

NOTE The full version of the course syllabus, schedule, and all course materials is available online at <https://governancef25.classes.andrewheiss.com/>. This is only a partially complete static version.

Governance Around the World

PMAP 8441/4441 • Fall 2025



Instructor

- [Dr. Andrew Heiss](#)
- 55 Park Place SE, Room 464
- ahheiss@gsu.edu
- [Bluesky](#)

Course details

- Thursdays
- August 28–December 12, 2025
- 4:30–7:00 PM
- Langdale Hall 315

Contacting me

- [Schedule an appointment](#)

Course objectives

How do public managers in Mexico, Ghana, and Australia behave differently? Why do some provinces and municipalities perform better than others? How do a country's political institutions shape its public sector and civil society?

By the end of this course, you will (1) understand the varieties of the public and civil society sectors around the world, (2) see the connections between a country's political regime, governance, bureaucracy, and civil society, (3) make cross-country comparisons of different forms of governing institutions, and (4) use theory and data to argue for specific public policy and management issues. Specifically you'll be able to:

- **Explain** varieties in administrative characteristics and management practices around the world
- **Understand** to what extent different institutional features and management practices influence governance outcomes and public management practices
- **Apply** the findings of scientific studies to current policy and management issues
- **Critically assess research** about public policy and administration
- **Conduct your own research** on issues in comparative public policy and management

Course materials

⚠ Don't buy anything!

Do not purchase any articles for this class — all readings are freely accessible on iCollege.

There is no textbook for this class, and all of the readings are free (!!). You will need to read 2–5 readings (generally policy papers and academic research articles) for each class session, and all of these readings will be available through the GSU library or through iCollege.

You're also expected to use quality news sources (e.g. *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Economist*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Guardian*, or high quality blogs or online

publications) to keep up with current events and policy debates related to the class. I also recommend [subscribing to Don Moynihan's "Can We Still Govern?" newsletter](#).

Attendance and participation

You're expected to read all class materials *before* each class and come prepared for class discussions. Anyone may be called on to discuss some aspect of the assigned readings. Therefore, (1) come to class on time, (2) read and think and write about the material beforehand, and (3) prepare to contribute as if this were a real policy forum or bureaucratic strategy meeting.

Attendance and participation are crucial to your success in this course. However, we're still in the middle of a global pandemic. If you are sick or are incapable of participating meaningfully in class (e.g. you have stayed up all night and are going to fall asleep in class), please stay home.

GSU has some new process for getting absences excused because of illness, but I don't care about that process. If you're sick, I don't need a doctor's note or anything. If a relative dies and you have to attend a funeral, do it! — don't worry about sending me confirmation or anything. If you have kids and your childcare situation falls through one week, focus on your kids! — again, don't worry about sending me confirmation. You're all adults — I trust you.

AI, large language models, and bullshit

I *highly recommend* **not** using ChatGPT or similar large language models (LLMs) in this class.

I am not opposed to LLMs in many situations. I use [GitHub Copilot](#) for computer programming-related tasks all the time, and I have ongoing research where we're experimenting with using [Meta's Ollama](#) to try automatically categorizing thousands of nonprofit mission statements. Using LLMs requires careful skill and attention and practice, and they tend to be useful only in specific limited cases.

I am deeply opposed to LLMs for writing.

Google Docs and Microsoft Word now have built in text-generation tools where you can start writing a sentence and let the machine take over the rest. ChatGPT and other services let you generate multi-paragraph essays with plausible-looking text. **Please do not use these.**

There's a reason most university classes require some sort of writing, like reading reflections, essay questions, and research papers. [The process of writing is actually the process of thinking:](#)

Writing is hard because the process of getting something onto the page helps us figure out what we think — about a topic, a problem or an idea. If we turn to AI to do the writing, we're not going to be doing the thinking either. That may not matter if you're writing an email to set up a meeting, but it will matter if you're writing a business plan, a policy statement or a court case.¹

Using LLMs and AI to generate a synthesis of the week's readings or to generate a policy brief will not help you think through the materials. You can create text and meet the suggested word count and finish the assignment, but the text will be meaningless. There's an official philosophical term for this kind of writing: **bullshit**.²³

Philosophical bullshit is "speech or text produced without concern for its truth."⁴ Bullshit isn't truth, but it's also not lies (i.e. the opposite of truth). It's text that exists to make the author sound like they know what they're talking about. A bullshitter doesn't care if the text is true or not — truth isn't even part of the equation:

[A bullshitter] does not reject the authority of the truth, as the liar does, and oppose himself to it. He pays no attention to it at all.⁵

LLMs and AI systems like ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, and so on are bullshit machines. That might sound hyperbolic, but at a technological level, that's literally what they do. LLMs use fancy statistics to take an initial prompt or starting phrase and then generate the most plausible words or phrases that are likely to follow. They don't care whether the text it creates is true — they only care about whether it looks plausible.

This is why these systems will generate citations to articles that don't exist, or generate facts that aren't true, or fail at simple math questions. They aren't meant to tell the truth. Their only goal is to create stuff that looks plausible:

The problem here isn't that large language models hallucinate, lie, or misrepresent the world in some way. It's that they are not designed to represent the world at all; instead, they are designed to convey convincing lines of text.⁶

Do not replace the important work of writing with AI bullshit slop. Remember that the point of writing is to help crystalize your thinking. Chugging out words that make it look like you read and understood the articles will not help you learn.

In your weekly reading reports, I want to see good engagement with the readings. I want to see your thinking process. I want to see you make connections between the readings and between real-world events. I don't want to see a bunch of words that look like a human wrote them. That's not useful for future-you. That's not useful for me. That's a waste of time.

¹Jane Rosenzweig, "AI-assisted Writing Is Close to Becoming as Standard as Spell Check. Here's the Catch," Los Angeles Times, June 20, 2023, <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2023-06-20/google-microsoft-chatgpt-ai-writing-assistants-artificial-intelligence>.

²Michael Townsen Hicks, James Humphries, and Joe Slater, "ChatGPT Is Bullshit," *Ethics and Information Technology* 26, no. 2 (2024): 38, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10676-024-09775-5>; Harry G. Frankfurt, *On Bullshit* (Princeton University Press, 2005).

³I'm a super straight-laced Mormon and, like, never ever swear or curse, but in this case, the word has a formal philosophical meaning (Frankfurt, *On Bullshit*), so it doesn't count :)

⁴Hicks et al., "ChatGPT Is Bullshit," 2.

⁵Frankfurt, *On Bullshit*, 61.

⁶Hicks et al., "ChatGPT Is Bullshit," 3.

I will not spend time trying to guess if your assignments are AI-generated.⁷ If you do turn in AI-produced content, I won't automatically give you a zero. I'll grade your work based on its own merits. I've found that AI-produced content will typically earn a ✓- (50%) or lower on my check-based grading system without me even needing to look for clues that it might have come from an LLM. Remember that text generated by these platforms is philosophical bullshit. Since it has nothing to do with truth, it will not — by definition — earn good grades.

Masks and vaccines

i Note

GSU does not require this and I can't require this but I am allowed to urge it so here's me urging it

Please get the COVID-19 vaccination and a booster shot. It is free. It saves lives. (I am fully vaccinated and repeatedly-boosted.)

GSU and the University System of Georgia do not have a mask mandate for students or faculty. However, I personally will be wearing a mask when [the CDC's wastewater surveillance ratings for Georgia](#) are moderate or above.

Learning in troubled times

Life still sucks right now. None of us is really okay. **We're all just pretending.**

You most likely know people who have lost their jobs, have been hospitalized, or have even died (I myself know people in all those categories). You all have increased (or possibly decreased) work responsibilities and increased family care responsibilities — you might be caring for extra people (young and/or old!) right now, and you are likely facing uncertain job prospects (or have been laid off!). You might know neighbors, relatives, or friends who have been detained or deported. You might face an uncertain legal future yourself.

I'm fully committed to making sure that you learn everything you were hoping to learn from this class! I will make whatever accommodations I can to help you finish your problem sets, do well on your projects, and learn and understand the class material. Under ordinary conditions, I am flexible and lenient with grading and course expectations when students face difficult challenges. During these troubled times, that flexibility and leniency is intensified.

If you tell me you're having trouble, I will not judge you or think less of you. I hope you'll extend me the same grace.

You *never* owe me personal information about your health (mental or physical). You are *always* welcome to talk to me about things that you're going through, though. If I can't help you, I usually know somebody who can.

⁷There are tools that purport to be able to identify the percentage of a given text that is AI, but they do not work and result in all sorts of false positives.

If you need extra help, or if you need more time with something, or if you feel like you're behind or not understanding everything, **do not suffer in silence!** Talk to me! I will work with you. **I promise.**

Please sign up for a time to meet with me during student hours at <https://calendly.com/andrewheiss/>. I'm also available through e-mail.

I want you to learn lots of things from this class, but I primarily want you to stay healthy, balanced, and grounded during these chaotic, awful times.

Course policies

Be nice. Be honest. Don't cheat.

We will also follow [Georgia State's Code of Conduct](#).

This syllabus reflects a plan for the semester. Deviations may become necessary as the semester progresses.

Student hours

Please watch [this video](#):

Student hours are set times dedicated to all of you (most professors call these "office hours"; I don't⁸). This means that I will be waiting for you to talk to me (in person or remotely) with whatever questions you have. This is the best and easiest way to find me and the best chance for discussing class material and concerns.

Since my schedule is often chaotic⁹ I don't have official permanently-set student hours every week. Instead, the best way to meet with me is to [make an appointment with me here](#). You can choose an online or in-person slot — if you choose an online slot, the confirmation e-mail will contain a link for a Webex meeting.

Late work

You will lose 2 points per day for each day an assignment is late. This is designed to not be a huge penalty (2 days late = 16/20 points on a reading report that gets a ✓), but instead works a commitment device to help you stay on schedule.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS)

Life at GSU can be complicated and challenging (especially during a pandemic!). You might feel overwhelmed, experience anxiety or depression, or struggle with relationships or family responsibilities. [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CPS\)](#) provides free, *confidential* support for students who are struggling with mental health and emotional challenges. The CPS office is staffed by professional psychologists who are attuned to the needs of all types

⁸There's fairly widespread misunderstanding about what office hours actually are! [Many students often think that they are the times I *shouldn't* be disturbed](#), which is the exact opposite of what they're for!

⁹Shuttling 5 kids around to different sports and music lessons, parenting while my wife is in her classes (she's a PhD student at UGA), meeting and traveling for research, and so on

of college and professional students. Please do not hesitate to contact CPS for assistance — getting help is a smart and courageous thing to do.

Basic needs security

If you have difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or if you lack a safe and stable place to live, and you believe this may affect your performance in this course, please contact the [Dean of Students](#) for support. They can provide a host of services including free groceries from the [Panther Pantry](#) and assisting with homelessness with the [Embark Network](#). Additionally, please talk to me if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable me to provide any resources that I might possess.

Lauren's Promise

I will listen and believe you if someone is threatening you.

Lauren McCluskey, a 21-year-old honors student athlete, [was murdered on October 22, 2018 by a man she briefly dated on the University of Utah campus](#). We must all take action to ensure that this never happens again.

If you are in immediate danger, call 911 or GSU police (404-413-3333).

If you are experiencing sexual assault, domestic violence, or stalking, please report it to me and I will connect you to resources or call [GSU's Counseling and Psychological Services](#) (404-413-1640).

Any form of sexual harassment or violence will not be excused or tolerated at Georgia State. GSU has instituted procedures to respond to violations of these laws and standards, programs aimed at the prevention of such conduct, and intervention on behalf of the victims. Georgia State University Police officers will treat victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking with respect and dignity. Advocates on campus and in the community can help with victims' physical and emotional health, reporting options, and academic concerns.

Academic honesty

Violation of [GSU's Policy on Academic Honesty](#) will result in an F in the course and possible disciplinary action.¹⁰ All violations will be formally reported to the Dean of Students.

Special needs

Students who wish to request accommodation for a disability may do so by registering with the [Office of Disability Services](#). Students may only be accommodated upon issuance by the Office of Disability Services of a signed [Accommodation Plan](#) and are responsible for providing a copy of that plan to instructors of all classes in which accommodations are sought.

Students with special needs should then make an appointment with me during the first week of class to discuss any accommodations that need to be made.

¹⁰So seriously, just don't cheat or plagiarize!

Global Scholar Distinction

This is a Global Scholar Distinction course. The GSD can be earned by students in any major and demonstrates a readiness to learn and lead with a global perspective. The GSD leads to a badge at graduation that can be added to your LinkedIn profile and other online profiles.

[Learn more here.](#)

For more information about study abroad, the free passport initiative, virtual exchange classes and more through the GSU office of International Initiatives, visit <https://international.gsu.edu/>.

Assignments and grades

You can find descriptions for all the assignments on the [assignments page](#).

Assignment	Points	Percent
Reading reports (13 × 20)	260	24.76%
Check-ins and warm-ups (14 × 20.5)	287	27.33%
Data-based essay	125	11.90%
Theory in real life essay	125	11.90%
Policy brief	250	23.81%
Free points to make the total a nice number	3	0.29%
Total	1050	100.00%

Grade	Range	Grade	Range
A	93–100%	C	73–76%
A–	90–92%	C–	70–72%
B+	87–89%	D+	67–69%
B	83–86%	D	63–66%
B–	80–82%	D–	60–62%
C+	77–79%	F	< 60%

Desserts

Once you have read this entire syllabus and [the assignments page](#), please [click here](#) and e-mail me a recipe for your favorite dessert. I love cooking ([see here for a feed of some of my cooking adventures](#)) and I'm always on the lookout for new things!

Schedule

Foundations of public management and governance		
Topic 1	August 28	Introduction, historical development of public administration and management, and recent critiques
Topic 2	September 4	Rediscovery of bureaucracy and good governance
	September 3	Reading report 2 (<i>due by 11:59 PM</i>)
Topic 3	September 11	Quality of government and governance outcomes
	September 10	Reading report 3 (<i>due by 11:59 PM</i>)
	October 2	Data-based essay (<i>due by 11:59 PM</i>)
Topic 4	September 18	Institutions
	September 17	Reading report 4 (<i>due by 11:59 PM</i>)
Comparative bureaucracy and civil society		
Topic 5	September 25	Bureaucratic structures, politicization, and governance outcomes
	September 24	Reading report 5 (<i>due by 11:59 PM</i>)
Topic 6	October 2	Bureaucratic structures, politicization, and bureaucratic behavior
	October 1	Reading report 6 (<i>due by 11:59 PM</i>)
Topic 7	October 9	Civil society and good governance
	October 8	Reading report 7 (<i>due by 11:59 PM</i>)
Topic 8	October 16	Civil society across countries
	October 15	Reading report 8 (<i>due by 11:59 PM</i>)
Topic 9	October 23	Representative bureaucracy and philanthropy
	October 22	Reading report 9 (<i>due by 11:59 PM</i>)
	November 6	Theory in real life essay (<i>due by 11:59 PM</i>)
Regional deep dives		
Topic 10	October 30	The OECD
	October 29	Reading report 10 (<i>due by 11:59 PM</i>)
Topic 11	November 6	Latin America
	November 5	Reading report 11 (<i>due by 11:59 PM</i>)
Topic 12	November 13	Africa
	November 12	Reading report 12 (<i>due by 11:59 PM</i>)

Topic 13	November 20	Middle East and North Africa
	November 19	Reading report 13 (<i>due by 11:59 PM</i>)
Topic 14	December 4	Asia
	December 3	Reading report 14 (<i>due by 11:59 PM</i>)
Final project		
Final project	December 12	Policy brief (<i>due by 11:59 PM</i>)