

GOVERNANCE, CORRUPTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Instructor

Maria Cucciniello, Course Director

maria.cucciniello@unibocconi.it

Associate Professor, Department of Social and Political Sciences

3-C1-14, Grafton Building

I. Objective and Learning Outcomes

The design and implementation of government policies depends on the actions and capacity of politicians and bureaucrats. For policies to be effective, they must be implemented according to programmatic criteria while avoiding leakage.

This course will familiarise Ph.D. students with the theory and practice of corruption, transparency and accountability in government, enabling them to critically address these questions and engage meaningfully in fast-moving contemporary policy debates. and how this can affect public sector governance and decision-making processes

During the course we will explore questions such as: Why do politicians and bureaucrats engage in corruption? Are anti-corruption bodies effective? Is “sunlight the best disinfectant”? Can information empower citizens to hold their government accountable? How have information technologies been used to enable civic engagement and participation? What are the relationships between transparency, secrecy, corruption, and accountability?

The course looks at the concept of corruption and transparency from different perspectives:

Overall, my aim in this course is to provide you with the foundations that will allow you to produce high-quality work that will make (or have the potential to make) an intellectual contribution to the field of Corruption and transparency in the public sector—work that will (ideally) aid in moving the field forward.

II. Course Organization

This class is primarily structured as a seminar. What is the difference between a seminar and (what you may be more familiar with) a lecture? A lecture generally has one main speaker (typically an instructor) presenting information. In lectures, students take notes on the speaker’s presentation. A seminar, on the other hand, has a facilitator (or, what I refer to as a “discussion lead” in this class); and, it involves active input and participation from everyone (both students and instructor(s) alike). Although there will be times where lectures will dominate our class sessions, most sessions will be

seminar-style in structure. That means, each student should come to class prepared to discuss the materials.

In an effort to organize the vast information in the growing field of Corruption and Transparency, this course is divided into several “Sections”

- I covers foundational concepts on corruption in the public sector, causes of public sector corruption and theories that explain corruption (lessons 1-2-3)
- II covers good governance and accountability as a way to curb corruption (lessons 5-6)
- III covers transparency in government, what it is, and its main effects (lessons 4-7-8)
- IV The role of AI in enhancing transparency and reducing corruption. (9-10)
- V You will present your work and the wrap-up of the course (lessons 11 -12)

Coursework and Grading

Coursework will be weighted as follows:

Your grade in this seminar will be based on your performance on three assignments (outlined below):

- Assignment 1: Active participation and Discussion Leader (30%)
- Assignment 2: Extended Conference Presentation (70%)

Assignment 1: Discussion Leader (30%)

Each student will lead at least one discussion. Discussion leaders should provide an overview of the readings, introduce questions and issues for examination, and facilitate the seminar discussion for that class session. Discussions should cover (what presenter’s believe to be) the most important and critical aspects of the readings for that class. This presentation should be approximately 30 minutes to 45 minutes in length.

It is the discussion leader’s responsibility to prepare and present the class with questions and observations that highlight the main issues, strengths, weaknesses, controversies, and gaps in the readings for that week (*students who are not serving as a discussion leader should come to class with at least two questions/comments on the readings in order to help facilitate discussions*). The role of a discussion leader requires an integrated and thorough understanding of the readings; however, each student is **also** expected to come fully prepared to engage the material and participate in the discussion.

Generally speaking, when you are responsible for leading the discussion of a topic—you are not responsible for finding and incorporating additional literature into your presentation (you may, however, find it helpful to do some additional reading for your own edification), but **you can relate to current research you’re conducting**

Assignment 2: Extended Conference Presentation (70%)

Each student will be responsible for making an “extended conference presentation” on a topic of their choosing. (Note: This should also be the topic of your final paper). The presentation should be approximately 30 – 45 minutes in length. This is your opportunity to deliver an **outline** of what you expect to focus on for your final research paper; as such, during the presentation, you *may* choose to focus on:

- Why this topic is important.
- What bodies of literature you will consult
- What theories you are considering.

- What previous research has shown.
- What methodologies do you believe are best suited to answer your research question(s).
- Issues/concerns you have, e.g., issues with access to data, theoretical/methodological concerns.
- Questions you have about your topic.

This will also be a good opportunity to flesh out possible proposal ideas for future Conferences or even for a future scholarly publication.

Session 1- Monday March 10th 8.30-10.00 and 10.15-11.45

Course overview and structure

What Is Corruption?

Almost everyone who studies it would agree that corruption is difficult to define and nearly impossible to measure. For the purpose of this course, “corruption involves the misuse of power by those who hold it—people who, in their official position, exploit the power with which they are entrusted by seeking private gain” (Golden and Fisman, 2017).

Corruption affects us all, and millions of people around the world protest against it every day. What is corruption? How do we know it when we see it? This session is designed to give you an understanding of both the definition and the key components of corruption.

Treisman, D. (2007). What have we learned about the causes of corruption from ten years of cross-national empirical research?. Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci., 10, 211-244.

Su, S., & Ni, X. (2021). Corruption in social relations: Bribe-taking, corruptibility, and corruption risks. Public Administration.

Session 3-4 Wednesday, March 12th 14.45-16.15 and 16.30-18.00

Theories that explain corruption

Corruption tends to be more prevalent in autocratic systems (where one person rules with unlimited authority), or oligarchies (rule by a small group of elites) Corruption exists in all societies and some would argue that you can minimize it, but never eliminate it anywhere. Despite this, a democratic system of government has some built-in mechanisms that keep corruption in check (*Heidenheimer and Johnston, 2002*).

In this sessions we will explore the extensive causes of public sector corruption and the typology of corruption theories.

Please read in advance:

Sulitzeanu-Kenan, R., Tepe, M., & Yair, O. (2022). Public-sector honesty and corruption: field evidence from 40 countries. Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 32(2), 310-325.

Moldogaziev, T. T., & Liu, C. (2021). Public sector corruption and perceived government performance in transition. Governance, 34(2), 475-504.

Discussion Leader 1 _____

Part 2

Part 2

A Guest Lecturer will present and discuss a paper with the class

Professor Robert Christensen

Professor Christensen the George W. Romney Professor of public and nonprofit administration in the MPA Program at the Romney Institute of Public Service and Ethics in the Marriott School of Management at Brigham Young University.

He specializes in public and nonprofit management and is interested in (1) public service employees and (2) public service organizations. His research has been published in *Public Administration Review*, *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, *Law & Society Review*, and *American Political Science Review*. His work has been covered in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and *Wall Street Journal*.

<https://marriott.byu.edu/directory/details?id=36271>

Session 5-6 Friday 14th 12.00-13.30 – 14.45-16.15

Can institutions of horizontal accountability serve to enable vertical accountability through electoral sanctioning? To reward or punish politicians retrospectively, voters require timely and credible information on their actions in office (e.g., Fiorina 1981; Przeworski, Stokes, and Manin 1999). A large literature investigates voter responses to information about corruption or the performance of incumbents (e.g., de Vries and Solaz 2017; Dunning et al., *Lessons from Metaketa I*, 2019; Healy and Malhotra 2013), including from audits by official oversight bodies suggesting financial malfeasance.

In this sessions we will discuss public accountability as one of the most important mechanisms to control corruption. Can officials (elected or otherwise) be exposed to public scrutiny and criticism for not meeting standards and for wrongdoing? Or, perhaps more importantly, can they lose their jobs or be put in jail?

Please read in advance:

Berliner, D., & Wehner, J. (2022). Audits for accountability: evidence from municipal by-elections in South Africa. *The Journal of Politics*, 84(3), 1581-1594.

Part 2

A Guest Lecturer will present and discuss a paper with the class

Daniel Berliner, LSE

Daniel Berliner is Associate Professor of Political Science and Public Policy Department of Government. His primary research focuses on the roles of information in politics and governance. This includes studying the impacts of information on both voter and bureaucratic behaviour; the politics of transparency, accountability, and participation reforms; and transnational multistakeholder governance reform initiatives. He studies these topics using both qualitative and quantitative methods, and both in Mexico, South Africa, the United States, and in global context

<https://www.lse.ac.uk/government/people/academic-staff/daniel-berliner>

Session 7-8 Monday 17th 14:45-16.15 - 16.30-18.00

The effects of transparency

Governments view transparency as a means of achieving an array of objectives and in particular to reducing public corruption and improving financial performance (Benito and Bastida 2009 ; Bertot, Jaeger, and Grimes 2010).

Transparent governance exists when citizens have a very clear idea of what their government is doing and how they are spending tax dollars. With transparency, decisions made by the government are known and the implementations of the decisions abide by rules and regulations that are freely available and understandable to those who are affected by the decisions and even the public. Such openness does matter, not only to lessening corruption, but also to instilling legitimacy and making a society less vulnerable to destabilization (Welch, Hinnant, and Moon 2005 ; Worthy 2010)

In this lessons, we will explore how the transparency concept has evolved in the public administration theory over the past 25 years and the key effects of transparency.

Please read in advance

Grimmelikhuijsen, S. G., & Meijer, A. J. (2014). Effects of transparency on the perceived trustworthiness of a government organization: Evidence from an online experiment. Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 24(1), 137-157.

Porumbescu, G., Bellé, N., Cucciniello, M., & Nasi, G. (2017). Translating policy transparency into policy understanding and policy support: Evidence from a survey experiment. Public Administration, 95(4), 990-1008.

Discussion Leader 2 _____

Part 2

A Guest Lecturer will present and discuss a paper with the class

Rebecca Kirley

Rebecca Kirley is a postdoctoral researcher in public administration at the University of Milan-Bicocca. In early 2024, [Name] successfully defended a PhD at Bocconi University.

The research focuses on how representative government can learn from and about the public through public administration. During the PhD she developed a novel perspective on learning from

civic challenges in service of representation, employing mixed methods to examine how public actors can gain insights through accountability processes initiated by members of the public and civil society organizations.

Strategies for mediating downstream citizen voice into policy and service ecosystems - what, how and why? (with Juan Pablo Ripamonti & Maria Cucciniello)

Lesson 9-10 Thursday March 20th 14.45-16.15 and 16.30-18.00

The role of AI in enhancing transparency and reducing corruption. (9-10)

Big Data is thought to have a global reach and exert a fundamental structural impact throughout society (McNeely and Hahm, 2014).

While the use of data in the public sector is not new, *the potential and actual use of Big Data applications affects aspects of the theoretical and practical considerations of decision-making in the public sector* (Giest, 2017).

We will discuss the link existing between Artificial Intelligence, transparency and public decision-making”.

Please read in advance

de Fine Licht, Karl, and Jenny de Fine Licht. "Artificial intelligence, transparency, and public decision-making." AI & society 35, no. 4 (2020): 917-926.

Young, M. M., Bullock, J. B., & Lecy, J. D. (2019). Artificial discretion as a tool of governance: a framework for understanding the impact of artificial intelligence on public administration.

Perspectives on Public Management and Governance, 2(4), 301-313.

[Discussion Leader 3](#) _____

Part 2

A Guest Lecturer will present and discuss a paper with the class

Stephan Grimmelikhuijsen

A Guest Lecturer will present and discuss a paper with the class

Dr. Stephan Grimmelikhuijsen, Utrecht University

Dr. Stephan Grimmelikhuijsen is Director of Research at the Utrecht University School of Governance. He is an associate professor of public management and associate editor at the Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory. His research and teaching focuses on: citizen trust, digitization (AI) in the public sector, government transparency, and behavioral public administration.

SESSION 11-12 : Thursday 10th April, 8.30-10.00 and 10.15-11.45

We will have the Extended Conference Presentation (70%) in this session.

Finally, we will summarize the course contents.