humans, remains unrealized because of polarized debates in social science that call for choosing between explanation and understanding.

Session 8 – October 22, 2020 -- Holism, Social Facts, and Functionalism

Rosenberg, Chapter 9, 10

Deliberation Prompt: Understanding and applying symbolic racism theories to public policy and administration has the potential to provide transformational insight.

Session 9 -- October 29, 2020 – Nature or Nurture – Social Sciences and Sociobiology

Rosenberg, Chapter 11, 12

Deliberation Prompt: Public policy and administration scholarship continues to be a bulwark for patriarchal power.

Session 10 – November 5, 2020 -- Facts and Values; Ethics in Social Inquiry

Rosenberg, Chapter 13, 14

Deliberation Prompt: The lack of self-awareness about theory-ladenness of observation and measurement stymies deep understanding of core issues in public policy and administration.

Session 11 -- November 12, 2020 -- Course Project Consultations (1-on-1 meetings)

Session 12 -- November 19, 2020 -- Social Science and Philosophy -- Recap
Rosenberg, Chapter 15

*****Thanksgiving Break*****

Session 13 -- December 3, 2020 -- Course Project Presentations

Session 14 -- December 10, 2020 -- continued

Session 15-- December 17, 2020 -- Course Project Paper
→ Course Project paper due

Course Policies: Grades

Late Work Policy: Assignments turned in late will be assessed a penalty: a half-letter grade for anything from 1 – 12 hours late, a full-letter grade for 12-24 hours. Students will not receive credit for any assignments turned in after 24 hours.

Professor Pandey's Policy on grading concerns: The professor will not consider any verbal or oral statement of concerns about grading. The student must write a detailed memo to the professor explaining how his/her work met the requirements outlined in the respective evaluation rubric for the professor to consider the grade.

Expectations of Written Work: For all written material you submit or share in this course, be sure to use quotation marks to denote exact quotations and provide the page number(s). Failure to attribute sources correctly may constitute plagiarism and result in a grade of F for the course.

Course Policies: Technology and Media

Blackboard: Blackboard may be used as an aid to the course for providing course readings and for sharing course materials and carrying out course-related exchanges.

Computer and cellphone usage: If you use a computer during class to take notes, please only take notes. The class is a cellphone-free zone. In the case of an emergency, please step out of the classroom discreetly and without distracting others. Any use of technology to distract one's self or others in the class may lead to suspension of the privilege to use technology during class.

Course Policies: Student Expectations

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 are encouraged and appreciated.

Civility Policy: 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. At the same time, higher education 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.

Attendance and Participation Policy: Attendance and participation is crucial to learning and you are expected to attend all classes except in case of extreme hardship such as an unforeseen medical emergency.

Professionalism Policy: Per university policy and classroom etiquette; mobile phones, iPods, *etc.* must be silenced during all classroom lectures. Those not heeding this rule will be asked to step

outside the classroom so that the learning environment is not disrupted.

Please arrive on time for all class meetings. Students who habitually disturb the class by talking, arriving late, *etc.*, and have been warned, will result in a letter grade reduction to their final grade.

Policies in The Trachtenberg School Courses:

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 TSPPA Student Handbook or visit <http://bulletin.gwu.edu/university-regulations/#GIIncomplete> for the 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. 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 at studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-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. **The Syllabus:** This syllabus is a guide to the course for the student. Sound educational practice requires flexibility and the instructor may therefore, at her/his discretion, change content and requirements during the semester. 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 and Information

University policy on observance of religious holidays

In accordance with University policy, 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. For details and policy, see: provost.gwu.edu/policies-procedures-and-guidelines

Academic integrity code

Academic Integrity is an integral part of the educational process, and GW takes these matters very seriously. Violations of academic integrity occur when students fail to cite research sources properly, engage in unauthorized collaboration, falsify data, and in other ways outlined in the Code of Academic Integrity. Students accused of academic integrity violations should contact the Office of Academic Integrity to learn more about their rights and options in the process. Outcomes can range from failure of assignment to expulsion from the University, including a transcript notation. The Office of Academic Integrity maintains a permanent record of the violation. For more information, please refer to the Office of Academic Integrity website (studentconduct.gwu.edu/academicintegrity), email (rights@gwu.edu), or call (202-994-6757).

Support for students outside the classroom

Disability Support Services (DSS) 202-994-8250

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact Disability Support Services in Rome Hall, 801 22nd Street, NW, Suite 102, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information see: disabilitysupport.gwu.edu

Counseling and Psychological Services 202-994-5300

GW's Colonial Health Center offers counseling and psychological services, supporting mental health and personal development by collaborating directly with students to overcome challenges and difficulties that may interfere with academic, emotional, and personal success. For additional information see healthcenter.gwu.edu/counseling-and-psychological-services.

Student Support Information

You can obtain a variety of useful information at <https://online.gwu.edu/student-support> (e.g., technical requirements and support, student services, obtaining a GWorld card, and state contact information).

Average Minimum Hours of Workload

Students will spend ~2 hours per week on direct instruction and ~5.5 hours per week on independent activities, on average. Over the course of the semester, students will spend 7.5 hours in instructional time per week for a total of 112.5 hours for the semester.

Safety and security

- **In an emergency:** call GWPD 202-994-6111 or 911

- **For situation-specific actions:** review the Emergency Response Handbook:
safety.gwu.edu/emergency-response-handbook
- **In an active violence situation:** Get Out, Hide Out or Take Out: go.gwu.edu/shooterprep
- **Stay informed:** safety.gwu.edu/stay-informed