PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Public sector organizations rely primarily on a single resource – talent – to achieve their goals. As a result, acquiring, managing and retaining human resources (HR) should be of paramount importance to government organizations, managers and supervisors.

In this seminar, we will discuss why public sector HR matters, explore the key components of personnel/human resources, and discuss the critical talent issues that public sector leaders face. We will approach these issues from the perspective of the manager. While we will go into some detail on public sector personnel, we will not focus on technical HR details. Instead, we will discuss what effective public sector managers need to know, understand and do – to attract, develop, engage and retain talent.

For those interested in specializing in one or more aspects of HR, this course will serve as a foundation.

To the extent possible, we will rely on practitioner examples to illustrate HR principles and operations. These examples will include what is occurring on the UW-Madison campus, beginning on July 1, 2015, as we comprehensively and dramatically redesign our entire HR system. The timing is right because the July implementation is the start of a redesign that will continue over at least the next two years. This initiative is entitled HR Design.

Students will therefore have the opportunity to explore, analyze and discuss issues we're facing, and even offer suggestions on how we should proceed.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

We will assume that everyone has completed the reading assignments in advance, and therefore we will not always go into detail on these readings. Class meetings will be most successful, stimulating and enjoyable if everyone comes prepared. We will often engage in interactive discussions, so we can learn from each other. The schedule of topics and assignments is below.
There are four major graded requirements:

1. **Class participation (15%)**

   We will create opportunities to stimulate class discussion and interaction, but the quality of our discussions will depend on student participation. Therefore, each student must come to class prepared to discuss the pre-class readings and actively participate in the discussions of that week’s topic.

2. **Weekly media reports (15%)**

   In each class, starting on September 15, two-three students will be asked to provide a brief summary (3-5 minutes) of an article from a media source (news article, op-ed piece, blog, column, etc., from traditional or electronic media) that relates to public sector personnel/HR. I will provide a list of possible sources, but you can search whatever sources you’d like.

   Each student will be asked to provide three of these reports throughout the semester, according to a pre-determined schedule. Presenters should summarize the article, and also draw conclusions about why the news is important to public sector HR – and to the students in our class. Presenters will also be asked to facilitate a brief class discussion about their articles.

3. **UW-Madison HR project (30%)**

   Students will form teams and explore the implementation of a major component of the UW-Madison HR Design initiative. This is the redesign of the campus HR system – implementation began on July 1, 2015, This project will provide you with a unique and real-time opportunity to engage with the strategy and tactics we are implementing to redesign the University’s HR system. I will provide a list of the relevant HR Design topics for you to choose from, as well as names and contact info, and material (background papers, policies, toolkits, communications materials, etc.).

   Each team will use this information to develop a presentation for the class. This will consist of three parts:

   - Fifteen-minute audio/visual presentation
   - Two-to-three page handout
   - Questions and answers session.

   Each team should let me know which component it chooses by the October 6 class.
4. End-of-term paper/presentation (40%)

Your agency director and her/his senior leadership are interested in making some changes to the organization’s HR practices. You have been asked to explore an HR issue (and you can even choose the issue!). The leadership would like you to prepare a briefing paper, executive summary, and presentation on the topic you have selected.

Your briefing paper should be 10-15 pages (in Word, double spaced with proper grammar), submitted electronically, by Dec. 8. I will approve the paper topics; proposals are due by Oct. 20. The in-class student presentations will take place during the Dec. 8 and 15 class sessions.

The briefing paper assignment is designed to foster research and discussion linked to the course objective of covering practical and timely information about HR in a public sector organization. The assignment is also designed to provide you with a realistic opportunity to explore an issue and then prepare/present a proposal to senior management. I will be the agency director and your classmates will be the other agency senior leaders.

Simply stated, the paper should focus on a contemporary HR topic in the public sector, keeping in mind that the role of HR is to enable the organization to attract, hire, develop, engage and retain talent. The underlying premise of this activity is that we will learn more through a participatory process, with the product being shared with, and discussed by, the class.

A key facet of this project is to know your audience – the agency director and senior leaders – who are likely appointed (not career civil servants) and also may not know much about public sector HR. Your paper and presentation should be geared toward convincing your audience that your issue matters, and that they should take the action you recommend.

**Topics:** I will provide a non-exhaustive list of possible topics as examples. You are not obligated to choose any of these topics; they are merely examples.

**Paper focus:** The best way to approach the project is to imagine that you are designing a briefing paper. You need to convey a large amount of material in a relatively short amount of space. You should present 10-15 pages of new material, plus any supplemental material (background, research, laws, etc.) as appendices. It is reasonable to assume that a paper may include:

- A brief overview of the background, history, and relevance of the topic;
- A summary of any major research/empirical data that inform the subject;
• A description of the issue you believe the agency should take action on, and why it matters to the agency director and senior leadership;
• Specific suggestions on what action you suggest the agency take;
• Implementation issues and how to address them;
• How results of the suggested action(s) will be evaluated; and
• Appendices with supporting material.

**Presentation:** Present a 10-15 minute summary of the issue and why it matters, your research, your recommendations, and how the impacts of your recommended actions will be evaluated. The presentation should be tailored to your audience (the agency director and other senior leaders).

**Proposal** (due by the Oct. 20 class): In 1-2 pages, please explain what topic you have selected, why it is important, and why you have selected it.
SCHEDULE OF CLASS DISCUSSIONS AND PRE-CLASS READING ASSIGNMENTS (subject to change)

Recommended text (I will provide the chapters listed in the syllabus but you may also want to purchase this book – up to you):

Dennis L. Dresang, Personnel Management in Government Agencies and Nonprofit Organizations, 5th ed.

Sept. 8 – Course goals and overview, class introductions, public sector HR model and issues
Pre-class readings
- Dresang, ch. 2.

Sept 15 – Workforce planning; recruiting, selecting and hiring; new employee onboarding; UW-Madison HR Design project
Pre-class readings
- Dresang, ch. 10.
- Condrey, Ch. 5.
September 22 – Recruiting, selecting, hiring and onboarding (cont.)
Pre-class readings

September 29 – Employee training and development
Don Schutt, Director, Office of Talent Management, OHR, will conduct the class

Pre-class readings
• TBD

October 6 – Job design and classification
Guest speaker – Meghan Owens, Advanced HR Specialist, UW-Madison Office of Human Resources

Pre-class readings
• Dresang, ch. 8.

October 13 – Employee engagement
Pre-class readings
• Lavigna, Robert J. (2013). Engaging Government Employees: Motivate and Inspire Your People to Achieve Superior Performance, AMACOM, ch. 1-3
October 20 – Performance management/employee discipline (and Gallup Strengthsfinder)

Pre-class readings:

- Dresang, ch. 9.
- Hays, ch. 8.

October 27 – Compensation, rewards and benefits

Pre-class readings

- Dresang, ch. 14.
- Hays, ch. 9.
November 3 – Legal issues in HR
Guest speaker – Brian Vaughan, Senior University Legal Counsel, UW-Madison Office of Legal Services

Pre-class readings
• Condrey, ch. 17.
• Other TBD

November 10 – Labor and employee relations, unions and collective bargaining
Guest speakers – Patrick Sheehan, Employee Relations Program Coordinator, OHR; Mary Czynszak-Lyne, University Services Program Coordinator, Letters and Sciences
Pre-class readings

November 17 – HR Design team presentations

November 24 – Diversity, inclusion and affirmative action
Pre-class readings
• Other readings TBD

December 1 – Civil service reform/future of public sector HR; student class presentations
Pre-class readings
• Hays, ch. 24

December 8 – Student class presentations

December 15 – Student class presentations