Administrative Case Study

The standard for case studies may have been established by Yale University political scientist Herbert Kaufman, who wrote *The Forest Ranger: A Study in Administrative Behavior* (June 1959). Although written decades ago, when the field of political science was still young and had yet to fully embrace input from other fields such as economics, psychology and sociology, it still stands as a definitive guide on how an administrative case study should be done.

Kaufman initially wanted to look at bureaucracy through a particular institution so he chose to look at a public agency and examine it for evidence of what makes it effective or ineffective. He chose the Forest Service in part because it had a reputation for efficiency and effectiveness and he wanted to find out if that reputation was warranted and why. After doing some preliminary research he became interested in why forest rangers had such a high level of compliance to administrative direction despite the fact that they worked independently, far from “headquarters,” and were largely unsupervised. To answer these questions, he studied the organization in depth: its structure, its rules, its procedures, and its personnel.

Once you have an issue, policy or practice to look into, we want to examine the organizational underpinnings for that policy, issue or practice. It might be the sponsoring entity, the implementation or oversight organization, or the agency affected.

Your case study paper is a discussion of the policy/law/practice and its implications for, or connection to, a particular organization/agency along with appropriate info. on the agency or organization such as background, history, organizational structure, and funding/staffing info. **Keep the info. relevant to the policy/law/practice!**

**For most case studies, basic guidelines apply once you select a particular agency:**

Come up with a general goal (ex: to better understand how an organization works)

Describe the agency and how it operates, its mission, its structure, its administrators & their functions, its employees & their functions, etc., **relative to the policy/law/practice**

Determine how the agency operates and its seeming effectiveness or success (or lack of)

Examine how the agency is seen by others and how it sees itself (image)

Identify any problems or potential problems that agency now has or may be facing

**Keep your focus on the policy/practice/law as you examine the above!**

Note: Not all of the above will apply to your agency or organization. Use your judgment; decide what does/does not apply. Feel free to include other areas of exploration in your case study. **It should incorporate 3-4 sources/final draft due 2/11** (see class schedule).

**Format:** Paper should have one-inch margins and be typed in 12 pt. type (Times New Roman, Arial or other clear, simple type). It should be 6-10 pages, double-spaced and paragraphs should be indented. (No double-spacing between paragraphs!) Your title page should include your name, the class (POS 4784), the date and the assignment title with an indication of whether the paper is a draft, a rewrite, or a final paper. Page headings should be your last name and page number on the top right-hand corner.