PS259 Winter 2018

Selected Topics in Comparative Politics:
Political Corruption, Criminality, and Electoral Fraud
https://moodle2.sscnet.ucla.edu/course/view/18W-POLSCI259-1

Wed 2:00–4:50 Public Affairs 1270

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Course Description: How and why do public officials abuse the public trust and chronically engage in illegal actions while in office? If voters have other candidates they can select to replace corrupt incumbents, why are corruption and political malfeasance so persistent? What are the conditions that shift the aggregate outcome from corrupt to clean?

This course reviews recent literature on these questions with the aim of locating the research frontier and helping students identify potential topics for further study.

Course Prerequisites: You will only be able to do the work in this course if you are familiar with statistical methods to analyze quantitative data. First year students in the Political Science Ph.D. program and students from other departments are welcome in the course if they have taken at least one prior course in statistics (covering material through multiple regression). The course may have been at the undergraduate level. If you are not sure if you can do the required work, please feel free to contact me prior to enrolling.

Course Objectives: At the completion of this course, you will:

1. Be familiar with some important recent studies of political corruption, electoral fraud, and of the relationship between politics and organized crime.
2. Be familiar with some of the data sources used in studies of corruption.
3. Have experience working with complex multilevel datasets.
4. Have experience writing a pre-analysis plan.
5. Have experience writing a research essay that integrates quantitative information into a theoretically-motived analysis.
6. Have experience preparing a dataset, code and codebook as if for a published article.
Course Format: The course is designed as a mixture of lecture and discussion.

Readings: A maximum of four separate readings has been assigned each week. Almost all are recent publications, in order to introduce you to the most recent research.

Readings use examples from countries around the world, crossing the distinction between developed and less developed countries. We also read some materials whose focus is the 19th century.

Please print out the readings and bring them to class. You will not have access to electronic versions during class and we may need to study specific tables.

I have indicated the URL for articles. Book chapters and unpublished materials are (or will be) posted on the course website.

Statistical Software(s): Instruction in the course will, where relevant, use a mix of Stata and R Studio. You may do your own data analysis in whatever package you are comfortable with (excluding Excel, which is not permitted). If you work in anything other than Stata, I will be less able to help you debug your code or evaluate the accuracy of your work, although I am gradually learning R.

Requirement(s): To complete the course for a grade, you will write an essay analyzing data on a question of relevance. Beforehand, you will prepare a pre-analysis plan. You will also prepare a codebook for the data you analyze. First and second year students are advised to draw directly on data provided by the instructor or to replicate an already-published piece of work. More advanced students are encouraged to use their own data and to write a paper that is relevant to their dissertation or potential dissertation topic. I am very broad in the topics that I consider relevant to this course.

Course Policies:

- General (for auditors as well as enrolled students)
  - Students should come to class meetings each week already having read the assigned material.
  - Students should bring written notes to class summarizing each assigned reading and be prepared to discuss every assigned reading. You may be cold called.
  - No laptops or other electronics are to be open during class. Phones must be turned off.
  - Students should take handwritten notes during class in order to understand and retain the material covered.
  - If you are auditing the course, please inform me so you are given access to the course site.
  - Students are expected to attend all class meetings except in cases of illness. Please do not attend class if you have a cold or the flu. If you cannot attend class due to illness and you inform me with sufficient advance notice, I will arrange to have the class video-taped.
• **Readings**

  – Articles listed on the syllabus are linked to the site for easy access.


• **Research Paper**

  – Research papers should be 20–25 pages in length (plus bibliography and supporting material), and should be modeled on a professional article. I put no premium on length. Make sure to explain everything but keep it compact.

  – Your paper does not need to report original research. You may instead replicate any relevant study for which the data are easily available. If the data for a published article are not posted online, email the author within the first week of the quarter to ascertain if you can obtain the data immediately for use in the course.

  – Please plan to work with an already-assembled dataset, whether your own or from another source. The course is not designed to permit you to collect or assemble new data.

  – The analysis that you report in your paper may use descriptive statistics and linear regression with few controls. Results may thereby be highly provisional. The more advanced analytical techniques that the problem likely requires do not have to completed during the quarter or reported in the paper.

  – You will hand in a paper that has the look of a professional article but whose contents essentially represent a first draft. That is as much as can be realistically accomplished in one quarter. It is useful to learn to complete a first draft and get feedback knowing that the work is in progress.

  – Please put all tables and figures in place (not at the end). Make sure they are large enough to be legible. Be thoughtful in your use of color.

  – Please make sure to observe all formatting standards used in professional publications (e.g. number and label all figures and tables, provide full bibliographic references, etc.).

  – You are strongly advised to use LaTeX and Bibtex (or RMarkdown and Bibtex). Please see me if you need help getting started.

  – All written materials (project memo, pre-analysis plan, final paper, etc.) must be submitted in .pdf format.

  – As supporting materials, you are required to submit your dataset (in .dta or .RData format) and the computer code (in .do or .R format) analyzing it that is reported in your paper. Code must be a clean run and must be properly annotated. This means that the code should produce only the output used in the paper. **If your code does not run, your paper will be considered incomplete.** Please make sure to write relative directory paths so that your code will run on
my computer with a single line change in the first section of the file indicating the name and location of the working directory.

– You should also submit a brief codebook. You should model this on what you would submit if your paper were accepted as a publication in a journal that requires replication data and code. An example that you may wish to consult is the codebook accompanying Asunka, J., Brierley, S., Golden, M. A., Kramon, E., and Ofosu, G. (Forthcoming). Electoral fraud or violence: The effect of observers on party manipulation strategies. British Journal of Political Science, which is available at the Harvard Dataverse site. That is also a good site to search for available replication datasets.

– The final item in the supporting material you will submit is a brief (approximately one page) list of any deviations you made from your pre-analysis plan (see below).

– So long as you inform the instructor, you are permitted to write a paper that is also being submitted in another course.

– So long as you inform the instructor, you are permitted to co-author a paper for this course. The other author(-s) do not necessarily have to be enrolled in the course. However, you must have secured their consent (see below).

– The due date for submission of your paper has been set at the very last possible moment for me to submit grades without having to give you Incompletes for the course. The accompanying dataset, computer code, codebook, list of deviations from your pre-analysis plan, and (if relevant) collaborative agreement are due shortly after your papers but before I submit final course grades.

– Late papers and supporting materials will not be accepted and no Incompletes will be given in this course.

• Pre-Analysis Plan

– You will write a pre-analysis plan laying out the hypotheses and the tests you intend to conduct. You will circulate your pre-analysis plan the fifth week of the quarter. Although this is a very demanding exercise, it is quickly becoming the norm in social science. The plan is what you would pre-register if you were working on a “real” piece of research.

– A pre-analysis plan is a more polished and formal presentation of the proposal for the paper you plan to write than you would normally be asked to submit in a graduate seminar, but is not qualitatively different than any other paper proposal.

– For a checklist of what to include, go to the World Bank’s Development Impact site and review David McKenzie’s “Pre-Analysis Plan Checklist.” Your pre-analysis plan will likely omit some of the items on this list. For instance, you probably will not include a formal model in your paper. At a minimum, your pre-analysis plan should include a description of the data you will use and how you selected your sample, the hypotheses you will test, how you plan to construct your measures and variables, the equation(-s) you plan to estimate, and a plan for dealing with multiple hypothesis testing. For some illustrations of the process, see the work in progress reported by the Declare Design research team. Some additional information is available on Graeme Blair’s website under the Projects tab.
Two examples of pre-analysis plans are included as readings in the first week of class.

During the process of working with your data, you may think of hypotheses and discover relationships that were not specified in your pre-analysis plan. You are free to follow up leads that emerge during the course of working with your data and writing your paper. If you deviate from your pre-analysis plan — and you are encouraged to do so — you will submit a brief list of the deviations with your final paper. You do not need to justify your deviations, only to enumerate them.

**Collaborative Work**

- You are encouraged to help each other during the course, to share expertise and information, and to work together on the research paper if you wish.
- Students who decide to collaborate formally on the written assignment for the course are required to set out in writing the nature of the collaboration, specifying who is responsible for what part of the work and how credit will be shared in the near and far term. Students should pay particular attention to specifying how they intend to proceed if any part of the work done for the course is eventually used in an article submitted for publication. Please submit this material even if your co-author is not enrolled in the course.

**Grades**

- Materials are to be submitted on time to be given full credit. Please ensure that the timestamp for every submission is within ten minutes of the time due.
- Final course grades will reflect class participation and the quality of all work submitted.

**Replication, Transparency, and Research Ethics:** All work you do will be held to the highest ethical and professional standards. Some aspects of “best practices” will not be directly relevant in this course, particularly those having to do with data collection and pre-registration. Working through the process of thinking through your analysis in advance and writing a pre-analysis plan, analyzing data, writing a paper, and preparing your data and codebook for public release will give you an overview of most steps that you will have to take in every subsequent research project you do.

For for examples of pre-registered pre-analysis plans, see the Design Registration Form and other materials on the [EGAP](https://egap.ucla.edu/) website under the Registration tab.

**UCLA Student Guide to Academic Integrity:** As a student and member of the University community, you are expected to demonstrate integrity in all of your academic endeavors.

Please carefully review the university guidelines regarding academic dishonesty. Suspicion of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of Students for evaluation and appropriate action.
SYLLABUS

Week One, January 10: Introduction to the Problem of Persistent Political Malfeasance

Corruption and other forms of political malfeasance occur in all societies. These phenomena are politically consequential when they become entrenched and chronic among elected or appointed government representatives. We aim to understand corruption as an equilibrium of mutual expectations between rulers and the ruled. A central question for the course is why ordinary people — who are usually the victims of corruption and political malfeasance — often behave as if acquiescing to it.

The readings this week provide guidance on research practices.

Readings:

Note that you do not need to bring printed copies of the readings with you to class this week.


Week Two, January 17: Persistent Corruption in a Highly Developed Country

First and second year students who do not already have a dataset selected for use in the course may wish to work with a dataset analyzed in this week’s readings. The datasets have many variables and are multilevel (individual parliamentarians, electoral districts, political parties), thereby offering challenging contexts for data analysis.

The main determinant of corruption and other forms of political malfeasance is economic development: bad government is significantly worse at lower levels of economic development. How do some countries end up off the regression line, with higher levels of corruption than expected given their level of economic development? How does corruption become so embedded in political institutions that decades of free elections do not reduce it? To investigate these questions, we explore the Italian case, a country notoriously more corrupt than other wealthy European nations.

Readings:

Week Three, January 24: Data Day: A Critical Examination of Data Sources

Due before class:

No later than Tuesday, January 23 at 6:00pm, you will post on the course website a one-page memo presenting basic information about your proposed paper. Your memo should include: your name, project title, country (or other) setting, data source(-s), data units and level(-s) of analysis, whether your project is a replication and the bibliographic information of the paper you are replicating, and a one-paragraph statement of the theoretical problem or main hypothesis that you intend to investigate. In addition, please write one or two sentences about why the problem is important. All this information should fit onto a single sheet of paper (without using a font that is too small to read).

The cross-country data on corruption and related forms of wrongdoing by public officials provides a useful map of malfeasance but is conceptually problematic for multiple reasons. The subnational data that exists is often excellent but obviously narrow and usually not generalizable. We examine various sources of data and discuss their strengths and weaknesses.

Readings:

Read project memos by all class members.


Datasets to be examined:

- Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index (CPI)
- World Bank’s Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI)
- United Nations International Crime Victims Survey (ICVS)
- Quality of Government (QoG) expert survey dataset
- Golden-Picci index, provincial level data. Posted on course website.

Week Four, January 31: The Role of Electoral Fraud

One reason that widespread political corruption may persist despite elections is that the elections themselves may be partially fraudulent. Electoral authoritarian regimes frequently engage in election fraud, but democratic regimes may also experience fraud. Fraud occurs
when the government leverages its control over the administration of an election to alter the outcome of the vote.

Readings:


Week Five, February 7: The Role of Violence and Intimidation in Pressuring Voters

Due before class:

Please upload your pre-analysis plan and any collaborative agreement to the course website prior to the start of class.

Political parties engaged in malfeasance have often used violence and intimidation to coerce voters. Before the introduction of the secret ballot, or in settings where the vote can be observed despite a nominally secret ballot, parties and elites have been able to threaten voters who did not vote as instructed. The threats were often laced with violence, perhaps to be delivered by auxiliary criminal organizations. With the introduction of the secret ballot, the favored tactic has been the use of violence to discourage supporters of the opposition from casting votes (so-called turnout suppression). Recent research in Africa and Eastern Europe suggests that these tactics remain highly relevant in some settings.

Readings:

Read pre-analysis plans and collaborative agreements by all class members.


Week Six, February 14: How Patronage and Clientelism Sustain Corruption

In pre-modern societies, social and economic hierarchies bound patrons and clients in unequal exchange relationships. The establishment of democratic political competition in poor countries often encouraged political parties to infiltrate traditional patron-client relationships, which in urban areas then mutated into modern political machines. The micro-foundations of political machines and patronage more generally have been subject to recent scrutiny and debate.

Readings:


Week Seven, February 21: When Does Information Reduce Political Malfeasance?

A standard argument is that if voters continue to support malfeasant incumbents, voters must be ignorant. According to this view, disseminating accurate information to voters can correct ill-informed electoral choices. In fact, however, even well-informed voters usually reelect corrupt politicians, and the ability of voters to use information effectively is impaired in various ways. Only in a narrow range of situations is new information useful to voters. Is it possible to identify the general characteristics of these situations?

Readings:


Week Eight, February 28: Instructor Out of Town
Week Nine, March 7: When Can Voters Coordinate Their Way Out of Corruption?

Voters are often well informed about the malfeasance of their political representatives. They typically dislike political wrongdoing and are willing to switch partisan allegiances. Yet they rarely do so. When are voters able to initiate the expulsion of corrupt incumbents?


Week Ten, March 14: Equilibrium Shift as an Outcome of Intra-Elite Competition


## Checklist of Materials Due During Quarter

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Due date</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project memo</td>
<td>.pdf</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-analysis plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>List of pre-analysis plan deviations</td>
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