

Course Learning Outcomes for Unit II

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

3. Appraise a code of ethics as it relates to public administration.
 - 3.1 Examine why public institutions need a code of ethics.
 - 3.2 Summarize why the citizenry need to develop trust and transparency in public institutions.

Course/Unit Learning Outcomes	Learning Activity
3.1	Unit Lesson Article 13: Bureaucracy and the Public Interest (1936) E. Pendleton Herring, p. 101 Article 33: Watergate: Implications for Responsible Government (1974) Frederick C. Mosher and Others, p. 332 Article 41: The Possibility of Administrative Ethics (1985) Dennis F. Thompson, p. 444 Video: <i>Watergate</i> Unit II Article Critique
3.2	Unit Lesson Article 13: Bureaucracy and the Public Interest (1936) E. Pendleton Herring, p. 101 Article 33: Watergate: Implications for Responsible Government (1974) Frederick C. Mosher and Others, p. 332 Article 41: The Possibility of Administrative Ethics (1985) Dennis F. Thompson, p. 444 Video: <i>Watergate</i> Unit II Article Critique

Required Unit Resources

Article 13: Bureaucracy and the Public Interest (1936) E. Pendleton Herring, p. 101

Article 33: Watergate: Implications for Responsible Government (1974) Frederick C. Mosher and Others, p. 332

Article 41: The Possibility of Administrative Ethics (1985) Dennis F. Thompson, p. 444

In order to access the following resource, click the link below.

PBS (Producer). (2013). *Watergate* (Segment 7 of 22) [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://libraryresources.columbiasouthern.edu/login?auth=CAS&url=http://fod.infobase.com/PortalPlayers.aspx?wID=273866&xtid=58630&luid=277079>

The transcript for this video can be found by clicking the "Transcript" tab to the right of the video in the Films on Demand database.

Unit Lesson

Introduction

Welcome to Unit II. This unit provides an overview of ethics from the perspective of public administration. Next, a narrative of the origin of ethics will provide an abbreviated summary of how ethical values are derived and how these values continue to evolve. Along with defining the difference between standards of conduct versus a code of ethics, a historical perspective on why ethics should be integrated with honor will be reviewed. Lastly, an example of transparency to the citizenry is reviewed by examining the code of conduct for executive-level government personnel. These behavioral standards are drafted to provide internal controls and expectations for the daily performance of public employees.

Obtaining Ethical Standards

How would one define the origin of ethics? Are ethics strictly derived from one's upbringing only? It can be concluded that we learn a set of values from a variety of sources—and that our conclusions about behavior evolve throughout one's lifetime. Several categories exist from which we obtain our ethical values and morals. The first is rather obvious—our upbringing. Personal morality can derive from parents' and relatives' influence, combined with religious convictions, cultural beliefs, and personal experiences. For professional associations, it is important to project a unifying message of behavioral expectations and practices in particular fields. These expectations also provide a standard for membership into the organization or field of practice. These public associations provide a code of ethics to their employees, which provides independent or unique standards of behavior. The American Society of Public Administration (ASPA) is an organization that utilizes behavioral codes in order to hold the public sphere accountable for meeting certain principles of conduct. Click the link below to learn more about ASPA.

American Society for Public Administration. (n.d.). Code of ethics. Retrieved from <http://www.aspanet.org/ASPA/About-ASPA/Code-of-Ethics/ASPA/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics.aspx?hkey=fefba3e2-a9dc-4fc8-a686-3446513a4533>

Another source or category of ethics stems from public organizations in government—to include public agencies in emergency services, transportation, public schools, law enforcement, community development, public health, or nonprofit occupations.

Along with in-house ethics, these government agencies also adhere to public laws, agency rules, and executive laws. Would you include the act of voting or jury duty as a part of an ethical code? Our society and culture do have behavior expectations that we should consider labeling as social ethics. Furthering the progress of society by providing a safe environment of ethical behavior and organizational norms are affirmed by having formal and informal rules in our community. Each of these ethical levels produce its own set of individual responsibilities that should be applicable to ourselves, our workplace organizations, and our society.

Ethics: Honorable Behavior

Is honorable behavior a historical concept not emphasized in today's public realm? Alexander Hamilton chose to duel Aaron Burr because of honor and commitment of a cause. Today, most duels (or disagreements) are settled in the court system. The Birkenhead Drill is another example of honorable behavior that captains of ships supposedly display when catastrophic events occur. In 1852, the *HMS Birkenhead* was slowly sinking after coming too close while maneuvering around South Africa (Johnson, n.d.). Knowing the inevitable doom of the ship, and with limited lifeboats aboard, the captain quickly announced the now famous saying, "Women and children first." The sinking of the famous *RMS Titanic* also quietly took many rich men's lives but saved many children with their mothers because most men stepped aside and let others take their place in the lifeboats first ("Titanic," 2009).

According to Greenblatt (2014), many were surprised when Captain Yiannis Avranas announced on the loudspeaker to abandon ship in 1991. It was determined that the captain of the cruise ship *Oceanos* was one of the first to leave the sinking ship. He later said when he gave the orders to abandon ship, it did not matter

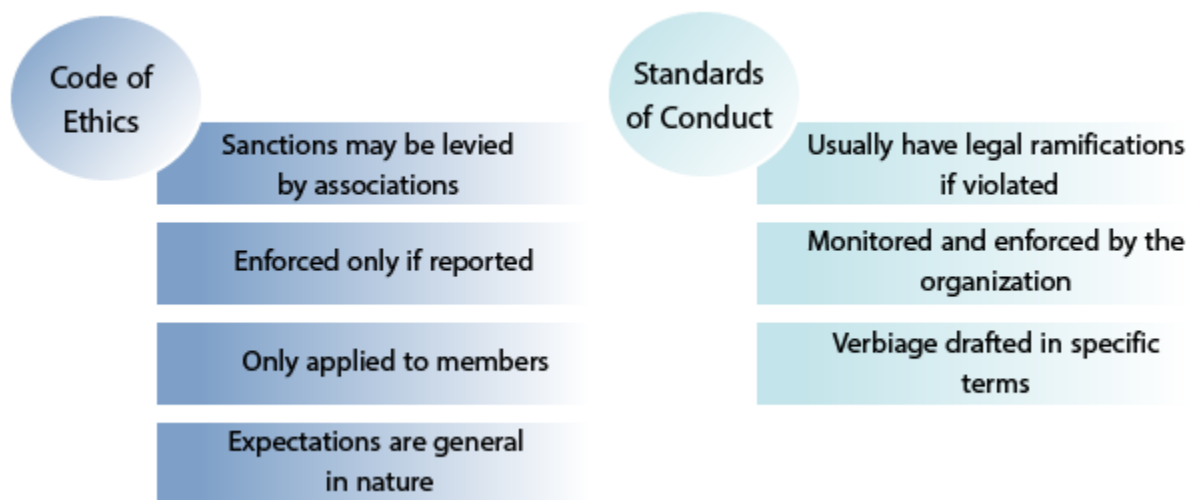
what time he left. More than legal interpretation, is it morally right for a person in charge of the lives on board to leave before remaining passengers?

In more recent times, the floods of New Orleans brought on by Hurricane Katrina also proved deadly for many who stayed behind during and after the storm. Bertram, Landahl, and Williams (2011) reported that many police officers failed to report to duty because of failed training and preparedness systems that were not in place. Many law enforcement officers were put in the particularly awful position of selecting between protecting their families versus protecting the citizens of New Orleans they were sworn to keep safe. Some viewed the act as desertion because their actions left on-duty police officers in grave danger with limited assets during a time of crisis.

Standards of Conduct

Formal working guidelines or standards of conduct are usually a part of every government agency today. For the most part, they entail instructions that prohibit the use of one's official position for the purpose of private gain. Although standards of conduct usually apply to specific organizations, codes of conduct often pertain to a wider audience such as a profession or an association. Usually a profession's code of conduct includes the scope of behavioral expectations such as being supportive, considerate, and respectful; avoiding conflict of interest; and communicating in a professional manner.

The graphic below depicts the characteristics of a code of ethics versus standards of conduct.



Shortfalls in Ethical Standards

Public administration does pose challenges working within the confines of different loyalties—loyalty to the individual agency, loyalty to public needs, and loyalty to employee or citizen individual goals. When combined, all three interests produce an environment of ethical public dilemmas. Public employees can be put in situations where one must decide between what is best for the individual or what is best for society. For example, public health representatives work in clinics to help low-income populations. The qualifying cost of service is a function of income. Sometimes, the working poor are in-between two difficult positions of not qualifying for care or not being able to afford medical assistance. Another example of competing demands deals with the attempt to attain higher education. For many, higher education goals are out of reach for certain population sectors because working families are not being able to afford college tuition or do not qualify for tuition aid. The last example requires police officers to fill out lengthy documentation and written reports during their shifts; the tradeoff is taking time from providing citizen protection. Eliminating the conflicts certainly requires revising policy, thus reducing instances where citizen needs, such as health care, education, and protection, do not conflict with organization or societal service.

Standards of Ethical Conduct

Title 5 of the Code of Federal Regulations (5 C.F.R.), effective January 1, 2017, lists 14 general principles that apply to each federal executive government employee. The document is known as the Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch (2017). Each employee is to respect and adhere to each principle listed below to determine if their conduct is proper in representing their agency.

1. Public service is a public trust, requiring employees to place loyalty to the U.S. Constitution, the laws, and ethical principles above private gain.
2. Employees shall not hold financial interests that conflict with the conscientious performance of duty.
3. Employees shall not engage in financial transactions using nonpublic government information or allow the improper use of such information to further any private interest.
4. An employee shall not, except as permitted by subpart B of this part, solicit or accept any gift or other item of monetary value from any person or entity seeking official action from, doing business with, or conducting activities regulated by the employee's agency, or whose interests may be substantially affected by the performance or nonperformance of the employee's duties.
5. Employees shall put forth honest effort in the performance of their duties.
6. Employees shall not knowingly make unauthorized commitments or promises of any kind purporting to bind the government.
7. Employees shall not use public office for private gain.
8. Employees shall act impartially and not give preferential treatment to any private organization or individual.
9. Employees shall protect and conserve federal property and shall not use it for other than authorized activities.
10. Employees shall not engage in outside employment or activities, including seeking or negotiating for employment, that conflict with official government duties and responsibilities.
11. Employees shall disclose waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption to appropriate authorities.
12. Employees shall satisfy in good faith their obligations as citizens, including all just financial obligations, especially those—such as federal, state, or local taxes—that are imposed by law.
13. Employees shall adhere to all laws and regulations that provide equal opportunity for all Americans regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or handicap.
14. Employees shall endeavor to avoid any actions creating the appearance that they are violating the law or the ethical standards set forth in this part. Whether particular circumstances create an appearance that the law or these standards have been violated shall be determined from the perspective of a reasonable person with knowledge of the relevant facts. (Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch, 2017, Section 2635.101, para. 2)

Summary: Why Study Public Ethics

This unit reviews the application of ethical constructs in the public administration field. Practical reasons to study these principles include the need to have a guide for making decisions quickly and accurately while working for a public organization. Consistency in decision-making is also crucial. Government employees need to be assured that all subordinates are treated fairly, and the citizenry needs to know that each policy, standard, or public issue receives impartial attention. Public administrators also need to review that decisions are made for the sake of the citizens they serve rather than determining a policy that makes more money. Last, reflective judgements that will not make the public question motives need to be constructed by those in the public administrative field. The media will certainly provide coverage to any government action or policy change, thus ensuring that decisions can be defended publicly, which is important from a public leader's perspective. Through this unit's lesson, it is hoped that the importance of public ethics is made clear for public service and also serves the public trust.

References

- Bertram, C., Landahl, M., & Williams, M. C. (2011, January/February). Family vs. duty, personal and family preparedness for law enforcement organizational resilience. *Sheriff Magazine*. Retrieved from http://www.cityofholladay.com/downloads/emergencypreparedness/sh11_01_familyvsduty_bertram_landahl_williams.pdf
- Greenblatt, A. (2014, April 18). Captains uncourageous: Abandoning ship long seen as a crime. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/2014/04/18/304541866/captains-uncourageous-abandoning-ship-long-seen-as-a-crime>
- Johnson, B. (n.d.). Women and children first. Retrieved from <http://www.historic-uk.com/CultureUK/Women-Children-First/>
- Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch, 5 C.F.R. § 2635.101 (2017).
- Titanic. (2009). Retrieved from <http://www.history.com/topics/titanic>

Suggested Unit Resources

In order to access the following resources, click the links below.

The articles below discuss additional concepts and principles relating to the continued value of ethical constructs in the public sphere. The video below features Robert Kaiser, who says that many politicians come into office with a sense of entitlement to power and wealth, which is then exploited by lobbyists promoting special interests. The resource below explore the following question: Does power increase the chances of ethical violations occurring?

Ablow, F., Brangham, W., Meryash, P., Rate, B., White, C. (Producers), & Diego, K., & Palmer, W. (Directors). (2009). *Lobbyists and money in government*. [Video file]. (Segment 2 of 9). Retrieved from <https://libraryresources.columbiasouthern.edu/login?auth=CAS&url=http://fod.infobase.com/PortalPlayslists.aspx?wID=273866&xtid=40325&loid=490058>

The transcript for this video can be found by clicking the “Transcript” tab to the right of the video in the Films on Demand database.

Donaldson, S. (2006). Outside, looking in. *Public Integrity*, 8(3), 207–214. Retrieved from <https://libraryresources.columbiasouthern.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=21646808&site=ehost-live&scope=site>

Hoggett, P., Mayo, M., & Miller, C. (2006). Private passions, the public good and public service reform. *Social Policy & Administration*, 40(7), 758–773. Retrieved from <https://libraryresources.columbiasouthern.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=22930532&site=ehost-live&scope=site>

Pfeffer, J. (1992). Understanding power in organizations. *California Management Review*, 34(2), 29–50. Retrieved from <https://search-proquest-com.libraryresources.columbiasouthern.edu/docview/216127422?accountid=33337>