

**GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY**  
**FEDERAL ACQUISITION IN NATIONAL SECURITY**

**INSTRUCTOR**

Steven Meier, Ph.D., PMP  
Email: [stevenrmeier2@gmail.com](mailto:stevenrmeier2@gmail.com)  
Fall 2024 Semester

**COURSE OVERVIEW**

As our Nation continues to experience federal budget pressures year after year, there has been increased pressure from taxpayers and lawmakers to constrain government funding and to obtain the best value for the procurement of goods and services. With the federal government spending close to \$600B spent each year on goods and services it is essential that contracting be handled in an efficient, effective, and accountable manner. This course provides an introduction to the procurement and contracting processes used by most federal agencies with specific emphasis on contract management and the change control processes used to administer contracts. In this fiscally constrained environment, government agencies are seeking best acquisition practices and methods to meet their ever-increasing customer needs.

This course is focused on federal acquisitions in the national security community. Students will develop an understanding of the fundamental phases and milestones involved in leading an acquisition to a successful outcome, whether the project is building a satellite or deploying a new IT system. Moreover, this course will also cover how to improve the efficiency and effectiveness with which the government acquires good and services in the National Security community. Therefore, policies, processes, and training aimed at improving acquisition outcomes in a fiscally constrained environment will be discussed in detail.

Acquisition management involves managing the procurement of products or services over the end-to-end acquisition lifecycle. In this course, we will discuss: developing requirements; creating a scope of work; choosing and administering the appropriate contract type; serving on a source selection panel; negotiating the scope of work and intellectual property rights; ethics; conducting milestone reviews; the consequences of changing requirements; transitioning technology; and properly closing out an acquisition. In order to illustrate the key phases, milestones, and deliverables, examples will be taken from current acquisition lifecycles undertaken by the Department of Defense, NASA, and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

Student in this course will assume the role as the leader of a federal acquisition activity and will complete projects and assignments with this mindset. Accordingly, key project leadership attributes, leading teams, and conflict resolution techniques will be examined. Course exercises will include case studies based on the instructor's extensive experience in acquisition management as well as case studies and articles in *Harvard Business Review* and other journals. Participants will learn program management, practical aspects of cost and schedule estimating, financial management, risk management, systems engineering, technology management, and team management. At the end of this course, each participant will be armed with the best practices, tools, techniques, and checklists successfully lead the acquisition of products or services.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Identify leadership attributes for leading a federal acquisition in the national security arena
- Understand the project acquisition lifecycle from concept to closeout
- Develop a buying and selling strategy for a unique product or service
- Select the appropriate contract type for different products or services based on risk profile
- Understand the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR)
- Summarize the activities within each procurement phase such as concept development, design, integration, testing, production, operations, and closeout
- Present detailed descriptions of major milestones such as systems requirements review (SRR), authority to proceed (ATP), preliminary design review (PDR), critical design review (CDR), and test readiness review (TRR)
- Develop rigorous entrance and exit criteria for each major milestone to ensure the product or service is ready for advancement to the next phase
- Describe the roles and responsibilities of the project manager and integrated product teams
- Explore how to recover a troubled acquisition program
- Review policies, processes, and training aimed at improving acquisition outcomes
- Discuss techniques to judge cost and schedule estimates from proposals, quotations, or bids
- Select the appropriate project metrics to manage and balance the key program drivers of cost, schedule, and performance
- Present best practices for systems engineering, project management, technology management, stakeholder management, and team management

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This entire course is taken from the perspective **that you are the program director/program manager leading the acquisition activity for your organization**. Specifically, for each case study, journal paper, report, and class discussion, your viewpoint should reflect a leadership perspective.

In general, readings and homework will be assigned each week. You should prepare for the class discussions by identifying the following: 1) key issues, 2) relevant theory or approach, and 3) recommended actions and rationale. You are encouraged to discuss the readings and homework with fellow students. There will be a midterm exam, final paper, and presentation.

The midterm will be a **practicum, case study exam** based on in-class discussions, processes, terminology, techniques, and case studies around mid-March 2023 timeframe. There will be some definitions, however the focus will be practical applications of scenarios.

The final paper should be clearly written, well documented with references, contain statistical data, and provide a recommended course of action. It should not exceed 20 pages; have 12-point font; be double-spaced; with one-inch margins. The final paper will be due April 25<sup>th</sup>.

There will also be a final presentation on your topic. Your presentation should be aimed at approximately 15 slides and 20 mins of presentation time. Everyone should select and vet a topic with me by **March 10<sup>th</sup>**. The final presentations will take place the last few classes of the semester.

## COURSE GRADING

The grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

Homework and Class Participation:	20%
Midterm:	40%
Final Paper and presentation:	40%