

POLS 425: Political Corruption – Ver 2.

Cal Poly, Dept. of Political Science
Winter 2023

Section

Meeting time: T/R 12:10-2:00 PM
Meeting place: 186-C201 (Constr Innovations Center);

Instructor: Dr. Kevin Simmt
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Phone: N/A
Office: Bldg. 74M, Rm. B109
Office hours: T/R 4:10-6:00
Or by appointment

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Course Description

As per the Registrar's listing, in the course catalogue, this course will cover materials consistent with the following:

- "Examination of the causes and effects of corruption in the United States and around the world, and the problems corruption causes in different societies. Particular attention will be placed on the role of political and social institutions."

I will simply add that we will take time to understand what corruption is (both philosophically, and in practice), why it matters, what causes it, and what might be done about it.

On a final note, it is my sincere wish that you might apply this course towards better understanding (and talking about) an issue in our society that is impacted by corruption (or causes corruption) and is of importance to you. To that end, take special note how this course's deliverables have been designed. The opportunities for discussion, that will be created for this class, offer a great time to put forward social matters related to corruption that are of concern to you, such that we might think of how they link up to the concepts of this course.

Course Goals and Learning Objectives

The goal of this course is to prepare you to read, interpret, critique and conduct research in political science (and beyond!). To ensure my particular teaching of this course maintain the Department's past standards, we will be sure to cover necessary materials such that all students will know how to:

- Identify core concepts and theories in the political science literature on corruption
- Understand the relation between corruption and societal welfare
- Understand how seemingly unrelated features of a society might have impacts upon levels of corruption
- Engage in independent study of a research question
- Present critical reviews of scholarly literature

These specific course objectives are in addition to and complement the department's Program Learning Objectives, which includes:

- Subject Matter Expertise
- Critical Thinking
- Working Productively and Communicating Effectively
- Ethics, Diversity and Sustainability
- Lifelong Learning and Positive Contribution
- These objectives are described more thoroughly here:
<http://catalog.calpoly.edu/collegesandprograms/collegeofliberalarts/politicalscience/bapoliticalscience/>

Grading

Course Grade Expectations

A numeric weighted average of grades on course assignments will translate to final letter grades according to the thresholds below. Note: cutoffs are at the full point level rather than the half point level. I will not “bump-up” or “round-up” final student grades; an 89.99 is a B+. However, if you think a grade has been miscalculated or mis-entered, please let me know ASAP so I can check and make a correction.

- A (93.0-100%) Exceptional Performance
- A- (90.0-92.99%) Very Good Performance
- B+ (87.0-89.99%) Good Performance
- B (83.0-86.99%) Good Performance
- B- (80.0-82.99%) Satisfactory Performance
- C+ (77.0-79.99%) / C (73.0-76.99%) / C-(70-72.99%) Adequate Performance
- D+ (70.0-69.99) /D(65.0-66.49%) Minimal Passing Performance
- F (Below 65.0%) Unacceptable Performance

Grade Weights

Your final grade is a weighted average of the assignments listed in the table below.

Assignment	Percent	Due Dates
Modular Worksheets	$2\% \times 5 = 10\%$	By 11:59PM on select dates. 1/26, 2/2, 2/9, 2/28, 3/9
Final Research Paper	25%	Must complete by 11:59PM on 3/21*
Exams	$20\% \times 2 = 40\%$	Must complete within 12-8 PM Window 2/16 *, 3/16*
<u>Class Leadership</u>		
Course Readings, Lead Discussant	2 %	In-class upon date student is assigned
Seminar Discussion Leader	3 %	In-class upon date student is assigned
Research Workshop Presentation	5 %	In-class upon date student is assigned
<u>Class Participation</u>		
Weekly Participation on Course Readings	5 %	Every Relevant Class
Participation in Student-Led Seminars	5 %	Every Relevant Class
Participation in Student Workshops	5 %	Every Relevant Class

**These assignment deadlines are firm. See late work policy below.*

Modular Worksheets (Issued In-Class on Select Days); 10% of Final Grade

Learning how to conduct research within political science – asking good questions, developing persuasive theories and models, relating events to concepts, designing appropriate empirical tests, and communicating findings – is best done by *doing*. These worksheets will break-down major course concepts and research tasks (for your final paper) into bite size pieces. Indeed, one of the key points of these assignments is to build-up to your major research project by completing these “bite-sized” pieces. They will be issued during class via Canvas (with approx 1/3rd of class time made available to get started; you will likely still have to finish these up at home). Most will allow for completion in small groups of 2-3. Submit via Canvas.

Politics/Policy Research Paper; 25% of Final Grade

The largest component of your grade consists of a semester long “Final Research Paper”. The modular worksheets will help you break this paper down into smaller, more manageable, pieces.

Instructions for this paper (and each checkpoint) is described at length on Canvas. In brief, you are asked to write a paper on a issue of your choice, conditioned upon it falling within the bounds of the *politics of corruption*. Papers should be 12-18 pages in length and should cite at least 10 academic sources. Students who are unsure of their topic should check-in with the instructor. Completing the aforementioned worksheets will help you put together this daunting task in manageable baby-steps, which will likely prove helpful. The final paper will contribute 25% to your final grade.

Exams; 40% of Final Grade

There will be two exams throughout the quarter (please note: potentially labelled as “quizzes” on Canvas, due to the tech platform’s naming conventions). These exams will cover all terms and concepts discussed in our classes *up to the class prior to the exam* and *all readings including those assigned on the date of the quiz*. Like the content of this course, all examinations are cumulative. Please note that these will be completed via Canvas, and must be completed within the scheduled time-frame. Failure to start or complete the exam within the allotted window will score you a ZERO! Note: Our exam days will occur online, meaning we will not meet in-person.

Class Leadership: Lead Discussant; 2% of Final Grade

Every class will have required readings. During the first two weeks of class, I will share a sign-up sheet for students to pick a class in which they wish to be the “lead discussant” of the readings. The task does NOT require having a presentation of the readings. Rather, they will simply help to steer the class, in collaboration with myself, by arriving with some prepped question and prompts. Specific instructions are listed on Canvas.

Class Leadership: Student-Led Seminars; 3% of Final Grade

During the first two weeks of class, I will share a sign-up sheet for students to pick a class (in the first half of the semester) in which they wish to share a interesting article/podcast/video/op-ed/etc. on an issue regarding the politics of corruption. The task does NOT ask for students to have a

formal presentation prepared; however, they should arrive with some background context as to why they picked the article, and should offer questions/prompts for the class to discuss. Specific instructions are listed on Canvas.

Class Leadership: Research Workshop Presentation; 5% of Final Grade

During the first two weeks of class, I will share a sign-up sheet for students to pick a class (in the second half of the semester) in which to present on the issue of their final paper (regarding a topic in the politics of corruption). The task DOES ask for students to have a formal presentation prepared. The environment will be very low-key, making this an excellent opportunity to practice public speaking. Specific instructions are listed on Canvas.

Class Participation: Peer as Lead Discussant (Readings); 5% of Final Grade

Every student co-leads (with me) a discussion on the readings, but every student is also expected to participate in discussing these readings. While being present will score a small nominal reward, full marks require active participation. While nothing profound must be said, students must engage with the substance of the presentation. Specific instructions are listed on Canvas.

Class Participation: Peer-Led Seminars; 5% of Final Grade

Every student is expected to share a interesting “think piece” on corruption (blog/op-ed/ted talk/etc.), which means every student is expected to come prepared to share their reaction to the piece shared by all their peers! While being present will score a small nominal reward, full marks require active participation. While nothing profound must be said, students must engage with the substance of the week. Specific instructions are listed on Canvas.

Class Participation: Research Workshops; 5% of Final Grade

Every student will workshop their paper, which means every student must also give feedback to each other’s papers! Specific instructions are listed on Canvas.

Textbook and Readings

This course will have one textbook that should cost about \$8-12 depending on whether you go with the digital copy or a hardcopy; you may seek the following at your preferred retailer:

Fisman, Raymond, and Miriam A. Golden. Corruption: What everyone needs to know. Oxford University Press, 2017. .

Course Policies

Office Hours

Office hours are times during the week set aside for me to meet with students about any questions or concerns they have about the course. I intend to hold in-person office hours during the times listed at the top of this document and by appointment. That said, you may email me if you would prefer to discuss via Zoom – I will make a link. If you are in class or scheduled to work during

those times, that's A-ok, just send me an email with your availability and we will find a time where we are both free.

Late Work

I honestly don't know which late-work policy is the best combination of ethical, practical, and pedagogically effective in a covid world. In my experience, deadlines with penalties are a great way to encourage students to stay on track with their work (y'all are generally a grade-motivated bunch!), but I do not want to penalize students for things outside of their control nor do I want to put myself in the position of deciding whose illnesses and life issues are important enough to justify an "excused" label.

So, y'all are the guinea pigs for a new policy: **I will automatically issue every student 192 cumulative hours (8 days) worth of "free" late penalties – although this CANNOT be used for Exams, and it cannot be used past the date of March 17** (See **Qualifications** below).

Any student exceeding their cap will start to be penalized 5% per day, which is issued the very second an assignment is late (the penalty will, then, be re-issued the very second that 24 hours elapses; it will be re-issued for every 24 hour period until handed-in). These free days CANNOT be applied: to Quizzes/Exams; past the last day of class (March 17 at midnight); nor for the final project (due on March 21). As of March 17 at midnight, your "free" late days are null and void (I have to submit final grades, after all.)

I've set up deadlines that will make sure you are on-track to complete a solid final project at the end of the course. I ***STRONGLY*** recommend submitting work by the deadlines throughout the quarter, but if something out of your control happens and you need another day or two, go for it. If you need to exceed your 8 allowance days, then YOU MUST PROVIDE VALID DOCUMENTATION (e.g., medical) demonstrating the need for more than 8 excused days. Note that I do not offer extensions for exams, unless medical documentation is provided in which a doctor EXPLICITLY explains that you cannot be expected to perform for examination during the specific window of time in which the exam takes place.

Some **Qualifications**:

- Exceptions here are quizzes, your draft (because other folks depend on you), and your final papers (because my deadline for submitting grades is firm).
- All late work must be submitted by the last day of classes: March 17 at 11:59 PM. Any work not received by midnight on the 1st will get an automatic zero. Note: all of the work in this course is designed to help you produce good final projects. If you don't do the work until the end of the quarter, it won't be helpful.
- You will get more timely – and therefore more useful – grading, for work that is turned in by the stated deadline. In general, I do not offer feedback for late work.
- Don't let the "free late days" lull you into a false sense of having extra time. The quarter moves fast. And, submitting late just means you're not able to advance on your final project.

Incomplete Grades

If extenuating circumstances affect your ability to finish the course material by the end of the quarter, please schedule a meeting with me as soon as possible to discuss whether taking an incomplete for the course is a good option for you. Incomplete grades will only be given for extenuating AND documented circumstances (simply falling behind because you're busy is not sufficient for an incomplete¹) and if an agreement is made **prior** to the end of the course. Once an Incomplete has been given, it is the student's responsibility to schedule meetings with me to facilitate the completion of the work.

Communication

In addition to announcements made in class, I will communicate with you through email. You are expected to check email regularly (daily, M-F). I check my email regularly during the work week – Monday through Friday, 9:00am-5:00pm – and respond as promptly as possible. Emails sent to me in the evenings and weekends *might* get a prompt(ish) response but probably won't. Emails sent in the middle of the night definitely aren't getting a prompt response (go to bed!). It is your responsibility to clear-up any questions about assignments at least 24 business hours in advance of a deadline!

Two additional points: think carefully about whether a question is appropriate for email. If a good response requires more than 2-3 sentences, visit office hours or book an appointment. Additionally, I can only guarantee receiving your communications if they take place through the Canvas online messaging service. I know, it is annoying to open Canvas. BUT, the service is reliable, and avoids situations of emails winding up in the junk folder.

Integrity of Scholarship

I take the integrity of scholarship very seriously in this course. By taking this course, you affirm that it is against course standards to cheat on exams, to plagiarize, to deviate from my instructions about collaboration on work submitted for grades, to give false information to a faculty member, and to undertake any other form of academic misconduct. You agree that I am entitled to move you to another seat during quizzes without explanation.

Any evidence of cheating/plagiarism will be punished with an automatic 0 for the assignment. Severe offenses (defined at the instructor's discretion) will result in an automatic failure of the course. All cases of cheating will be reported to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities, without exception.

For more information about Cal Poly's expectations for academic integrity see

<https://academicprograms.calpoly.edu/content/academicpolicies/Cheating>

The Department's Definition of Plagiarism "Plagiarism is defined as the act of using the ideas or work of another person or persons as if they were one's own without giving proper credit to the source. Such an act is not plagiarism if it is ascertained that the ideas were arrived through independent reasoning or logic or where the thought or idea is common knowledge. Acknowledgement of an original author or source must be made through appropriate references;

¹I'm not trying to be harsh here. I've tried giving out incompletes for students who've fallen behind for non-specific reasons, and not a single one of them has ever finished the work late. In those cases, all the incomplete does is prevent students from re-registering for the course/taking the next courses, which ultimately hurts progress towards graduation.

i.e., quotation marks, footnotes, or commentary. Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to the following: the submission of a work, either in part or in whole completed by another; failure to give credit for ideas, statements, facts or conclusions which rightfully belong to another; failure to use quotation marks (or other means of setting apart, such as the use of indentation or a different font size) when quoting directly from another, whether it be a paragraph, a sentence, or even a part thereof; close and lengthy paraphrasing of another's writing without credit or originality; use of another's project or programs or part thereof without giving credit." <https://politicalscience.calpoly.edu/students/advising/policy>

The Department's Definition of Cheating "Cheating is defined as obtaining or attempting to obtain, or aiding another to obtain credit for work, or any improvement in evaluation of performance, by any dishonest or deceptive means. Cheating includes, but is not limited to: lying; copying from another's test or examination; discussion at any time of answers or questions on an examination or test, unless such discussion is specifically authorized by the instructor; taking or receiving copies of an exam without the permission of the instructor; using or displaying notes, "cheat sheets," or other information devices inappropriate to the prescribed test conditions; allowing someone other than the officially enrolled student to represent same." <https://politicalscience.calpoly.edu/students/advising/policy>

Access, Disability Services, and Resources

I am committed to providing appropriate accommodations. If you have a disability-related need please contact the Disability Resource Center at Cal Poly immediately: <http://drc.calpoly.edu/content/drc-services>, (805) 756-1395. If you need immediate accommodations or physical access, please let me know. You can email me, come to office hours, or schedule a one-on-one meeting. I want everyone to learn and will do what I can to facilitate that process.

Diversity and Inclusion

My goal is to create a learning environment that enables all students to succeed and know that their experiences are valid. I expect students to treat each other with kindness and civility. For more information on resources related to diversity and inclusion, please visit the Office of University Diversity & Inclusivity website at <http://diversity.calpoly.edu>. If you notice behaviors or institutions in our class that undermine or obscure diversity and inclusion, please share those concerns with me (if you are comfortable doing so) or the department chair, Dr. Anika Leithner aleithne@calpoly.edu

Needs Support

If you face challenges securing food, housing, or other human needs know that you are not alone and Cal Poly can help. You can find resources available to support you through Cal Poly's Basic Needs Initiative at <https://www2.calstate.edu/impact-of-the-csu/student-success/basic-needs-initiative> and information about the Food Pantry and Meal Vouchers at <https://studentaffairs.calpoly.edu/hunger>

Zoom Etiquette

While primarily an in-person class, we shall, on occasion, conduct meetings over Zoom. Most of you are familiar with the zoom etiquette norms at this point, but a few reminders:

- Mute yourself unless you are actively about to ask or respond to a question to minimize background noise.
- When your video is on, please minimize distractions for the other students. Life happens when we take classes from home, but – if possible – point your camera to minimize distractions behind you. Turn off any TV screens in the background, and temporarily turn your video off if you need to get up or do something other than listen and participate in the class (eating a meal, for example)
- When your environment has minimal distractions and you feel safe sharing it, please keep your video on. Having your video on is useful for a few reasons – having your video on is an incentive for you to stay focused on the course content, and having your video on is useful to me/your instructor (being able to see faces gives good feedback about whether or not what we are discussing makes sense).
- If you'd like, you're welcome to use that chat function to talk to other students about the content of the class, but move any extra-curricular conversations out of zoom (and after class).

Class Schedule

Any changes to the schedule below will be announced in class as soon as possible and an updated syllabus will be emailed and posted to Canvas.

Session	#	Topics/Examinations	Readings	Deadlines
Tue Jan 10	1	No Class: Cancelled by CalPoly Admin over safety concerns due to winter storm.		
Thu Jan 12	2	What Counts as Being Corrupted?	Syllabus	Read Syllabus & Submit Question Sheet
Tue Jan 17	3	No Class: University recognized statutory holiday.		
Thu Jan 19	4	Why is Corruption so Nefarious?	Syllabus Rose-Ackerman 2nd ed. [Ch 1] Fisman & Golden [Ch 1]	
Tue Jan 24	5	What is (Political) Corruption?	Fisman & Golden [Ch 2]	
Thu Jan 26	6	What is (Political) Corruption? The Public Choice Response	Krueger, "Rent-Seeking Society"	Module 1 @ 11:59 PM
Tue Jan 31	7	Where Does Corruption Happen?	Fisman & Golden [Ch 3]	
Thu Feb 2	8	Empirical Approaches I	Fisman, "Estimating the Value of Political Connections" OR Vidal, "Revolving Door Lobbyists" OR Khawja & Mian, "Do Lenders Favor Politically Connected Firms"	Module 2 @ 11:59 PM
Tue Feb 7	9	What are Corruption's Effects?	Fisman & Golden [Ch 4]	

Session	#	Topics/Examinations	Readings	Deadlines
Thu Feb 9	10	Who Gets Corrupted?	Fisman & Golden [Ch 5] Firman, "Private Returns to Public Office" [Optional]	Module 3 @ 11:59 PM
Tue Feb 14	11	Recapitulation Session & Structured Writing Exercises	Svensson, "Eight Questions About Corruption"	
Thu Feb 16	12	MIDTERM EXAM: Listed as "Quiz 1"; must be completed online via Canvas between Noon - 8PM		
Thu Feb 21	13	How Does Culture Figure into Corruption?	Fisman & Golden [Ch 6]	
Thu Feb 23	14	Empirical Approaches II	Gupta, "Blurred Boundaries" OR Ekeh "Colonialism & the Two Publics in Africa"	
Tue Feb 28	15	How do Political Institutions Figure into Corruption?	Fisman & Golden [Ch 7]	Module 4 @ 11:59 PM
Thu Mar 2	16	Empirical Approaches III	Olken, "Monitoring Corruption" OR McMillan, "How to Subvert Democracy"	
Tue Mar 7	17	How do Countries Escape Corruption?	Fisman & Golden [Ch 8]	
Thu Mar 9	18	What is to be Done About Corruption?	Fisman & Golden [Ch 9]	Module 5 @ 11:59 PM

Session	#	Topics/Examinations	Readings	Deadlines
Tue Mar 14	19	Recapitulation Session & Structured Writing Exercises	Gerring & Thacker, "Political Institutions & Corruption"	
Thu Mar 16	20	FINAL EXAM: Listed as Quiz 2; must be completed online via Canvas between Noon - 8 PM		
Tue Mar 21		Final papers due by 11:59 pm		

Signature Sheet

Please sign below. (in ink or e-sign) and submit this page to canvas on to indicate that you have read and generally understand the course policies outlined in this document:

Name: _____

Signature: _____

What questions do you have about the class that are not answered in the syllabus/ what policies are unclear?

Do you have access to an electronic device that you can use to work on my project in class? (It is totally OK if you do not, I just like to know so we can best make use of in-class work time.)

If professors/folks/people-with-names-like-Kevin tend to mispronounce your name, can you provide a phonetic spelling below to help me get it right?

If you'd like to share, what pronouns should I use to refer to you in class?

In addition, is there anything else that you would like to share with me?