

Louisiana State University
Department of Political Science
POLI-4000 ▪ Spring 2018 Online

POLITICAL SCANDALS

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Course Description: Political scandals in American politics are nothing new. Joe Klein (1998) wrote that "in the past decade, political scandals have become the defining events of public life, often far more compelling and significant than elections." Today, political scandals are amplified by a "gotcha" political environment, increased political partisanship, 24-hour news cycle, the internet, and growth in social networks (i.e., Facebook and Twitter). Consequently, public awareness of scandals has grown. The purpose of this course is to examine the ways in which political scandals impact political institutions, the electorate, and the individual(s) involved.

Course Objectives: This course is to help students understand the complex nature of political scandals and its impact on political institutions, the electorate, and the individual(s) involved. By the end of the course you should be able to:

- define the differences between gossip, rumor, and political scandal;
- explain the rise and the seriousness of mediated scandal;
- describe the complexities of: political scandals, sex scandals, financial scandals, and power scandals; and
- discuss the implications of scandals on the various institutions of government.

Course Methods:

To reach these goals, you will:

- Read and discuss weekly assignments;
- Prepare an argument paper and a paper on a scandal; and
- Complete an exam that gauges competencies of course content

Basic Expectations:

You can expect me (the professor) to:

- Arrive on time and be prepared for class;
- Follow the syllabus and alert you in advance of any changes;
- Respond as quickly and as thoroughly as possible to your work and concerns; and
- Evaluate your work fairly according to clearly communicated expectations.

I expect you (the student) to:

- Be both prompt and prepared for class;
- Place all cell-phones, CD players, and MP3 players in your book-bag;
- Read and follow the written syllabus and ask any clarifying questions in advance;
- Take the initiative in communicating with me before problems get out of control; and
- Evaluate your own work according to the expectations of the course.

■ I'm happy to email with you about problems, questions, confusions or concerns about the class.

Policies & Procedures:

Missing an Examination- In the event of a missed exam the student should contact the professor as soon as possible. It is your responsibility to find me; do not expect me to track you down. You must take exams when they are scheduled. If miss you an examination due to an emergency (car accident, emergency room visit, sick child, or death in the family) you must: (1) contact me within 24 hours of your absence, and (2) provide written documentation of your absence.

Attendance & Participation- Class attendance is regarded as an obligation as well as a privilege, and all students are expected to attend regularly and punctually to all classes. Failure to do so may jeopardize your grade. Absences of military personnel are reported in accordance with university rules. These guidelines follow University policy as described in the general catalog. I encourage meaningful and positive class participation. Participation will heavily be considered at the end of the semester. Meaningful and positive class participation needs to be done in an organized matter. Please raise your hand to be acknowledged. Talking out of turn will not be tolerated. Please respect me and your colleagues when they are speaking.

Student Code of Conduct- Chatting (side conversations), reading the paper, sleeping, wearing personal stereos, playing with cell-phone, and generally not paying attention during lecture can be distracting not only to me but to your fellow classmates. Students who must leave earlier than the end of the class period should inform me before lecture begins; otherwise they will be "absent." Please do not pack-up before I indicate that class has been dismissed. Please turn off cell-phones before coming into class. I expect that you will maintain the highest standards of intellectual honesty in this class. Anyone involved in any act of academic dishonesty as outlined by the University's Student Conduct Code will be referred to the Dean of Students.

Students with disabilities: If you are seeking classroom accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act, you are required to register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS). The ODS is located in 112 Johnston Hall. Phone is 225/ 578-5919. To receive academic accommodations for this class, please obtain the proper ODS forms and meet with me at the beginning of the semester.

Copyright Statement- Students shall adhere to the laws governing the use of copyrighted materials. They must ensure that their activities comply with fair use and in no way infringe on the copyright or other proprietary rights of others and that the materials used and developed at Louisiana State University contain nothing unlawful, unethical, or libelous, and do not constitute any violation of any right of privacy.

Required Texts:

Political Scandal: Power and Visibility in the Media Age. John B. Thompson.
Polity (December 19, 2000).

Opposing Viewpoints Series - Political Scandals. William Dudley. Greenhaven Press
(September 1, 2000).

Evaluation:

■ Memos Questions (100 points): Each reading provides us with an opportunity to critically think. We will do this by way of Memo Question posts. You will have Memo Question posts due on Wednesdays, which are listed in the Course Assignments and Due Dates form—you will answer the questions I provide. These posts are due by the due date, 11:00pm CST. There will be a total of 10. Each Discussion Board post will be worth 10 points each. Responses **must include chapter citations.**

Criteria for responding to my Memo Questions (by 11:00pm CST) should:

1. include up to 4 to 5 supporting points (and at least 600 words), with an explanation of each point and cite the information from the book, with page numbers; and
2. be posted on Moodle by 11:00pm CST on the date the memo is due. For example, the first memo is due on Wednesday, Jan. 17 and must be submitted by 11:00pm CST that date. After 11:00pm CST, you will not have access.
3. **If you don't reach the 600-word limit, you will NOT receive credit. There are no partial points for assignments, IF you don't reach the 600 words limit.** So please take your time and explain your thoughts in detail. You must give equal attention to both parts of each question-factual and opinion parts. This will also prepare you for the essay exams.

****Memos should be typed (or copied and pasted) into the text box in Moodle**

■ President William Jefferson Clinton: Political Scandal Case PowerPoint Presentation (50 Points): The only two presidents to be impeached were Andrew Johnson (in 1868—House) and William Jefferson Clinton (in 1998—House). To be impeached (and convicted), a president must face trial both in the United States House of Representatives and in the Senate. You will examine the Clinton scandal from either “yes” he committed impeachable offenses or “no” he did not. It is your choice which side to support. Your PowerPoint presentation (which you will NOT actually present, but prepared as if you were) should include the following: a detailed background of the

case; issues surrounding the case; the rational for arguing either “yes” he committed impeachable offences or “no” he did not. On Moodle, you will be given access to the Prosecution’s Case File and While House Defense Case File. You are to use these sources to help make your case. **Therefore, grades will be based on, in large part, citing from these materials.** Remember, this is not an opinion paper. You must use the evidence provided to you to make your case—similar to an attorney making a case on the innocence of their client. Everyone must **submit presentations (PowerPoint format) on Moodle by 11pm on Wednesday, April 18.** After 11pm, you will NOT have access.

■ **Scandal Case Paper** (50 Points): You are to select a political scandal and write a paper using the concepts you’ve learned from the readings. I will provide a list of scandals on Moodle for you to choose from, or you can choose a more recent scandal. The paper should include the following: a detailed background of the case, issues surrounding the case, and the impact of the case. In addition, and most importantly, you should integrate the concepts discussed in the course. For example, you should be able to discuss the impact the case had on political institutions, the electorate, and the individual(s) involved. **Therefore, grades will be based on, in large part, citing concepts from course readings. The paper should be around 10 pages.** The paper will be **due by Monday, April 30.** Please submit your paper on Moodle by 11pm. After 11pm, you will NOT have access. If you are not prepared, you will receive a “0” for a grade.

■ **Exam** (100 Points): There will be one exam worth 100 points. These exams will include essay questions taken directly from my lectures and readings. In order to do well on the exams, you must answer all parts of a question and give detailed responses. Often, students do not receive full credit, because they simply list their answers or they just write one sentence. In the directions, it will state clearly to please explain answers in-detail. Simply writing one sentence or listing is not answering questions in-detail. As a word of advice, when a question is worth 10, 15, and 20 points, it means more is required in terms of explanation. Please do not just write one or two sentences, because that is not enough to receive full credit. The exams will be **due on Wednesday, March 21 by 11pm.** Upload the Word document as an attachment on Moodle.

Grading Scale: In order to calculate your grade, you will divide your total points earned by the total points allowed--which is 300 points.

The following grading scale will be used to determine the letter grade for the course:

Letter Grade	From	To
A+	97	100
A	93	96.99
A-	90	92.99
B+	87	89.99
B	83	86.99
B-	80	82.99
C+	77	79.99
C	73	76.99
C-	70	72.99
D+	67	69.99
D	63	66.99
D-	60	62.99
F	0	59.99

Course Schedule: Subject to Change

Class Meetings and Due Dates:	Readings and Assignments:
Wednesday, January 17	<p>BK: Thompson, <u>Political Scandal: Power and Visibility</u> Read: Chapter 1</p> <p>Memo Question 1: Select two recent scandal cases, and discuss what makes the cases you selected a scandal that is “<i>sufficiently serious</i>” to elicit a public response? Select a political scandal and discuss it with respect to the ingredients of a scandal. Hint: Refer to Figure 1.1 and Figure 1.2 in your book.</p>
Wednesday, January 24	<p>BK: Thompson, <u>Political Scandal: Power and Visibility</u> Read: Chapter 2</p> <p>Memo Question 2: What are the possible advantages and disadvantages of the diffusion of information communication technologies (radio, internet, cell phones, and social media) in mediated scandals? Do you believe the increase in mediated scandals are helping or hurting our view of government and its leaders?</p>
Wednesday, January 31	<p>BK: Thompson, <u>Political Scandal: Power and Visibility</u> Read: Chapter 3</p> <p>Memo Question 3: Describe the four phases of mediated scandal. Why do media get involved in the creation of scandals? Why do those accused of scandal sometimes choose denial as a first response? Who benefits from scandal?</p>
Wednesday, February 7	<p>BK: Thompson, <u>Political Scandal: Power and Visibility</u> Read: Chapter 4</p> <p>Memo Question 4: Describe the five underlying reasons for the growing prevalence of political scandals. Why is political scandal more prevalent today? Which factors do you believe is most responsible? Explain why a scandal might be seen as a distraction, a legitimate check on power, and a form of entertainment?</p>
Wednesday, February 21	<p>BK: Thompson, <u>Political Scandal: Power and Visibility</u> Read: Chapter 5</p> <p>Memo Question 5: Define sexual scandals? Do you think the public should be made aware of the sexual indiscretions of political figures? Make an argument as to why sexual scandals should disqualify and not disqualify a politician from holding office.</p>
Wednesday, February 28	<p>BK: Thompson, <u>Political Scandal: Power and Visibility</u> Read: Chapter 6</p> <p>Memo Question 6: Define financial scandals? Describe the number of developments that led to a rise in conflict of interest cases? Do you think the public should be made aware of the financial indiscretions of political figures? Make an argument as to why financial scandals should disqualify and not disqualify a politician from holding office.</p>
Wednesday, March 7	<p>BK: Thompson, <u>Political Scandal: Power and Visibility</u> Read: Chapter 7</p> <p>Memo Question 7: Define power scandals? Do you think the public should be made aware of the power indiscretions of political figures? Make an argument as to why financial scandals should disqualify and not disqualify a politician from holding office.</p>
Wednesday, March 14	<p>BK: Thompson, <u>Political Scandal: Power and Visibility</u> Read: Chapter 8</p> <p>Memo Question 8: Referring to the book, describe the four theories of scandal and its consequences—both arguments supporting and opposing each of the theories. In addition, describe the social theory of scandal. Should a voter be concerned with the character of a politician? Or, should more of emphasis be placed on competence? Or, should both be equally important? Explain your thoughts.</p>
Wednesday, March 21	<p>Exam 1 (upload Word Document to Moodle by 11pm)</p>
Wednesday, April 4	<p>BK: Dudley, <u>Opposing Viewpoints Series - Political Scandals</u> Read: Chapter 2</p> <p>Memo Question 9: Does <i>greater public exposure of private lives of politicians benefit America</i>?</p>

Course Schedule: Subject to Change

Wednesday, April 11	BK: Dudley, <u>Opposing Viewpoints Series - Political Scandals</u> Read: Chapter 4 Video: Justice for Sale: An Investigation into how Campaign Cash is Corrupting American's Courts http://www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/02192010/watch.html Memo Question 10: Should <i>private campaign contributions be more strictly regulated</i> ?
Wednesday, April 18	Clinton Scandal PowerPoint Presentation Due (upload PowerPoint to Moodle by 11pm)
Monday, April 30	Scandal Case Paper Due (upload Word Document to Moodle by 11pm) Course Evaluations Due