







# Political Science (POLI) 405

## Innovative Public Management (Revision 2)

**Status:**

Replaced with new revision, see the [course listing](#)  for the current revision 

**Delivery mode:**

[Individualized study online](#)  or [Grouped study](#) 

**Credits:**

3

**Areas of study:**

Applied Studies (Business and Administrative Studies) or Social Science. POLI 405 can be used to fulfill the Applied Studies (Business and Administrative Studies) area of study by credential students only.

**Prerequisites:**

There are no formal prerequisites for this course, however, a previous course in public administration, management, or political science is recommended.

**Precluded:**

POLI 405 may not be taken for credit by students who have obtained credit for GOVN 405, or for students who have obtained credit for GOVN 505.

**Challenge:**

POLI 405 has a challenge for credit option.

**Faculty:****Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences** **Notes:**

Students in Group Study courses are advised that this syllabus may vary in key details in each instance of the course. Always refer to the Moodle site for the most up-to-date details on texts, assignment structure, and grading.

## Overview

In 1979, Margaret Thatcher launched a comprehensive plan to reform public administration in Britain. This plan included: reducing the power of the public service and increasing political control; introducing private-sector management practices to the public-sector; and increasing the influence of individual citizens, consumer groups, and communities in shaping the design and delivery of public services. The result was major changes in organizational design and managerial practice, which came to be known as the "new public management" (NPM).

Thatcher's approach was quickly emulated in the early 1980s by other Western governments that had identified similar priorities: the reduction of public spending, deficits, and debt; a reversal of the serious decline in public trust in government; and modernizing and streamlining public service management in the new era of global competition. The resulting changes in public management—led by governments in the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, especially—shifted public sector organization from its traditional hierarchical, rule-based, process-oriented, and bureaucratic structure, toward a flatter, organizational form that is characterized by partnerships with the private and nonprofit sectors. Thus, a new form of public management has been evolving over the last three decades (although there are many who would call it revolutionary, rather than evolutionary, change).

Some players enthusiastically embraced NPM, while others have been highly critical of reforms that they see resulting in the "marketization" of public life, and the imposition of western-based principles in contexts for which it is a poor fit. In addition, rapid changes in information technology have left an indelible

mark on all organizations. The resulting changes have been dizzying, and change often brings unintended consequences. As Sharon L. Sutherland has said, "Every Reform Is Its Own Problem" (1991). Thirty years later, the "new" public management is not so new anymore, and is itself the target of reformation.

This course provides an overview of public sector reform. It takes both a historical and a contemporary approach when it addresses the following questions: What challenges are inherent in efforts to realize major organizational change, and what are the implications for democratic governance? Can principles of organizational management be universally applied with equal success?

## Outline

- Unit 1 Old — and New — Public Management
- Unit 2 The Post Bureaucratic State
- Unit 3 Culture and Values
- Unit 4 Transparency and Accountability
- Unit 5 Administrative Ethics and Professionalism
- Unit 6 Managerialism, Empowerment and Public Participation
- Unit 7 Alternative Service Delivery and Coproduction
- Unit 8 Comparative Public Administration
- Unit 9 Indigenous Administration
- Unit 10 Technology and Organizational Change
- Unit 11 The Future of Public Sector Management Reform

## Objectives

The purpose of this course is to enable students to:

1. Enhance their own critical reading skills.
2. Discuss the major differences between old and new approaches to public management: its structures, relationships, objectives, methods, and implications.

3. Assess major environmental changes that have led most Western governments to alter their approach to public management
4. Assess changes in public management from a non western perspective.
5. Evaluate theoretical arguments that support and reject the adoption of the principles of New Public Management (NPM) and other post-bureaucratic approaches, and assess the advantages and disadvantages to the public sector of pursuing major reform
6. Reflect critically on the long-term implications for democratic rule and citizenship of the focus on new methods of public management.

## Evaluation

The final grade in POLI 405 will be based on the grades you achieve on the critical review, policy memo, research proposal and essay, and the take home test. To **receive credit** [↗](#) for the course, you must complete all of the assignments, and obtain an overall course composite grade of **D (50 percent)** [↗](#) or better. The following indicates the assignments for credit and their weighting toward the final grade.

The following table summarizes the evaluation activities and the credit weights associated with them.

Activity	Weight
Assignment 1 (critical review)	15%
Assignment 2 (policy memo proposal)	No grade
Assignment 3 (policy memo)	20%
Assignment 4 (research proposal)	5%
Assignment 5 (research essay)	30%
Final Exam	30%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

The **final examination** for this course must be requested in advance and written under the supervision of an AU-approved exam invigilator. Invigilators include either ProctorU or an approved in-person invigilation centre that can accommodate online exams. Students are responsible for payment of any invigilation fees. Information on exam request deadlines, invigilators, and other exam-related questions, can be found at the **Exams and grades** [↗](#) section of the Calendar.

To learn more about assignments and examinations, please refer to Athabasca University's **online Calendar** [↗](#).

## Materials

### Physical course materials

The following course materials are included in a course package that will be shipped to your home prior to your course's start date:

Denhardt, Janet V. and Robert B. Denhardt. 2015. *The New Public Service: Serving not steering*. New York: Routledge.

## Challenge for credit

### Overview

The challenge for credit process allows you to demonstrate that you have acquired a command of the general subject matter, knowledge, intellectual and/or other skills that would normally be found in a university-level course.

Full information about **challenge for credit** [↗](#) can be found in the Undergraduate Calendar.

### Evaluation





To **receive credit** [↗](#) for the POLI 405 challenge registration, you must complete all required components, and achieve an overall grade of at least **D (50 percent)** [↗](#).

Activity	Weight
Written Assignment 1	5%

Activity	Weight
Written Assignment 2	15%
Exam	80%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

 **Challenge for credit course registration form**

## Important links

- > [Academic advising](#) 
- > [Program planning](#) 
- > [Request assistance](#) 
- > [Support services](#) 

Athabasca University reserves the right to amend course outlines occasionally and without notice. Courses offered by other delivery methods may vary from their individualized study counterparts.

*Opened in Revision 2, January 16, 2017*

*Updated February 21, 2025*

View [previous revision](#) 