

Ethics in American Politics
POS 4264
Fall 2019

Professor Beth Rosenson

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Office Hours: Thursdays 10:40-12:40 and Fridays 1-2.

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 September 17 (5-7 pages): 20 points, 20% of grade

QUIZ #1, October 1: 15 points, 15% of grade

QUIZ #2, October 22: 15 points, 15% of grade

SECOND PAPER, due November 7 (5 pages): 15 points, 15% of grade

THIRD PAPER, due Nov. 19 (2 pages), 2 points, 2% of grade

FOURTH PAPER, due Dec. 3 (10-12 pages): 28 points, 28% of grade

ATTENDANCE: 5%. Attendance will be recorded and attendance expressed as a percentage rate will account for 5% of the final grade; for example, if you attend 50% of classes, you will get 2.5 out of 5 possible attendance points. If you need to be absent (or are out sick) with documentation, let the professor know.

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

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 four papers for the class. Topics will be announced in advance and sent via the class list-serve. Papers are due AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS on the day they are due. Late papers will be penalized by half a 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 quizzes. 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

Four books and one coursepack are required for purchase. They will also be on course reserve. The coursepack will be available at Bookit, 1250 West University Avenue (ph 371-9588).

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

August 20

**II. Theories of Political Ethics and of Political Corruption
Does Political Ethics Differ From Ethics in Private Life? How Have
Conceptions of What is Ethical in Politics Changed Over Time?**

August 22, 27, 29

August 22

Readings

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 (REQUIRED TEXT)

August 27

Readings

Political Ethics and Private Ethics

* Dennis Thompson, *Ethics in Congress*, chs. 2-3 (REQUIRED TEXT)

* 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* (1999), Vol. 32, No. 3, pp. 554-557 (journal available through UF library website)

August 29

Readings

Changing Conceptions of What is Unethical in Politics

* Beth Rosenson, "Unethical Political Behavior Viewed Through the Lens of U.S. House Ethics Investigations, 1798-2011" *Public Integrity*, Summer 2014, Vol. 16, No. 3, pp. 227-242 (journal available through UF Library website)

III. What Causes Corruption? Where Does it Come From? Why Does it Vary Across Different States (and Countries)?

September 3

Readings

* George C. S. Benson, *Political Corruption in America* (Lexington, Mass: D.C. Heath, 1978), pp. 211-237 (ITEM 3 IN COURSEPACK)

* Beth Rosenson, "The Effect of Political Reform Measures on the Perception of Corruption," *Election Law Journal* (2009), Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 31-46 ((journal available through UF Library website)

September 5

Readings

Michael Johnston, *Syndromes of Corruption* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), Chapter 3 (To be emailed to list serve)

IV. Corruption and Reform Before 1920: Federal, State and Local Governments

September 10

Readings

A. Federal and State Corruption

* George C.S. Benson, *Political Corruption in America* (Lexington, Mass: D.C. Heath, 1978), pp. 73-87 (ITEM 4 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 5 and 6 IN COURSEPACK)

September 12

Readings

B. Machine Corruption

* Michael Johnston, *Political Corruption and Public Policy in America* (Westport: Praeger, 1997), pp. 36-71 (ITEM 7 IN COURSEPACK)

* William Riordan, *Plunkitt of Tammany Hall* (N.Y: E.P. Dutton, 1963), pp. xxiii-20 (ITEM 8 IN COURSEPACK)

*****PAPER 1 DUE SEPTEMBER 17*****

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

September 19

Readings

* Susan Welch and John Hibbing, "The Effects of Corruption on Voting Behavior in Congressional Elections, 1982-1990." *Journal of Politics* (February 1997), Vol. 59, No. 1, pp. 226-239 (journal available through UF library website)

* Scott Basinger, "Scandals and Elections in the Post-Watergate Era." *Political Research Quarterly* (June 2013), Vol. 66, Issue No. 2, pp. 385-98 (journal available through UF library website)

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

September 26

Readings

A. The Progressive Era, 1888-1920

* Arthur S. Link and Richard L. McCormick, *Progressivism* (Illinois: Harlan Davidson, Inc.), pp. 26-66 (ITEM 10 IN COURSEPACK)

October 1

Readings

B. Watergate and its Aftermath at the National Level

* 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 (journal available through UF library website)

* House ethics rules: available at

<https://ethics.house.gov/sites/ethics.house.gov/files/documents/Final%20Version%20of%20the%20Highlights%20Overview%20Booklet%202015.pdf>

* Video on Jack Abramoff to be shown in class

*****OCTOBER 3 – QUIZ #1*****

October 8

Ethics Regulation at the State Level, and Abroad

Readings

* Beth Rosenson, *Shadowlands of Conduct*, chapter on independent ethics commissions (to be emailed to 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 11 IN COURSEPACK)

* Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, "Controlling Corruption Through Collective Action." *Journal of Democracy*, January 2013, Vol. 24, No. 1, pp. 101-115. Available at: <https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Mungiu-Pippidi-24-1.pdf>

VII. Campaign Finance: What Does Money Buy and How Should Campaign Donations Be Regulated?

(*NO CLASS OCTOBER 10: PROFESSOR ROSENSEN OUT OF TOWN***)**

October 15

Readings

* Rick Hasen, "What Does Money Buy In Politics?" (from his Book Plutocrats United) (to be emailed to list serve)

* David Magelby, "Change and Continuity in the Financing of the 2016 Federal Election," in David Magelby, ed., *Financing the 2016 Election* (Brookings Institution, 2019), pp. 1-6, 9-17 and 21-33 (to be emailed to list serve)

* 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 12 IN COURSEPACK)

* Video on clean election reform to be shown in class - <https://wvcag.org/video-clean-elections-changing-the-face-of-america/>

* Austin Graham, "Seattle's Innovative Public Financing System Helped Citizen Participation in Campaigns Reach Historic High." Published by CLC, May 14, 2019. Available at <https://campaignlegal.org/update/seattles-innovative-public-financing-helped-citizen-participation-campaigns-reach-historic>

VIII. President Trump's Conflicts of Interest: What Are They And What Do Experts Say About Them? What Does History Tell Us About Presidential Conflicts of Interest?

October 17

* Article by Beth Rosenson available at

<https://theconversation.com/explainer-the-trumps-conflict-of-interest-issues-75761>

***** October 22: QUIZ #2 *****

IX. Defending Politicians: Medvic's Response To Critics of Politicians, or Why Politicians May Not Be As Bad As People Think

October 24, 29

October 24

Readings

* Stephen Medvic, *Defending Politicians*, chapters 1, 2 (REQUIRED TEXT)

* John R. Hibbing and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, *Congress as Public Enemy* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 1-20 (to be emailed to class list serve).

October 29

Readings

* Stephen Medvic, *Defending Politicians*, 4, 6, and 7 (REQUIRED TEXT)

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

October 31-December 3

October 31

Readings

A. Prudence, Cases of Exemplary Public Administrators

*J. Patrick Dobel, *Public Integrity* (Johns Hopkins: 1999), ch. 10, pp. 193-211 (ITEM 13 IN COURSEPACK)

*Terry Cooper and N. Dale Wright, eds., *Exemplary Public Administrators* (Jossey Bass: 1992), ch. 10 on William Ruckelshaus (pp. 241-267) (ITEM 14 IN COURSEPACK)

November 5

Readings

*Terry Cooper and N. Dale Wright, eds., *Exemplary Public Administrators* (Jossey Bass: 1992), ch. 12 on Marie Ragghianti (pp. 304-323) (ITEM 15 IN COURSEPACK)

* Changsuk Ko, Jianhong M a, Roman Bartnik, Mark H. Haney and Mingyu Kang, "Ethical Leadership: An Integrative Review and Future Research Agenda," *Ethics & Behavior* (May 2017), available at https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Mingyu_Kang9/publication/317216685_Ethical_Leadership_An_Integrative_Review_and_Future_Research_Agenda/links/5c1b1e07a6fdccfc705ad987/Ethical-Leadership-An-Integrative-Review-and-Future-Research-Agenda.pdf?origin=publication_detail

***** November 7: PAPER 2 DUE IN CLASS *****

November 12

Readings

B. Courage: Legislators, Presidents and Others

*John McCain, *Why Courage Matters* (Random House: 2004), pp. 3-12 and 86-105 (to be emailed to list serve)

*John F. Kennedy, *Profiles in Courage*, ch 1-4 (REQUIRED TEXT)

November 14

Readings

Kennedy, *Profiles in Courage*, chapters 6, 8, 9 (REQUIRED TEXT)

*****NOVEMBER 19- PAPER 3 DUE IN CLASS (1 to 2 page write up of a current US Senator, Representative, or state legislator you consider to be courageous and why– for class discussion) *****

November 21

Readings

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

November 26

Readings

*Michael Beschloss, *Presidential Courage*, chapters on Reagan (Chapters 33-36)
(REQUIRED TEXT).

***** December 3: FINAL PAPER DUE IN CLASS *****