

**Corruption, Scandal & Political Ethics****Credit Weighting:** .5**Pre-/Co-Requisites:** None**Restrictions:** None**INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION****Name:** David MacDonald**Email:** dmacdo03@uoguelph.ca**Office Location:** 508 MacKinnon**GENERAL DETAILS**

Online via the Quizzes tool in CourseLink using Respondus LockDown Browser and Monitor. This course approaches political corruption and ethics from two directions – the theoretical and the practical. Students will draw on assigned readings and videos, weekly written comments and material, short videos from the founder of the course the late Geoff Stevens, and news coverage in newspapers and on television. The internet will be a valuable resource for detailed and current information about some of the subjects. Students will be asked to pay particular attention to social media and the roles that “fake news” and other forms of disinformation are assuming in election campaigns.

The subject matter ranges from historical (Canada's first great political scandal, the Canadian Pacific Railway Scandal of the 1870s, which led to the defeat of the Sir John A. Macdonald's Conservative government) to contemporary – including the use of social media by unscrupulous politicians who are intent on misleading and manipulating the electorate. In between, we will look at such controversies as the Profumo sex-and-security scandal in 1960s Britain, the Diefenbaker-era Munsinger affair in Canada, the 1970s Watergate scandal in Washington DC that destroyed the presidency of Richard Nixon, the highly publicized Bill Clinton-Monica Lewinsky affair, and the scandal-ridden presidencies of Donald J. Trump. We will also examine a range of Canadian scandals, including the Sponsorship affair, the Toronto computer-leasing scandal, the Airbus scandal involving former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and lobbyist Karlheinz Schreiber, and the Maxime Bernier-Julie Couillard security controversy. We will also look at some more recent controversies involving the former Trudeau Liberal government for example: SNC Lavalin, the WE Charity, and PR China's election interference in Canada. This

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. Understand what scandal means, and how to subjectively differentiate a scandal from a political incident of lesser significance.
2. Understand what corruption is, how it can be defined, and how corruption impacts the political system;
3. Understand the settler-colonial political and economic context of Canada, within which corruption takes place.
4. Analyze corruption in a historical context and recognize the difference between corrupt behaviour and conduct that is merely outrageous or shocking;
5. Explain the ethical dilemmas and conflicts inherent in political life for all public office holders;
6. Assess actual situations, including war and national security crises, when political leaders find themselves compromising their ethical standards in the interest of the public good;
7. Evaluate the mechanisms employed in Canada to achieve transparency, accountability and honest government;
8. Assess the ability of the news media to serve as “society's watchdog”; and define the impact of social media and AI on the political system.

**METHOD OF ASSESSMENT**

Course Assessments  
Assessment Item Weight Learning Outcomes  
Short Essay 20% 1-2  
Term Paper 30% 3  
Debate (1) 15% 1-7  
Quizzes (10 x 1.5%) 15% 1-7  
Online Final Exam 20% 1-7

**REQUIRED READING**

All resources for this course can be found within the Courselink site. There are no costs for required or recommended textbooks or learning resources for students in this course.