

LECTURE / DISCUSSION / DEBATE
GOVERNMENTAL BUREAUCRACY

Terms and concepts to know:

Bureaucracy	Weber's thesis
Laissez-faire	"Free rider" problem
Interstate Commerce Comm (ICC)	Food / Drug Administration (FDA)
OSHA / EPA	Cabinet departments
Executive agencies	Independent regulatory agencies
Government corporations	Principles of bureaucratic organization
Hierarchy	Specialization
Formal rules	"Spoils system"
Bureaucratic motivation	Public interest / self interest
Policy triangles	Agency capture
Inefficiency / low productivity	Red tape
Turfing / bureaucratic jargon	Inconsistent policies

Study and discussion questions:

1. Discuss Heineman's perspective on how the "three" theories of American government relate to the federal bureaucracy (democratic, pluralist, and elite theories). Do you believe that the theory of hyperpluralism has some utility in a discussion of the bureaucracy? Why was it left out?
2. Vitaud (citing Graeber) posits that "...in our society, there seems a general rule that, the more obviously one's work benefits other people, the less one is likely to be paid for it." Do you suppose this is true and how does the existence of bureaucracies contribute to this phenomenon?
3. Hartmann makes the claim in his article "Which Is Worse – Government or Corporate Bureaucracy?" that corporate bureaucracies are worse, citing cable company's customer service as an example. In your estimation is this a fair comparison or cheap shot?
4. Discuss what Heineman calls a "policy triangle." What types of triangles develop among bureaucracies? Can the military-industrial complex be described as an "iron triangle"?
5. Discuss and debate the various criticisms offered by Heineman and suggest why you agree or disagree that these criticisms are legitimate. Can you offer any solutions (other than abolishing the bureaucracy) of how to solve these problems?
6. Which bureaucracies are expanding as a result of the "war on drugs" which started under President Nixon? Are these bureaucracies making the problem worse or better?
7. What did Wilson say in his interview with *Reason Magazine* in 1995 that set the stage for greater bureaucratic involvement in the drug war in our own time?

Readings:

Heineman. *American Government*, Chapter 10.
WEB – Readings from the "Government Bureaucracies" links.

Video: *David Graeber About Bullshit Jobs.*