Societies of the World 50: Political Corruption
Harvard University, Fall 2013

Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:00-2:00pm
Weekly sections to be arranged

Professor James Alt
CGIS Knafel, 307
1737 Cambridge Street
jalt@latte.harvard.edu
Office hours: Tuesdays 2-4

Professor Daniel Ziblatt
27 Kirkland St
Center for European Studies
dziblatt@fas.harvard.edu
Office hours: Wednesday 12-2

Head TF
Chiara Superti
csuperti@fas.harvard.edu

INTRODUCTION

Charges of corruption are everywhere. But which countries are the most corrupt? Do highly corrupt countries share any common characteristics? How much corruption is there? Its social costs are multiple, including the diversion and outright theft of funds for public programs and damage caused by firms and individuals that pay bribes to avoid health and safety regulations intended to benefit the public. Yet, few recent attempts to fight corruption are successful.

The course takes a comparative and historical approach to these questions. Part I introduces how social scientists think, examining how the meaning of political corruption has evolved over time, contrasting anthropological, psychological, social, economic, and political-legal efforts to understand, explain, and measure political corruption. Part II is more explicitly historical, looking closely at the evolution of corruption over centuries in a small number of countries, By contrast Part III examines how power and repression, social and political instability, foreign aid, a natural resource-based economy, and organized crime affect corruption in many countries in today's globalized world. Finally, we ask what and how much can be done, evaluating leading contemporary recommendations for “fixing” the problem.

This is a course in Societies of the World. Its subject is an issue that transcends national boundaries. It exists more or less everywhere, in many types of society. We draw connections across historical periods whenever we can. Readings are relentlessly interdisciplinary. To the greatest extent possible, no background knowledge is expected or required.

WEBSITE

The course website is a vital resource that will keep you informed of course updates and other important information. Please ensure you check the website regularly. Stable URL: http://isites.harvard.edu/k96136
REQUIREMENTS

Grades in SW 50 are determined by these components:

- Closed, written 90-minute final (25% of total)
- Section participation (25%)
- Papers (50%)

Course requirements are intended to help students develop a specific set of skills (the ability to write social scientific papers, working in groups, and verbal presentations) and also facilitate the development of a mix of analytical tools, including the elaboration of social scientific concepts, the ability to engage theory with evidence, and the ability to link theory to policy prescriptions.

In more detail, the three components are:

1) **Written in-class final exam:** at the end of the course based on lectures, sections, and readings

2) **Class participation:** grade based on participation in section discussion, lecture and group presentation at end of semester. Attendance at all sections is expected. During the semester, only one section may be missed without a supporting written note from resident dean or doctor.

3) **Papers:** This last portion of the course is worth 50% of the grade and has two parts: a group component requires that students hand in written work as part of a student team (that you will form early in the semester) and two individual written assignments.

Please see the “Assignment” Tab on the course website for further details about assignments.

Any student needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a documented disability is requested to present his or her letter from the Accessible Education Office (AEO) and speak with the professor by the end of the second week of the term. All discussions will remain confidential, although AEO may be consulted to discuss appropriate implementation.

Late assignments: Unless accompanied with a note from your doctor or resident dean, all written assignments will lose a grade (e.g. A to A-, B+ to B) for each day they are late.

COLLABORATION

Discussion and the exchange of ideas are essential to producing quality academic work and we do not wish to extinguish this important component of university life. For assignments in this course, you may find it useful to discuss the topic with your peers, your TF or the Writing Fellow. However, you should ensure that any written work you submit for evaluation is the result of your own research and writing and that it reflects your own approach to the topic. You must also adhere to standard citation practices in this discipline and properly cite any books, articles, websites, lectures, etc. that have helped you with your work. Please see *Harvard's Guide for Using Sources* for more information about what constitutes plagiarism. If you receive any help with your writing (feedback on drafts, etc.), you must clearly acknowledge this assistance.
For the group assignments, the members of each group can of course discuss the content of their project with each other within the group but not with others outside the group. For individual assignments the normal rules that "all work should be your own" apply.

SECTIONS

Students will be informed of the time and location of sections during the second week of the semester (there will be no section during “shopping” week). Students are expected to attend the section to which they are assigned. Changing will only be possible in extraordinary circumstances. Please contact the Head TF if there are problems with your section.

LECTURES AND READINGS

All readings (except where indicated) are available on the course website (Harvard log-in required and only for the students enrolled in the class).

Michael Johnston, Syndromes of Corruption, Ch. 3: 36-48

Part I. Corruption across time, space, and the social sciences

(Th 9/5) Lecture 2: Corruption through Other Eyes (68 pages)
Aleko Konstantinov, Bai Ganyo: Incredible Tales of a Modern Bulgarian (1895), ed. V. Friedman, Ch. 11 "Bai Ganyo Does Elections"
Nikolai Gogol, Dead Souls (1842), Chapters 1-2

(T 9/10) Lecture 3: Changing Meanings of Corruption Over Time (49 pages)
Carl Friedrich, Corruption Concepts in Historical Perspective, Heidenheimer/Johnston, pp. 15-22
Gordon Wood (1969) The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787, chapter 1
Andrew Jackson, “First State of the Union Address” 1829, pp. 1-2

(Th 9/12) Lecture 4: Defining Corruption: Public, Private, and Abuse (61 pages)
Susan Rose-Ackerman, Corruption and Government, Chapter 6 (pp. 91-110)
Peters and Welch, "Gradients of Corruption in Perceptions of American Public Life", pp. 155-172 in Heidenheimer and Johnston
(T 9/17) Lecture 5: Theories (i.e. causes) of Corruption 1: psychology and culture (70 pages)

(Th 9/19) Lecture 6: Theories (i.e. causes) of Corruption 2: social and economic (48 pages)

(T 9/24) Lecture 7: Theories (i.e. causes) of Corruption 3: legal, institutional and political (80 pages)

(Th 9/26) Lecture 8: Social Science & Corruption: How to Study it? How to Measure it? (39 pages)

Part II. Corruption in Comparative and Historical Perspective

(T 10/1) Lecture 9: Corruption in old states: Long History and Evolution (63 pages)
Alexis Tocqueville, Old Regime and the French Revolution, selections [Book II, chapters 9 and 10]
(Th 10/3) Lecture 10: Legislative Corruption: sinecures to stock portfolios (48 pages)

(T 10/8) Lecture 11: Corruption in U.S. States and Cities: Machines and the Legacy of Reform (65 pages)
Steffens, Lincoln. 1904. The Shame of the Cities [Chapter 1 only: 3-26].
Riordon, William. 1968. Plunkitt of Tammany Hall: A Series of Very Plain Talks on Very Practical Politics. [Chapter 1 only: Honest Graft and Dishonest Graft]

(Th 10/10) Lecture 12: Mass Democracy and Corruption: Electoral fraud (40 pages)

Movie “An African Election” (anafricanelection.com), 1hr. 26m, ITunes buy $9.99, rent $3.99

(T 10/15) Lecture 13: Campaign finance, comparative and contemporary (47 pages)
Michael Johnston, Syndromes of Corruption 60-77, 86-88
WSJ Online piece at http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123198033711683815.html is an update of Burke piece with history of cases

(Th 10/17) Lecture 14: Bureaucratic corruption and Capture (33 pages)
Sanford C. Gordon and Catherine Hafer, “Conditional Forbearance as an Alternative to Capture: Evidence from Coal Mine Safety Regulation” in Daniel Carpenter and David Moss (eds.), Preventing Regulatory Capture: Special Interest Influence and How to Limit it. 1-14
Nolan McCarty, Keith Poole, and Howard Rosenthal, Political Bubbles 104-16

Part III. The Limits of Democratic Institutions

(T 10/22) Lecture 15: Power and Repression: Corruption in Authoritarian regimes (71 pages)

(Th 10/24) Lecture 16: Democratic Transitions and Corruption (68 pages)

(T 10/29) Lecture 17: Easy Money I: Foreign Aid and Corruption (30 pages)

(Th 10/31) Lecture 18: Easy Money II: Natural resources and kleptocracy (37 pages)
Der Spiegel article that summarizes general literature on resource curse: http://www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/0,1518,426730,00.html
Economist article on corruption in Nigeria: http://www.economist.com/node/8057707?story_id=E1_RDVSSDS
Part IV. The Possibility of Fixing Corruption

(T 11/5) Lecture 19: Organized Crime, Corruption, and Violence (43 pages)
Gounev P. and Bezlov T., “Examining the links between organised crime and corruption”, Center of the Study of Democracy. Executive Summary.

(Th 11/7) Lecture 20: Whether and how international influences can help (55 pages)
Moises Naim (2005): “Bad Medicine” Foreign Policy, pp. 95-96

(T 11/12) Lecture 21: Prosecutors, Courts and Domestic Enforcement in the U.S. (60 pages)
Harvey Silverglade, Three Felonies a Day, pp. 3-31

(Th 11/14) Lecture 22: Free press, media, transparency (52 pages)

(T 11/19) Lecture 23: Institutional Reform: Civil Service (82 pages)
(Th 11/21) Lecture 24: Institutional Reform: local (49 pages)

(T 11/26) Lecture 25: Are there any “clean cases”? (60 pages)

(T 12/3) Lecture 26: Wrapping up: Conclusions and Review