

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Leading Strategic Change in a Disorderly World

MPA, Fall Quarter 2024

SYLLABUS – 4 credit class

CLASS MEETINGS

Tuesday 6-9:30pm / 10 Weeks: 1 Oct – 10 Dec
Tacoma campus

Instructor: Larry Seaquist
E-mail: larry@larryseaquist.com
Phone: 253-225-0616 m

LOCATION: Evergreen Tacoma (Rm TBA)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Our overall goal is to enable each student to prepare to lead strategic change efforts in the public sector organizations of tomorrow. Rapidly evolving political, economic, social, and technology dynamics are transforming our society and the public sector that serves it. In the years ahead, creative, agile strategic innovation will be as much the hallmark of the leaders of healthy, successful public service agencies and community organizations as it is of the entrepreneurs in today's high tech startups.

Students in this intensive course will strengthen their personal capacities to create and lead strategic change efforts in public agencies, in community-based organizations, and in the hybrid collaborations which increasingly plan and deliver key public services.

This class explores a wide range of the difficult strategic planning problems and leadership opportunities which lie ahead in the working careers of our MPA graduates.

Seminar work will explore advanced strategic planning principles using real world strategic planning problems. Augmented by preparatory reading and by in-class conversations with guest experts, students will use in-class "clinics" to strengthen a personal repertoire of strategic planning and change leadership skills. That repertoire will include students' conduct of an innovative "Strategy Lab" to explore a difficult, class-selected public policy problem with invited community guests.

At the heart of the class is each student's step-by-step development of an action plan to tackle one of our society's difficult problems. Selecting an issue of compelling personal interest, aided by in class discussion and faculty coaching, students will progress from problem definition to strategic concept to a finished game plan as they each tackle one of the big challenges likely facing tomorrow's public sector leaders in our *We the People* democracy.

KEY LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The work in seminar, clinic, and on the personal project aims to enable each student to organize and direct strategic planning efforts in public-sector agencies and in community-based organizations. Through their active participation, students will develop a personal repertoire for leading change in public sector organizations. To that end, seminar participants will:

- Practice the diagnosis of real world strategic planning problems and the design and leadership of rapid, effective strategic planning responses;
- Consider the constantly changing dynamics likely to require strategic plan resets by public sector leaders in the years ahead;
- Learn from the experiences and advice of selected public service leaders directly involved in current strategic change problems; and
- Explore a variety of strategic planning methods applied to a wide range of looming problems and consider the lessons from recent planning successes and failures.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Mindful of the personal commitments of students with evening classes, two breaks will divide our 3 1/2-hour class into three blocks enroute active student engagement throughout the evening. Brief admin and course info will open the evening promptly at 6pm and close the evening promptly at 9:30.

The ten-week span of the Tuesday classes includes the Thanksgiving holiday week.

Week Theme

- 1 Welcome, student project introductions; strategy-making in tomorrow's organizations.
- 2 Repertoire & clinic: Recognize need/opportunity to make a strategic difference.
- 3 Repertoire & clinic: Diagnose problems/opportunities; decide to act.
- 4 Repertoire & clinic: Choose goals for strategic change campaign.
- 5 Repertoire & clinic: Design strategic change campaigns.
- 6 Repertoire & clinic: Lead, launch, adjust and finish strategic change campaigns.
- 7 Repertoire: Connect the whole system with role-playing simulations.
- 8 Repertoire: StratLab -- Student-designed exercise with invited community guests.
- Thanksgiving week break
- 9 Repertoire: Look ahead – future challenges and durable problems.
- 10 Final clinic: Conclude with individual strategic action plans; key takeaways.

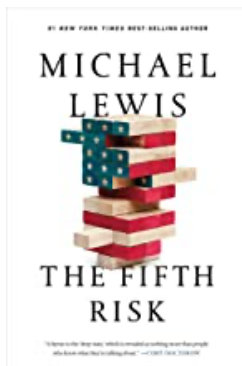
Note: In consultation with the class, individual class segments may be adjusted to capture real-world strategic planning issues of interest.

PRE-CLASS READING

While our class is **firmly non-partisan and non-political**, we meet during the final weeks of the 2024 elections. Our classes will continue during the immediate, post-election period when newly elected leaders begin to form governments at the local, state, and national levels. For public policy leaders — including for reelected incumbents— these transitions are often an opportunity to reevaluate and reset key policies and programs.

Although we will keep our focus on strategic planning at the state and local level, the reset of key Federal policies and programs is already a feature of current Presidential politicking.

Two books offer perspectives directly relevant to our in-class work and to the design and leadership of future strategic change campaigns.

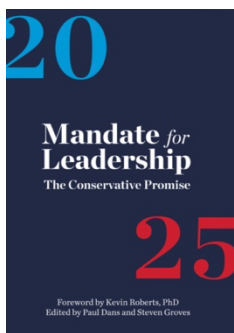


***The Fifth Risk* by Michael Lewis**

Lewis, one of our most engaging writers, uses the chaos of the 2016 Trump takeover of Federal agencies to explore the broad range of essential skills deployed by today's civil service professionals.

Mapping the wide reach of Federal programs, the book offers a key insight: that underneath the headlines of debates about policy is an array of highly skilled creativity delivered by public servants.

Reading: As you proceed with the development of your personal problem-solving project, does your strategy hinge on the skilled service of the kinds of Federal, state, and local experts Lewis describes? Will your strategy require the creation of new kinds of staff roles and organizational competence? Are you proposing to manage another of the fifth risks?



Project 2025 & Mandate for Leadership, The Heritage Foundation

In part a response to the experience described by Michael Lewis, The Heritage Foundation has organized a notably elaborate and well-funded project to prepare for a possible 2nd Trump administration. **All on-line.**

[Project2025.org](https://project2025.org) describes the four pillars of the overall project. The 877 pages of [Mandate for Leadership](#) detail a comprehensive, agency-by-agency policy change agenda. Note, too, that [Project 2025](#) includes a [campaign to recruit candidates](#) for service in the new Administration. A [Presidential Administration Academy](#) will prepare them to take office; a [180-day Playbook](#) maps a rapid schedule for the new appointees to install new, very conservative policies and programs.

Reading: You need only familiarize yourself with the general framework. Would any chapters change federal agencies and programs of personal interest to you or affect your own plan?

After the election, we will look also at the transition plans of Washington's governor-elect. The federal and state transitions may offer you cues to refine your strategic plan.

IN-CLASS REFERENCES

Our in-class discussions will occasionally use local examples of current strategic planning projects. Emailed links will invite you to examine these projects in advance of the week in which we may consider them.

PRE-CLASS & IN-CLASS WRITING – YOUR PERSONAL STRATEGY PROJECT

You are each invited to tackle a hard problem. Select something you care personally about, a compelling problem or an opportunity which you would like to see your community, or our state, nation, or the world go to work. Develop that action proposal in a series of steps – and please stay relaxed. These are opportunities to keep advancing your thinking as you test your ideas in class and gain from the seminar discussions about the methods of strategic planning.

1. **INITIAL ONE PAGER** – *due the day we start class, 1 October*. Outline the essence of your idea in a page or less. Sketch the problem (and/or the opportunity) and your initial thinking about how to fix it. Say why it is important and who cares. Write as though you might hand this to a friend to invite them to join you in taking action. *Please plan to email these one pagers to me before our first class on Tuesday, 9 January.*
2. **ELEVATOR PITCH** – *first evening in class*. In our opening class you'll have a couple of minutes to introduce yourself and sketch the essence of your idea.
3. **INITIAL CLASS PRESENTATION** – *15 minute clinic sessions (as sked during weeks 2-6)*. Continuing to refine your one-pager, outline your ideas in a 5-10 minute “first draft” presentation to the class. Invite the class to engage the problem and your game plan. Use PowerPoint slides if you wish, or talk from your (evolving) one-pager.
4. **FINAL CLASS PRESENTATION** – *5 minute clinic sessions (as sked during week 10)*. Drawing on the classwork and your further thinking, present a revised “final draft” to a guest VIP decision maker.
5. **FINAL PAPER** – *due COB Wednesday, 19 December*. Based on the class work and your continued refinements, present the problem and your plan for strategic action. Polish the key ideas in the one pager, add any additional material you'd like to include in the finished package. Think of this as something you'll be able to hand to the Governor, a community leader, or a fellow citizen as a persuasive call to studied, sustained action.

PLEASE CONSULT

You are invited to call/text/email me anytime. I look forward to conferring with you as you select your personal strategy project, as you mull an action plan, and as you advance through the stages of developing and presenting your evolving strategic action plan.

Please plan for us to talk at least once during the class as you incorporate what you are learning and the feedback from your class presentations.

As an adjunct, I do not have an office at Evergreen. But I am committed to helping each student succeed; I am available to consult with individual students both on course work and on students' personal career planning. I live not far from the Tacoma campus so we may meet anywhere in the area.

We can confer by email, by phone, or in person by arrangement. My phone: 253-225-0616, personal email: larryseaquist@comcast.net, Evergreen email larry.seaquist1@evergreen.edu.

EVALUATION

We will follow standard TESC/MPA practices using the Evergreen on-line system.

- Students will be evaluated based on knowledgeable participation, timely submission of advocacy campaign materials, and active engagement with their classmates.
- In light of the course objective – to develop as a public service strategic leader -- students are asked to submit a self-evaluation. A faculty evaluation is optional. You can submit these evaluations via the College's online evaluation system at www.my.evergreen.edu. An evaluation conference is optional at student's request.

INSTRUCTOR:

Larry Seaquist served as a strategist and strategic planning executive in a wide range of local, national, and international public service roles. During his eight years as elected State Representative (26th Legislative District/Gig Harbor) in the Washington State Legislature, four as Chair of the House Higher Ed committee, Larry led strategic planning and advocacy efforts in education, health, operating budgets, environment and transportation.

In his prior career as a U.S. Naval officer, Larry commanded a series of four warships including Battleship USS IOWA. His duty ashore in the Pentagon focused on political-military strategy and budget making. Following service in the Navy's Strategic Studies Group, he led strategy and budget planning efforts for the Navy, the Joint Staff, and the Office of the Secretary of Defense. He directed the Secretary of Defense Office of Policy Planning and served in the Office of Net Assessment during the transition to the new, post-Cold War world.

Larry followed his Navy career with a decade of peacebuilding in at-war and at-risk countries in the Middle East, South Asia, Central Asia, and Latin America. Advising the Director-General of UNESCO, working with local government and community leaders and with local students, he pioneered the design and demonstration of innovative strategies for locally led campaigns of conflict prevention and community development. He continued this work in a number of U.S. cities and towns including Washington DC, Columbus OH, Seattle-King County, and Tacoma-Pierce County.

A former Federal Executive Fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington DC, he has led strategic planning seminars with students at universities in the U.S., Europe, the Middle East, Central Asia, South Asia, and Latin America. Early in his career, Larry wintered over both in the Arctic and the Antarctic taking weather and ice observations for a year at Barter Island in the Arctic Ocean and for fourteen months as American rep to the Argentine Expedition to Ellsworth Station on an Antarctic ice shelf on the Weddell Sea from where he went to the South Pole.

Larry's wife, Carla, a writer and playwright, is the author of "Can America Save Itself from Decline? Politics, Culture and Morality" Vol. I & II. Her plays include "The Washington-Sarajevo Talks – Who Cares?" After writing for *The Christian Science Monitor* and *Huffington Post*, she regularly publishes commentary on politics, culture, and the American character at *Medium*. Her new book, "Across the Kitchen Table: A Mother and Daughter Turn Tragedy into Peace," will be published in January 2025.

Currently, Larry is at work on a book, "Doing Democracy," which outlines the work ahead if our *We the People* democracy is to achieve our founding ideals in a changed and changing world. With the League of Women Voters, YMCA, and other groups, Larry also works with local students and citizen leaders to address our crises of inequity, homelessness, and civility.

COURSE POLICIES -- THE FINE PRINT

General: We will adhere to the usual procedures and policies of Evergreen and the MPA program. Those include:

1. TESC Statement on Academic Honesty
<http://www.evergreen.edu/advising/academic-honesty>
2. TESC The social contract – College philosophy
<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=174-121-010>
3. TESC Student Conduct Code
<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=174-123>

Attendance. Designed to develop personal professional skills, full credit in this highly participatory course assumes full participation and engagement.

Communicating with Each Other: Email is our primary means of communication outside class. Generally, I'll email direct from my personal account, larryseaquist@comcast.net.

Other Expectations of TESC Students and Faculty: We commit to promoting a cooperative, supportive atmosphere within the community; to give everyone opportunity for self-reflection and expression; to use high standards in reading the texts and preparing our papers, lectures, and comments in seminar; to handle all disputes in a spirit of goodwill; to respect our differences; and to discuss any problems involving others in the learning community directly with the individuals involved.

LS/3.1/5 May 2024