

Ethics in American Politics
POS 4264
Fall 2020

Professor Beth Rosenson

Anderson Hall 202, Email: rosenson@ufl.edu, Phone 352-392-0262, ext. 232

Office Hours: By appointment via Zoom or phone

Zoom Meeting Codes and Passwords

Tuesday Class:

<https://ufl.zoom.us/j/94680746851?pwd=L2tOZ3VHRW52KytGR2J6aTFOM09LZz09>

Meeting ID: 946 8074 6851, Password: 501237

Thursday Class:

<https://ufl.zoom.us/j/96027545608?pwd=UE5DUjluUXNWOGNnL2UvV01PcWxsdz09>

Meeting ID: 960 2754 5608, Password: 402161

Link to buy coursepack if not in town: <https://book-it.myshopify.com/products/pos-4264-rosenson-fall-2020>. See page 3 of syllabus if you will be IN town to buy it in person.

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 22 (5-7 pages): 18 points, 20% of grade
QUIZ #1, October 6: 18 points, 18% of grade
QUIZ #2, October 27: 18 points, 18% of grade
SECOND PAPER, due November 10 (5 pages): 18 points, 18% of grade
THIRD PAPER, due Nov. 24 (2 pages), 2 points, 2% of grade
FOURTH PAPER, due Dec. 8 (10-12 pages): 26 points, 26% of grade

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	94 and above	C	74-76
A-	90-93	C-	70-73
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	84-86	D	64-66
B-	80-83	D-	60-63
C+	77-79	E	Below 60

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. The coursepack will be available at Bookit, 1250 West University Avenue (ph 352-371-9588). If you are not in Gainesville, you can go to this link and have the coursepack shipped to you. The price is \$54. <https://book-it.myshopify.com/products/pos-4264-rosenson-fall-2020>

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

September 1

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?

September 3, 8, 10

September 3

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)

September 8

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)

September 10

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 15

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)

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

September 17

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)

*****PAPER 1 DUE SEPTEMBER 22*****

September 24

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)

V. Electoral Responses to Corruption: Can Corruption be Addressed Adequately Through the Ballot Box? How are Legislators Affected by Scandal?

September 29

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

October 1

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)

*****QUIZ #1 OCTOBER 6*****

October 8

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 13

Ethics Regulation at the State Level, and Abroad

Readings

* Beth Rosenson, *Shadowlands of Conduct* (Georgetown University Press, 2005), 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?

October 15, 20

October 15: What Does Money Buy and Where Do Candidates Get Their Money From?

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)

October 20: Public Financing

* 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>

* Sarah Fenske, "The Dirty Truth About Clean Elections," *Phoenix New Times*, April 2, 2009, Available at <https://www.phoenixnewtimes.com/news/the-dirty-truth-about-clean-elections-6432811>

VIII. President Trump's Conflicts of Interest, What Does History Tell Us About Presidential Conflicts of Interest?

October 22

Readings

* Beth Rosenson, "The Trumps' Conflict of Interest Issues," *The Conversation*, April 19, 2017, available at <https://theconversation.com/explainer-the-trumps-conflict-of-interest-issues-75761>

***** October 27: QUIZ #2 *****

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

October 29, November 3

October 29

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).

November 3

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)

November 5-December 8

November 5

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 10: PAPER 2 DUE*****

November 12

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 17

Readings

B. Courage: Legislators, Presidents and Others

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

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

November 19

Readings

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

*****NOVEMBER 24- PAPER 3 DUE (1 to 2 page write up of a current legislator you consider to be courageous and why– for class discussion) *****

December 1

Readings

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

December 3

Readings

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

***** December 8: FINAL PAPER DUE IN CLASS *****