POLITICAL SCIENCE 403J / 603J
Political Ethics and Political Corruption
Section XX
Course date & time, Course Location
Fall 20XX Syllabus

Dr. Stacy Gordon Fisher
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Department Website: www.unr.edu/cla/polisci

Course Description:

As a capstone class, students will study political corruption in a variety of contexts. We will begin with critical analysis by discussing the difficulties of defining and measuring of political corruption. We then talk about its causes and consequences. To broaden your cultural perspective, we then apply this information to corruption as it affects the U.S. and other regions of the world.

In the first section, we will focus on how scholars, nongovernmental organizations, and journalists define corruption and how these different definitions both reflect and affect our understanding of the concept. In this section, we will also address measurement issues and the difficulty of collecting data on corruption in a cross-national context. Corruption is an open-ended problem, a complex issue. Ethics, similarly, is a tricky concept.

In the second section, we will apply our new knowledge of the concept to the various types of corruption in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Finally, we will return to the U.S. and Western Europe and discuss how corruption has manifested itself in those regions. This includes using an understanding of ethical practices in first addressing the problem and evaluating the potential solutions.

Prerequisite: Students are required to be junior or senior standing and have completed all of General Education courses that build Core Objectives 1-3 and satisfy Core Objectives 4-8.

Required Texts and Course Materials:


**Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes:**

At the conclusion of this course, students will be able to:

• Discuss the various definitions of ethics and corruption and how and why those definitions vary across time and context; show insight (from previous coursework) or new knowledge in identifying the gaps in the previous literature with the definition of ethics and corruption. (CO1, 3, 11, 12, 13)
• Articulate ethical principles through critical, written analysis and synthesis of corruption both in theoretical terms but also in practice. Students will articulate what makes a particular action ethical based upon the theoretical definition and their own ethical values. In addition, students will be able to synthesize and integrate modern day examples into theoretical constructs of ethics. (CO1, 3, 12, 13)
• Identify the multiple ethical interests at stake in the different regions of the world. This including discussing how corruption manifests itself in a variety of regions: Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the U.S.; explain the different causes and consequences of corruption in these areas of the world by applying observational and experimental approaches (CO1, 3, 11, 12, 13)
• Analyze the issues that confront scholarly attempts to measure corruption (CO1, 3, 10, 12, 13)
• Evaluate anticorruption reforms; discuss how such reforms are possible but why they are so difficult to achieve (CO1, 3, 11, 12)
• Propose and critique government reforms (CO1, 3, 11, 12, 13)

With the capstone designation, this course develops competency in silver core objectives CO01 (Effective composition and communication) and CO03 (critical analysis and use of information), it satisfies the silver core objective CO12 (Ethics) and CO13 (Integration and Synthesis). Core objective CO01 requires students to effectively compose written analysis and CO03 requires students to be critical consumers of information. Students will show competency in these two objectives through two research papers. Students will be asked to build on previous knowledge gained through in-major and or in-discipline coursework but incorporate other disciplines and relevant fields. Because students will be identifying and analyzing ethical issues in both theory but also in practice, they will have to do so through investigation, observation, critical reading, interpretation and ultimately written analysis. Students will demonstrate this skill through two different paper assignments and in a midterm and final exam. They are also expected to further the discussion during class time, which will affect their participation grades.

The name of the course, *Political Ethics and Political Corruption*, implies students will have a broader and broadened understanding of ethics. The writing activities
mentioned will not only show the student’s ability to do research but also shows an understanding of the topic at hand. Students will demonstrate an understanding and discuss how corruption manifests itself in a variety of regions: Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the U.S.; explain the different causes and consequences of corruption in these areas of the world. They will also be able to discuss anti-corruption reform potential through policy building.

For this reason, this course satisfies CO12 Ethics; students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the ethical principles in general or in application of specialized knowledge, results of research, creative expression, or design process. Students will be able to recognize, articulate, and apply ethical principles. This includes, but is not limited to, how corruption manifests and the potentials for the application of anticorruption reforms. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the ethical principles as being applied to modern day corruption examples.

Together, these objectives satisfy CO13. CO13 requires students to be able to integrate and synthesize core knowledge, enabling them to analyze open-ended problems, like ethnics and corruption. Through the writing assignments and the exam, students must convey their understanding of ethics through their writing. The core objectives are thus broadened because students will be able to frame original research in the context of modern day examples demonstrating inclusion and understand of the interplay among different case studies and even among different disciplines.

**Graduate Course Requirements:**

As part of the PSC 603J graduate level requirement, the student will be required to submit a research paper, as a more in-depth exploration and analysis of the literature. This paper can target their existing research direction or can be a proposal in an area that they wish to further explore. Graduate students will also be required to present their research and finalized paper to all the students. In addition, additional readings are required and graduate students will be held to a higher standard of analysis and discussion than their counterparts.

**Class Policies and Procedures:**

Cheating, plagiarism and other acts of academic dishonesty will, at the least, result in a failing grade in this class. Self-plagiarism is cheating and will result in a failing grade as well. Students with disabilities often have special needs. If you are a student with physical, educational or other disability-related needs, please make me aware of any accommodations you require. I am more than happy to work with you in any way necessary. All discussions of this nature will be confidential.

**Course Evaluations**
Course evaluations will open online, XXX and will close on XXX at 5:00 p.m. Once the process closes, there are no additional opportunities to submit the form. Administrative Assistant, Kristen Kabrin, will send out email reminders throughout the process. (Please make sure your email in MyNevada is up-to-date.) If you have any questions regarding the process or the evaluation, please contact Ms. Kabrin at kkabrin@unr.edu.

Description of Assignments:

**Paper #1: Defining Political Corruption**
In the first paper due on XXX each student must create his or her own cross-national definition of corruption and discuss its strengths and weaknesses. The paper must be in Times New Roman twelve-point font, be double-spaced, and use one-inch margins. Even though students will only be using information from the lectures and texts to write the paper, they must include appropriate citations and a bibliography (in any bibliographic format, e.g., MLA, APA, etc.). The grade sheet I will be using for the paper is provided at the end of the syllabus and students should look at it closely while writing their papers.

**Paper #2: Political Reform**
In the second paper, due on XXX, each student must identify and explain a real-life political reform that has been proposed or implemented to deal with corruption. They will then identify whether this reform will work in the type of system in which it is to be implemented (e.g., oligarch/clan, influence market, etc.) and why. **YOU MUST USE DETAILS AND SPECIFICS FROM THE COURSE LECTURES AND READINGS WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON THE JOHNSTON BOOK. FAILURE TO DO SO OR TO PROVIDE APPROPRIATE CITATIONS WILL RESULT IN A ZERO ON THIS ASSIGNMENT.**

The reform chosen may have been proposed by any country or nongovernmental organization; students should just make sure that they understand and can explain how it is supposed to work. The paper must be in the same format as the first paper and include a bibliography. The grade sheet for this paper is attached to the syllabus and is slightly different from the first, and students should pay close attention to it when writing their papers.

**Grading Criteria:**

**Midterm (20%):** The midterm exam will be on XXX. The exam will consist of one essay and ten short answers. A study guide will be given out one week prior to the midterm.

**Final Exam (30%):** During finals week, students will take a final exam in the same format as the midterm. A study guide will be handed out one week prior to the final.
Each study guide will include three or four essay questions and approximately forty to fifty identification terms. Eight of the terms will be on the exam and students must provide a definition and political significance for 5 of the 8 terms provided. The essay question and terms will be randomly selected from the study guide.

There are (theoretically) an infinite number of potential “significances” for each term, but you must only provide one and explain it. You receive no benefit by providing multiple significances. I suggest that students try to connect the term to a general theme of the course for the purpose of providing a significance. For example, how does the term relate to our ability to measure corruption, our ability to solve the problem, etc.?

*Example:*
Term: Level of measurement

*Definition:* How precisely we measure a concept from very imprecise (nominal) to very precise (interval).

*Significance:* The higher level of measurement we use when measuring a concept, the more information we include. For example, if we just measure political corruption nominally (1 = no corruption and 2 = corruption), we have less information than if we measure it ordinally (1 to 100 with 1 = very corrupt and 100 = not corrupt at all). This allows us to have a more complete understanding of the concept.

**Papers (20% each):** Each student will write two 5-page papers. The papers are discussed in more detail at the end of the syllabus. The first paper is due on XXX and the second is XXX. Both papers will be turned in via Turnitin on WebCampus and must be submitted before 11:59 p.m. on the due date.

The grading criteria for the papers are as follows:

**Introduction:** Do I know what you are going to discuss and what the organization of the paper will look like?

- Excellent
- Very Good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

**Definition:** Is the definition of corruption presented clear and concise? Is the definition based on information in the texts, lectures, and class discussions?

- Excellent
- Very Good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

**Explanation:** Are the strengths and weaknesses of the definition well-explained, clear, and based in the literature?
Excellent Very Good Good Fair Poor

Summary: Does the conclusion restate the major points and explain why the paper is important?

Excellent Very Good Good Fair Poor

Citation: Have appropriate citations been used? Is there a bibliography and is it in the correct format?

Excellent Very Good Good Fair Poor

General: Has the paper been proofread? Is the writing well-organized and clear? Has significant thought and effort been put into the paper as a whole?

Excellent Very Good Good Fair Poor

Participation (10%): Each student must actively participate in the course discussions. There will also be opportunities for group work in class and students are expected to be present for these projects. In order to fully participate, students must have the required reading done prior to the class meeting.

All grading will be on a 0-100 scale. The following correspond to the approximate letter grades in my class:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>94-100</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-93.99</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-83.99</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<tr>
<td>77-79.99</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<tr>
<td>67-69.99</td>
<td>D+</td>
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<tr>
<td>60-63.99</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74-76.99</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>70-73.99</td>
<td>C-</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>84-86.99</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>60-63.99</td>
<td>D</td>
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No late assignments will be accepted and no make up exams will be offered.

Course Calendar / Topics and Readings:

Note: course readings marked with an asterisk are available through WebCampus. I provide URLs below if the reading is available online. Readings from the required textbooks are identified by the last name of the first author.

XXX: Introduction

Review syllabus and expectations Discuss political science as a discipline Explain the importance of corruption

XXX: Defining Corruption and Defining Ethics (CO 12)

Reading: Chapters 1 through 4: Heidenheimer and Johnston Preface and Chapter 1: Johnston
Discussion Topic: *What is political corruption and why is it a problem?*

**XXX: Comparative Corruption/Ethics: Methodology (CO 1, 3, 12, 13)**

Reading: Chapters 8, 44, 45: Heidenheimer and Johnston


Discussion Topic: *How do we compare corruption across time and space?*

**XXX: Comparative Corruption: Causes (CO 11)**

Reading: Chapter 15: Heidenheimer and Johnston Appendix: Johnston

Article: Treisman, Daniel. 2007. “What have we learned about the causes of corruption from ten years of cross-national empirical research?” *Annual Review of Political Science* 10: 211-244.

Discussion Topic: *How does corruption manifest itself across a variety of contexts and why?*

**XXX: Comparative Corruption/Ethics: Consequences (CO 12)**

Reading: Chapters 16, 17 and 21: Heidenheimer and Johnston

Chapters 2 and 3: Johnston

Discussion Topic: *Do we need different solutions for different situations?*

**XXX: Review for midterm and MIDTERM EXAM XXX: Official Mogul Corruption (~Africa) (CO 12; Paper – CO 1, 3, 12, 13)**

Reading: Chapter 22 and 24: Heidenheimer and Johnston Chapter 4: Johnston

Movie: *Last King of Scotland*

***** 1st Paper Due *****

Discussion Topic: *Causes, consequences, and reform of official mogul corruption.*

**XXX: Oligarch/Clan Corruption (~Asia) (CO 12)**

Reading: Chapters 26-28: Heidenheimer and Johnston Chapter 5: Johnston
Discussion Topic: *Causes, consequences, and reform of oligarch/clan corruption*

**XXX: Elite Cartel Corruption (~Latin America and early 19th century U.S.)** (CO 12)

Reading: Chapter 41: Heidenheimer and Johnston Chapter 6: Johnston

Movie: *The Last Hurrah*

Discussion Topic: *Causes, consequences, and reform of elite cartel corruption*

**XXX: Influence Market Corruption (Europe, Japan, and modern U.S.)** (CO 12; Paper CO 1, 3, 12, 13)

Reading: Chapter 33, 34, 37, and 38: Heidenheimer and Johnston

Chapter 7: Johnston

Discussion Topic: *Causes, consequences, and reform of influence market corruption.*

***** 2nd Paper Due XXX*****

**XXX: Overview of reform Reading:** (CO 13)

Reading: Chapter 8: Johnston

Discussion Topic: *Looking at solutions through ethics*

**XXX: Prep Day—No Classes**

Final exam will be during finals week on XXX.

**Academic Dishonesty:**

Cheating, plagiarism or otherwise obtaining grades under false pretenses" constitute academic dishonesty according to the code of this university. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and penalties can include canceling a student's enrollment without a grade, giving an F for the course or for the assignment. For more details, see the University of Nevada, Reno General Catalog and the Office of Student Conduct [here](http://www.unr.edu/student-conduct/policies/university-policies-and-guidelines/academic-standards/policy)

**Disability Services:**

Any student with a disability needing academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with me and the Disability Resource Center as soon as possible to
arrange for appropriate accommodations. You can refer to the Disability Resource Center website at [http://www.unr.edu/drc](http://www.unr.edu/drc).

**Academic Success Services:**
Your student fees cover usage of the Tutoring Center (784-6801 or www.unr.edu/tutoring-center) and University Writing Center (784-6030 or http://www.unr.edu/writing-center). These centers support your classroom learning; it is your responsibility to take advantage of their services. Keep in mind that seeking help outside of class is the sign of a responsible and successful student.

**Audio and Video Recording:**
Surreptitious or covert video-taping of class or unauthorized audio recording of class is prohibited by law and by Board of Regents policy. This class may be videotaped or audio recorded only with the written permission of the instructor. In order to accommodate students with disabilities, some students may have been given permission to record class lectures and discussions. Therefore, students should understand that their comments during class may be recorded.