PLSC 450: Capstone Seminar: Abuse of Power in Politics  
Department of Political Science, Brigham Young University

Instructor Information
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Office Hours: 10:30-12 MW & by appt  
Class Locations: SWKT 793  
Class Times: MW 9-10:15am

Course Overview and Objectives
This course is a writing course. In this course, you will learn how to complete an article-length research project. You will need to use skills you gained in previous political science courses to select an appropriate research question; design a research project; locate materials to help you in your research; write and revise multiple drafts; and use appropriate evidence to make your case. You will work with your classmates to give and receive appropriate feedback on your work at various stages of development as well as receiving guidance from the professor. You will also present your findings in a high-quality oral presentation. This course is an opportunity for you to choose a topic that you find interesting and important and learn and teach others something new about it. Though you are not required to do quantitative analysis in this class and many questions are best answered through other methods, it is inappropriate to avoid quantitative analysis when that would be the best or one of the better methods of answering your research question.

The content aspect of the course focuses on the abuse of power in politics. Governments must have power in order to govern. Many discussions of political institutions debate how best to limit the powers of government, but experience has sadly shown that governments are often able to exercise power in ways that are outside of the legitimate scope of government; make use of that power for personal gain of politicians; or abuses the basic rights of some of the state’s subjects. This course examines some of the ways that governments (and the people in them) can and do use their powers in ways that those they govern would not choose. We begin with relatively benign abuses of power and move on to total disregard for the lives and freedoms of the governed.

Assignments and Grading
This course does not include either tests or quizzes. The readings and class discussions will be helpful for your research, but it is possible that your chosen research topic will not directly relate to the topics in the course readings. However, they should be beneficial for you because they will give you a broad understanding of the issues of abusing and preventing the abuse of power that you would miss if you concentrated only on the narrow topic of your research paper. They will be useful to you as you define and think through conceptual issues that are important in designing your research and framing your questions. The assignments for this course are as follows:
1) Brief Research Proposal: Submit a typed one-page explanation of the topic related to the course you are interested in researching for your paper and why. Due Jan 15. 2%

2) Annotated Bibliography: For this assignment, you will need to identify 20 or more pieces of academic writing (journals articles, books, working papers, government policy papers, etc. You may use news articles from high quality newspapers if your topic is very current, but these cannot make up more than 5 of your twenty sources. You are welcome to use more than 5, but you must still have at least 15 academic sources.) An annotated bibliography is not simply a list of citations. The annotation is at least one paragraph includes a summary, assessment, and reflection of how/why this piece informs your research. You also need to organize the literature thematically according to what bodies of literature it address. You will receive instructions in class. For some preliminary guidance, check out https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/01/. Due Feb 3. 8%

3) Research Proposal: This should follow the instruction you received on qualitative or quantitative research designs in PL SC 200. You must address your research question, provide a relevant and analytical literature review, discuss how your research will contribute to the existing literature, identify your data sources, and describe how you will analyze them. You will receive instructions in class. Due Feb 18. 10%

4) Peer Review of the Research Proposal: You will make extensive marginal comments and detailed final comments on the paper. Include both praise and criticism as appropriate. You may correct grammar, but your focus should be on the style of writing and the content of the proposal. Is it clear what question they want to answer and how they propose to answer it? Does the method they have selected for presenting empirical evidence seem appropriate for the topic? Do you think it is convincing? Are there alternative hypotheses they should be considering? Do they need more carefully to define a concept? Peer reviews that are too brief, ignore either ideas or writing style, or are incorrect, confusing or offensive will not receive good grades for this assignment. Apply the golden rule here—be as helpful to the author as you want your reviewers to be to you. Due Feb 4. 2%

5) Draft of Paper: Notice this does not say “rough draft” or “first draft.” Revision is an essential part of good writing. For this assignment, I expect a complete and relatively polished draft so that I can provide useful feedback. Due March 24th. 15%

6) Peer Review of Draft Paper: The standards for this review are the same as those listed above for the peer review of the research proposal. Due March 31st. 5%

7) Oral Presentation: Each student will give a 6-7 minute presentation in class. The presentation must be polished, concise, and targeted to a general audience. Your classmates will then have 2-3 minutes to ask you questions. You will be graded on standards posted on Learning Suite and your response to questions that follow your presentation. April 7, 9, 14 in class (sign-ups will occur March 24th in class). 8%

8) Final Paper: This should be an improved and revised version of your Draft Paper. Final papers that do not address issues raised by peers or the professor in the draft will be penalized. Due April 21st by 1:59pm (uploaded to Learning Suite). 40%

9) Class participation: For every class, at least one student will introduce and summarize readings. I will not summarize readings for you. Students will lead each discussion. We will have sign-ups to schedule when you lead discussion on the first day of class. You should be able to state the major points that each author is making and explain why the
reading is significant. Prepare at least 2 discussion questions for your classmates to discuss in seminar. Even if you are not scheduled to introduce/summarize for a given class meeting, in a class this size, you should expect to talk in class every time we meet and be able to answer questions about all of the assigned readings. If you miss class, come late, are unprepared, or your comments do not meet expectations, your grade will suffer. **10%**

Final letter grades will be assigned using the following scale: A (94-100), A- (90-93.99), 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 (65-67), D- (60-64), and F (59 and below).

If you have reason to believe that a grading error has been made, you must submit a detailed argument in writing, outlining why you believe your grade to be in error; a clean copy of the assignment you originally submitted; and the returned copy of the assignment (with notes and the original grade). You must submit these within 10 days of receiving your grade-- after that, I will assume you have accepted the grade assigned.

**Civility**

Please mind your manners in class. This means that you should arrive promptly, avoid surfing the internet or reading newspapers during class, avoid packing up bags prior to the end of class, and refrain from talking/texting on cell phones during class. It also means that you will be civil in all discussions. Each class member should feel free to express an opinion. Lively debate is intellectually stimulating and healthy. Demeaning another class member or making derogatory generalizations about any group of people are unacceptable behaviors.

**Academic Integrity**

While all students sign the honor code, there are still specific skills most students need to master over time in order to correctly cite sources, especially in this new age of the internet; as well as deal with the stress and strain of college life without resorting to cheating. Please know that as your professor I will notice instances of cheating on exams or plagiarizing on papers. General information about the honor code can be found at honorcode.byu.edu. Details about Academic Honesty are found at [http://saas.byu.edu/catalog/2010-2011ucat/GeneralInfo/HonorCode.php](http://saas.byu.edu/catalog/2010-2011ucat/GeneralInfo/HonorCode.php).

Writing submitted for credit at BYU must consist of the student's own ideas presented in sentences and paragraphs of his or her own construction. The work of other writers or speakers may be included when appropriate (as in a research paper or book review), but such material must support the student's own work (not substitute for it) and must be clearly identified by appropriate introduction and punctuation and by footnoting or other standard referencing. The substitution of another person's work for the student's own or the inclusion of another person's work without adequate acknowledgment (whether done intentionally or not) is known as plagiarism. It is a violation of academic, ethical, and legal standards and can result in a failing grade not only for the paper but also for the course in which the paper is written. In extreme cases, it can justify expulsion from the University. Because of the seriousness of the possible consequences, students who wonder if their papers are within these guidelines should visit the Writing Lab or consult a faculty member who specializes in the teaching of writing or who specializes in the subject discussed in the paper. Useful books to consult on the topic include the
current Harbrace College Handbook, the MLA Handbook, and James D. Lester's Writing Research Papers.

**Discrimination**
Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination against any participant in an educational program or activity that receives federal funds. The act is intended to eliminate sex discrimination in education. Title IX covers discrimination in programs, admissions, activities, and student-to-student sexual harassment. BYU’s policy against sexual harassment extends not only to employees of the university but to students as well. If you encounter unlawful sexual harassment or gender based discrimination, please talk to your professor; contact the Equal Employment Opportunities Office at 422-5895 or 367-5689 (24-hours); or contact the Honor Code Office at 422-2847.

**Access**
Brigham Young University is committed to providing a working and learning atmosphere which reasonably accommodates qualified persons with disabilities. If you have any disability which may impair your ability to complete this course successfully, please contact the University Accessibility Center (422-2767). Reasonable academic accommodations are reviewed for all students who have qualified documented disabilities. Services are coordinated with the student and instructor by the UAC office. If you need assistance or if you feel you have been unlawfully discriminated against on the basis of disability, you may seek resolution through established grievance policy and procedures. You should contact the Equal Employment Opportunity Office at 422-5895, D-282 ASB.

**Readings**
These books are the main texts of the course:


**Introduction: Power and Politics**
Jan 8: What is Power?
- Mosiah 29
Jan 13: Where is the line between use of power and abuse of power? What are legitimate vs. illegitimate uses of state power? Where does government legitimacy come from?

- John Locke, “Second Treatise on Government” Chapters 8 and 9, pp. 61-75
- D&C 121:39
- D&C 134

Jan 15: What can be done? If a state oversteps its bounds, what options are there for control?

- Henry David Thoreau, “Civil Disobedience Part 1” 1849
- Article of Faith 12

Brief Research Proposal Due

**Abuse of Power Type I: Use of Political/Governmental Office in Pursuit of Interests other than the Common Good**

**Agency Problems**

Jan 22:


Jan 27:


**Rent Seeking**

Jan 29:

Feb 3:
- Parker (continued)

Annotated Bibliography Due

**Corruption**

Feb 5: Rose-Ackerman, chs. 1, 3, 6-7.

Feb 10:
- Elf Acquitaine: [http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2003/nov/13/france.oilandpetrol](http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2003/nov/13/france.oilandpetrol)
- Moises Naim, “Mafia States” Foreign Affairs 91(3)

Feb 12:

Feb 18: Constraining Corruption: Rose-Ackerman, chs. 4, 8-9, 11
Research Proposal Due

Feb 19:

**Abuse of Power Type 2: State Policies and Practices that Disenfranchise or Violate Rights**

Feb 24:

Peer Review of Research Proposal Due.

Feb 26:
• Constanze Letsch, “Kurds in Turkey” *The Guardian* 28 December 2011
• “A foreigner in her own home” *The Economist* March 10, 2011.

March 3: Gaventa chs. 1-3

March 5: Gaventa, chs. 4-6

March 10: Gaventa 7, 10
• Starbuck, William. 1999. \Fussy Professor Starbuck's Cookbook of Handy-Dandy Prescriptions for Ambitious Academic Authors."

March 12: No Class. Individual Meetings with Professor Beesley to discuss drafts.

March 17:
• Maud S. Beelman “The Dangers of Disinformation in the war on Terrorism” Neiman Reports

**Totalitarianism**
March 19: Arendt, “The Totalitarian Movement”

March 24: Arendt, “Totalitarianism in Power”
Draft Due

March 26: Demick, Chapters 1-6

March 31: Demick, Chs 7-13
Peer Review of Draft Due
April 2: Demick, Chs 14- Epilogue

April 7: Oral Presentations
April 9: Oral Presentations
April 14: Oral Presentations

Final Draft Due April 21st.