

PPOL 5170
Public Management and Leadership
Fall Term 2026

Dates: Mondays 07/09/2026-29/11/2026
Venue and Time: L1 - Tower 1, Millennity, Rm. 1, 30/F, 12:30-15:20
L2 - Tower 1, Millennity, Rm. 2, 30/F, 15:30-18:20

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

The study, and more importantly, the practice of policy practitioners does not end once decisions are taken. In fact, most of the hard work occurs in the details of how policy gets implemented, day to day, in the messy and conflicting real world. Many a beautiful piece of policy legislation has resulted in an unwieldy, ineffective mess; in other situations, effective public services have muddled along, under circumstances of neglect or outright disfavour at the decision-making level. For many MPP's, they will find themselves working in, or with, public organizations that are responsible for implementing policy on a day-to-day basis.

This course aims to equip you with a rigorous theoretical as well as practical understanding of the kinds of policy decision making and implementation activities that occur in varying institutional contexts at different levels. You will become familiar with the sectors, organizations, and groups who are participants in public management, including those beyond the traditional confines of government. They will also critically examine the concept of 'leadership' in public organizations- where it is located, and how it is related to the task of policy implementation. Building on that, the course will also explore how approaches to public management differs from organization to organization per its type. This course will help prepare you to undertake continuous learning, flexible adaptation, and creative innovations as core components of policy systems and processes under situations of complexity and uncertainty.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

1. Understand key concepts and doctrinal debates in public management and leadership.
2. Point to the conceptual differences across literature and their application in public management.
3. Develop rigorous understanding on some of the most important areas in public management with an applied approach.
4. Apply public management concepts to real world cases, especially those characterized by complexity and uncertainty.

ASSESSMENT

The details of the assignments and different graded components of the class will be announced during class and via Canvas. The overall structure and points assigned to each are as follows:

<i>Indiv/ Group</i>	<i>Weight</i>	<i>Component</i>
I	10%	Attendance & Participation
I	15%	Reading Quizzes
G	20%	Debate Parts 1 & 2
G	20%	Field Observation
I	15%	Strategy: A Visual Guide
I	20%	Final Exam

EXPECTATIONS:

This is a required course for MPP students. By this point in your academic career, I expect that you are responsible, independent students and adults. At the same time, some the topic matter may be new to a good portion of you. This means that class discussion, analysis, exercises and participation will be crucial for your understanding and processing of the material. ***Attendance is mandatory, and the expectation is that you will do the readings for each session before class.*** I am committing to be in class, each day, and on time (and earlier in my office when possible), ready to guide and support you through the course. I ask that you make the same commitment to yourselves and to your learning. **Every unexcused absence, late arrivals and leaving early will have an impact on final grades. More than 3 absences, excused or unexcused, will result in a 0 in attendance (10% of your grade).**

Our lectures will consist of a mix of theory (lecture), discussion, and application. Public policy is a cooperative, interdisciplinary endeavour, and working through the material together is as much an element of the course as the subject matter itself. The structure of the course gives multiple ways for students to develop your skills by contributing orally and in writing. But working on oral skills is an important element of the class, and the expectation is that ***all students will come to class prepared to participate.***

At HKUST, we have a wonderful diversity of students. They bring with them a wealth of perspectives and experiences. So, while vigorous discussion is encouraged, disrespect, inside of the classroom or out, will not be tolerated. We will work under Chatham House rules- what is said in the classroom stays in the classroom. Furthermore, under no circumstances will any student resort to personal attacks, however dry or wit. Any disrespectful or disruptive students will be asked to leave the class.

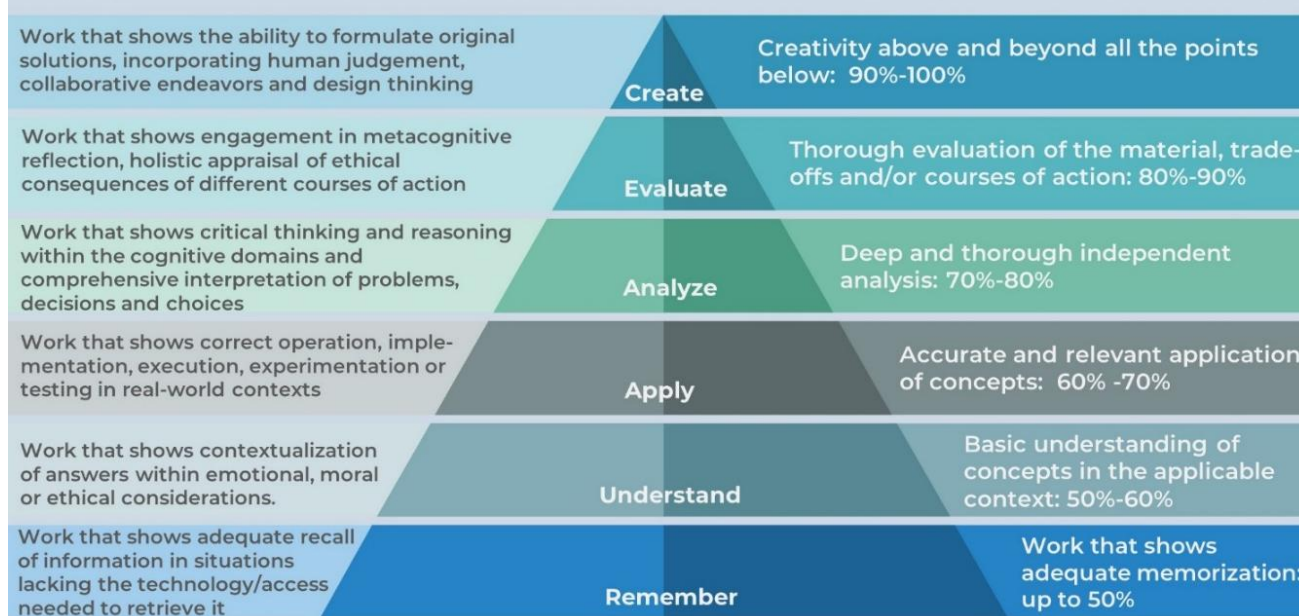
Finally, please note that only students who have successfully enrolled or those with expressed permission from the instructor to audit it, may attend this course (no friends, assistants, spouses, etc.).

GRADING:

For each assignment, we will provide the outline and general marking rubrics. But for all assignments, it will be helpful to keep Bloom's Taxonomy in mind. In general, the different levels relate to grades as follows (but note that different assignments may have particular requirements that need to be met which may change this a bit):

The Cognitive Process Dimensions: Evaluation of Student Work

(Adapted from: Anderson and Krathwohl, 2001, pp. 67–68 and Oregon State University Ecampus: Bloom's Taxonomy Revisited)



Please note: *fulfilling the basic requirements of an assignment is not enough, in and of itself, to warrant an 'A' grade. Very good work, that fulfils the assignment, often gets a grade of a B+ or even a B. To get into the A range, we expect to see original thought, nuance, drawing on a range of sources of information (course readings, cases, empirical data, etc.), that is well organized and thoughtful.*

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All work must be entirely your own. Please **cite** the relevant work whenever you borrow ideas from others, using the proper reference format (e.g., APA, MLA). Examples of violations of the academic integrity code include but are not limited to: *failure to use quotation marks when quoting, failure to give full credit when paraphrasing, use of others' ideas or work products, submission of work prepared through impermissible collaboration, and submission of work prepared by you for another class.* (Your work in this class may be related to your work in another class, but the work you submit for this class should not duplicate that submitted for another class. If you anticipate an exception, please do not hesitate to ask.) Violation of the Academic Integrity Code may result in failure in the course, as well as more serious academic sanctions. For details about the academic integrity code, please refer to <https://acadreg.ust.hk/generalreg.html>.

Please check for plagiarism before you turn in each homework, for example using the anti-plagiarism software Turnitin available on Canvas. **A rule of thumb is that the similarity score should not exceed 15%, excluding references.** But it is entirely possible to have a similarity score below 15% and still commit plagiarism! Look holistically and check for accidental copying/cut and paste, missing references, or even insufficient paraphrasing (i.e. just changing word order or minor words, as opposed to summarizing in your own words). If you have any questions, the Instructor and TA are more than happy to discuss.

“The University’s approach to cases of academic misconduct is fundamentally educational. The process for dealing with these cases is designed to enable students to better understand the nature of academic misconduct and the high standards of academic integrity that are expected. The sanctions available in confirmed cases of misconduct are intended to signal the importance that the University places on maintaining these high standards and to communicate this to students.”¹

¹ Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, “Regulations for Student Conduct and Academic Integrity,” Academic Calendar 2019-20, accessed September 3, 2026, <http://publish.ust.hk/univ/cal1920/acadreg/generalreg.html>.

Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to:

Cheating: conduct designed to mislead those responsible for making a judgment on a student's academic performance or standing, including:

- Unauthorized conveyance or receipt of examination or test questions
- The giving, receiving or utilizing of unauthorized information or assistance in completing an assignment, test or examination
- Breaches of the regulations for examinations set out in the Annex
- Impersonating another student or allowing oneself to be impersonated by another student in participating in a test or examination
- Submission of academic work containing purported statements of fact or references to sources that have been fabricated
- Presenting for credit work that has already been accepted for credit in another course

Plagiarism: the presentation of work which originates from other sources, including the work of other students, as the student's own work, without appropriate attribution to the source." THIS INCLUDES THE USE OF AI content creation.

<http://acadreg.ust.hk/generalreg.html>

GENERATIVE AI

In this course, you are expected to produce original and authentic work that reflects your own understanding and creativity. The use of generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, Bing Chat, Claude, Google Bard, or any other automated assistance, to complete any part of your assignments is strictly prohibited, unless you have a written permission from the instructor, or we are expressly using such tools in class. Generative AI tools are not reliable sources of information, and they may produce inaccurate, misleading, or plagiarized content. Using these tools without proper citation and acknowledgment *is a form of academic dishonesty, and it will result in serious consequences, such as a failing assignment grade, a report to the dean, or even a failing final grade.* Therefore, you are strongly advised to avoid using generative AI tools for your coursework, and instead, rely on your own skills, knowledge, and resources.

CLASS RECORDINGS

Under **no circumstances** may students record, transcribe, livestream, photograph, or otherwise capture any part of this class without my **prior written permission**; this prohibition explicitly includes real-time translators, speech-to-text apps, smart devices, or any tool that documents or uploads my words to the cloud, an online service, or an AI system.

Recording or uploading class content without consent infringes my intellectual property (this course is my paid professional work) and risks that material being stored, misused, taken out of context, or used to train third-party models; it also chills discussion and **compromises the privacy of classmates.**

Violations are strictly forbidden and may result in disciplinary or legal consequences; anyone who records or uploads material will be required to delete all copies and may face further institutional action. If you need a recording or transcript for a documented accessibility need, please coordinate with the SEN department to request written permission in advance.

LATE HOMEWORK POLICY

Late assignments will incur a penalty for each day they are late, except in cases where extensions have been granted by the instructor. Except for emergencies, extensions are much more likely to be granted when they are requested *well in advance*, with strong justification. If you are struggling to complete your coursework, please come discuss it with us sooner rather than later, as it is always easier to adjust things before there is a crisis.

READING MATERIAL

There is no single book that covers all the topics of this course. Essential material is provided via Canvas. You are not expected to read everything on the reading list. Aim to read the required readings for each class meeting. Further reading provides for alternative sources as well as opportunities for more in-depth study for assignments.

We will also, when appropriate, make use of other media, including film, podcasts, etc. These will be provided via the library, freely available links, or viewing sessions, depending on the source.

CLASS SCHEDULE (Subject to topic adjustment as necessary)

	<i>Week</i>	<i>Title</i>
7-Sep	1	Introduction to Public Management: Public vs Private Sectors
14-Sep	2	Street-Level Motivations and Discretion + Leadership
21-Sep	3	Ethics and Accountability
28-Sep	4	Stakeholder Engagement and Transparency
5-Oct	5	Case: Flint
12-Oct	6	The State, Strategy, and the Public Sector + Administrative Burdens and the Politics of Access
19-Oct	7	NO CLASS
26-Oct	8	Performance Measurement and Management
2-Nov	9	Case: Metrics in Action: (Organizational) Learning and Evaluation
9-Nov	10	Organizational Change
16-Nov	11	Collaborative Governance/PPPs
23-Nov	12	Science Advice & Crisis Management
30-Nov	13	Case