

## **Ethics in American Politics POS 4264**

Professor Beth Rosenson

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Office Hours: Tuesday 9:30-10:30, Thursday 1-2, Friday 10:30-11:30

### **Course Overview**

The problem of unethical behavior involving elected officials is a perennial concern in American politics. Since the early days of the Republic, policy makers and ordinary citizens have sought to control unethical conduct such as bribery and treason. In recent decades, the focus of concern about political ethics has shifted to the problem of "conflicts of interest" between elected officials' private interests and their public duties, and to the regulation of campaign finance. This course will examine theories of political ethics, important episodes of corruption, and the regulation of political ethics through elections and legislation. The main focus will be on the ethics of legislators, but we will also look at presidents, governors, and other public officials.

Some of the main questions the course will address include: How does political ethics differ, if at all, from private ethics? What causes corruption? What have been the aims of good-government reformers? What sorts of ethical issues does the American campaign finance system pose? Should unethical behavior be addressed at the ballot box rather than through new laws? What are the limits of ethics regulation? What defenses of politicians can be mounted against the various criticisms that are often made of them, for example that they are overly concerned with winning reelection, that they are too partisan, and that they are overly ambitious and dishonest? What constitutes political courage, and what other virtues are important for public officials to have?

### **Disability Statement**

Students requiring accommodations must first register with the Dean of Student's Office, Disability Resource Center. The Dean of Student's office will provide documentation which the student will then give to the instructor: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc>.

### **Course Requirements/Breakdown of Points for Assignments**

**FIRST PAPER, due Feb. 6 (5-7 pages): 20%**

**MIDTERM EXAM, March 13: 35%**

**SECOND PAPER, due April 22 (10-12 pages): 35%**

**ATTENDANCE: 10% (Attendance will be recorded and attendance expressed as a percentage rate will account for 10% of the final grade; for example, if you attend 50% of classes, you will get 5 out of 10 attendance points).**

### **MISSED WORK**

Make-up exams will only be given if discussed in advance with the professor or if there are unusual circumstances that make the student unable to take the exam on time.

### **THE HONOR CODE**

On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." For more information on the honor code, see: [HTTP://www.dso.ufl.edu/SCCR/honorcodes/honorcode.php](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/SCCR/honorcodes/honorcode.php)

## GRADING SCALE

### GRADES:

A 90	B 80-84.1	C 69.7-73.8	D 60-64.1
A- 86.6-89.9	B- 77-79.9	C- 66.7-69.8	D- 57-59.9
B+ 84.2-86.5	C+ 73.9-76.9	D+ 64.2-66.6	E Below 57

A C- will not be a qualifying grade for major, minor, Gen Ed, Gordon Rule or College Basic Distribution credit.

For information on the grading scale, see either [HTTP://www.isis.ufl.edu/minusgrades.html](http://www.isis.ufl.edu/minusgrades.html) or [HTTP://registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html](http://registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html).

Students must write two papers for the class. Topics will be announced in advance and sent via the class list-serve. The papers will require students to do a critical analysis of the arguments presented in the. Papers are due AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS on the day they are due. Late papers will be penalized by a third of the grade for each day late (e.g. from a B+ to a B if one day late, from a B+ to a B- if two days late).

Students are expected to attend all classes. Material will be covered in lecture that is not necessarily covered by the readings, and it may appear on the midterm. Participation is strongly encouraged. You will get more out of the class if you see yourself as an active participant rather than as a passive note-taker.

### Books For Purchase

Three books and one coursepack are required for purchase. The coursepack will be available at Orange and Blue Textbooks, 309 NW 13<sup>th</sup> St. (ph 375-2707)

#### Books Required For Purchase

- 1) Dennis F. Thompson, *Ethics in Congress* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1995)
- 2) John F. Kennedy, *Profiles in Courage* (Harper Collins (HarperPerennial): 2006)
- 3) Michael Beschloss, *Presidential Courage* (Simon & Schuster, 2008)
- 4) Stephen Medvic, *In Defense of Politicians* (Routledge, 2013)

## I. Introduction and Course Overview

January 7

**II. Theories of Political Ethics and of Political Corruption  
Does Political Ethics Differ From Ethics in Private Life?**

January 9, January 14, January 16, January 21

Readings

A. Theories of Political Ethics and Corruption

\* Dennis Thompson, *Political Ethics and Public Office* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp. 96-122 (ITEM 1 IN COURSEPACK)

\* Dennis Thompson, *Ethics in Congress*, chs. 1-3 (REQUIRED TEXT)

B. Political Ethics and Private Ethics

\* Dennis Thompson, *Political Ethics and Public Office* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp. 123-147 (ITEM 2 IN COURSEPACK)

\* Molly Sonner and Clyde Wilcox, "Forgiving and Forgetting: Public Support for Bill Clinton During the Lewinsky Scandal," *PS: Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 32, No. 3, pp. 554-557 (ITEM 3 COURSEPACK)

\* Professor Rosenson's working paper "Ethics Evolving: Change and Continuity in Unethical Political Behavior Viewed Through the Lens of U.S. House Ethics Investigations, 1798-2011" (to be emailed to class list serve)

**III. What Causes Corruption? Where Does it Come From?**

January 23

Readings

\* George C. S. Benson, *Political Corruption in America* (Lexington, Mass: D.C. Heath, 1978), pp. 211-237 (ITEM 4 IN COURSEPACK)

**IV. Corruption and Reform Before 1950: Federal, State and Local Governments**

January 28 and January 30

Readings

A. Federal and State Corruption

\* George C.S. Benson, *Political Corruption in America* (Lexington, Mass: D.C. Heath, 1978), pp. 73-87 (ITEM 5 IN COURSEPACK)

\* Robert T. Roberts and Marion T. Doss Jr., *From Watergate to Whitewater: The Public Integrity War* (Westport: Praeger Press, 1997), pp. 9-21 (ITEMS 6 and 7 IN COURSEPACK)

B. Machine Corruption

\* Michael Johnston, *Political Corruption and Public Policy in America* (Westport: Praeger, 1997), pp. 36-71 (ITEM 8 IN COURSEPACK)

\* William Riordan, *Plunkitt of Tammany Hall* (N.Y: E.P. Dutton, 1963), pp. xxiii-20 (ITEM 9 IN COURSEPACK)

**V. Electoral Responses to Corruption: Can Corruption be Addressed Adequately Through the Ballot Box?**

February 4

Readings

\* John Peters and Susan Welch, 1980, "The Effects of Corruption on Voting Behavior in Congressional Elections." *American Political Science Review* 74:697-708 (ITEM 10 IN COURSEPACK)

\* James C. Kirby, "The Role of the Electorate in Congressional Ethics." In *Representation and Responsibility*, eds. Bruce Jennings and Daniel Callahan (New York: Plenum Press, 1985), pp. 29-37 (ITEM 11 IN COURSEPACK)

**\*\*\*PAPER DUE February 6\*\*\***

**VI. Addressing Corruption Through Legislation: the Progressives and the Post-Watergate Era**

February 6, February 11, February 13 and February 18

Readings

A. The Progressive Era, 1888-1920

\*Arthur S. Link and Richard L. McCormick, *Progressivism* (Illinois: Harlan Davidson, Inc.), pp. 26-66 (ITEM 12 IN COURSEPACK)

B. Watergate and its Aftermath at the National and State Levels

\*James D. Carroll and Robert N. Roberts, "If Men Were Angels: Assessing the Ethics in Government Act of 1978," *Policy Studies Journal*, Vol. 17, No. 2, Winter, 1988-89, pp. 435-447 (ITEM 13 IN COURSEPACK)

\*Congressional Quarterly, *Congressional Ethics: History, Fact and Controversy* (Washington D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 1992), pp. 145-161 (ITEM 14 IN COURSEPACK)

\* Beth Rosenson, *Shadowlands of Conduct* (Georgetown University Press, 2005), chapter 6 (to be emailed to class list serve)

\* Donald J. Maletz and Jerry Herbel, "Some Paradoxes of Government Ethics Revisited." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, 1998, pp. 20-25 (ITEM 15 IN COURSEPACK)

**VII. Campaign Finance and Conflict of Interest**

February 20 and February 25

Readings

\* SKIM THIS ITEM: Center for Public Integrity, *Buying of the President* (HarperCollins, 2004), pp. 221-257. 364-398 (ITEM 17 IN COURSEPACK)

\* David Donnelly, Janice Fine, and Ellen S. Miller, "Going Public," in *Campaign Finance Reform*, Anthony Corrado, Thomas E. Mann, Daniel R. Ortiz, Trevor Potter and Frank J. Sorauf, eds. (Washington D.C.: Brookings: 1997), pp. 364-370 (ITEM 18 IN COURSEPACK)

\*Thomas Mann, "The Battle over Campaign Finance," *Brookings Review*, Fall 2003, Vol. 21, No. 4, pp. 28-32 (ITEM 19 IN COURSEPACK)

**VIII. Defending Politicians: Why People Hate Politicians and Medvic's Responses to Those Criticisms, or Why Politicians May Not Be As Bad As People Think**

February 27, March 11 (Spring break in between)

Readings

Stephen Medvic, *Defending Politicians*, chapters 1, 4 and 7 (REQUIRED TEXT)

**\*\*\* EXAM MARCH 13 \*\*\***

**IX. Beyond Ethics and Campaign Finance Laws: Virtues of The Ethical Politician (Prudence, Political Courage, and Moral Integrity)**

March 18, March 20, (No class March 25 or March 27), April 1, April 3, April 8, April 10, April 15, April 17

Readings

March 18 and 20:

\*J. Patrick Dobel, *Public Integrity* (Johns Hopkins: 1999), ch. 10, pp. 193-211 (ITEM 21 IN COURSEPACK)

\*Terry Cooper and N. Dale Wright, eds., *Exemplary Public Administrators* (Jossey Bass: 1992), chs. 10 and 12 (pp. 241-267 and 304-323) (ITEMS 20 and 22 IN COURSEPACK)

**NO CLASS March 25 and 27**

April 1, 3 and 8:

\*John F. Kennedy, *Profiles in Courage*, chs. 1, 3, 6, 8-11 (REQUIRED TEXT).

April 10, 15, 17, 22:

\* Michael Beschloss, *Presidential Courage*, chapters on Truman (Chapters 25-28), John F. Kennedy (Chapters 29-32) and Reagan (Chapters 33-36) (REQUIRED TEXT).

**\*\*\* FINAL PAPER DUE APRIL 22 IN CLASS \*\*\***