

**CRIM 490-DL3: Public Corruption Law and Case Studies**  
**Spring 2024**  
**George Mason University**  
**Tuesday 4:30 pm – 7:10 pm, Online – Zoom through GMU Blackboard**

**Professor and Contact:**

Professor: Mr. Richard M. Denholm II, J.D.

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**Course Description:**

This course introduces students to the concepts of corruption in government including the laws used to combat corrupt officials and those who corrupt them. This course reviews well-known corruption investigations and prosecutions and the key laws used to prosecute corrupt officials.

Students will gain an understanding of fact patterns pointing to a corrupt governmental system and the actors in the corrupt system. It is taught from the perspective of the professor who spent almost 27 years working for the United States Government with over 22 years as an FBI Special Agent and Supervisory Special Agent investigating major public corruption cases across the United States and four years as an Enforcement Attorney at the United States Federal Election Commission. By the conclusion of this course, students will be able to list key statutes used to combat corruption, recognize high profile corruption cases, and recognize patterns of corruption. This course focuses on possible methods law enforcement could use to combat corruption in government organized around federal public corruption, state and local corruption, police corruption, and foreign business corruption combatted by the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. This course will also discuss important issues facing the United States today for example police brutality and civil rights investigations.

**Required Textbook:**

**Investigating and Prosecuting Corruption An Anthology**

1<sup>st</sup> Edition – Cognella, Inc.

By Richard M. Denholm II

ISBN 978-1793539656

Publication Date July 21, 2023

Please ensure you are purchasing the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition. This book may be purchased through the GMU Bookstore or Cognella Publishing. A digital version will be available. You may purchase your course material here: <https://store.cognella.com/>. If you need any help with ordering from Cognella, feel free to email [orders@cognella.com](mailto:orders@cognella.com) or call 858-552-1120.

Additional readings may be assigned and will be posted to Blackboard. You are responsible for reviewing all materials in Blackboard, especially all material in the Content Section. You will be tested on materials in Content as well as information presented in class.

**Course Format:**

This class is Synchronous and will meet in **Zoom**. The Zoom tab is in Blackboard for our class. Class will mainly be presented online and in lecture format, but attendance and participation are required and form a part of your grade. Corresponding materials will be posted on Blackboard throughout the course or emailed to the students. The posted materials on Blackboard may not necessarily be identical to those presented in class. Therefore, attending lectures on a regular basis will be beneficial to your grade in this course.

I expect you to attend class. At the start of each class, I will tell you the code for Qwickly attendance and you will enter that code into Qwickly to record your attendance. If you are making excuses as to why you are not attending, it may reduce your final grade. I do accept communication and discussion if you are having an issue. I do not accept excuses after the fact. If you do not respond to my emails or read announcements and follow instructions, your grade will be significantly reduced.

Again, if you fail to turn in projects on time or show up for exams, this will go in as a O in the grade book. Do not email with excuses afterwards.

**Office hours:** By appointment (Email me or text me and I will make myself available)

**Email and Communication:**

As I have noted throughout this document, please check your Mason email and Blackboard. The Syllabus is the controlling document of this course, but I often supplement it with Blackboard ANNOUNCEMENTS, emails, and comments in the class. You are responsible for reading and understanding all documents. I always copy ANNOUNCEMENTS as emails to the entire class. If you do not understand something, just ask me. I do not tolerate students saying they did not follow instructions and/or they did not read the Syllabus, emails, or ANNOUNCEMENTS. I appreciate it when you take the time to respond saying you have seen and understand my communications.

I expect you to monitor your email and respond. This is part of the professional development keys to this course. I expect you to read your emails and announcements I make in Blackboard and respond as necessary and/or take action as necessary. I do want you to succeed. I sometimes (rarely) will send you an email if I notice you were late with an assignment or not taking the exam. If you do not reply, **I will deduct at least 25 points from your final, overall grade in addition to the additional, significant point losses discussed herein.**

See <https://masonlive.gmu.edu> for information on how to use your account. In an emergency, if you need to use a different email address please notify me or set up forwarding to that address. I check my email frequently and it is the quickest way to reach me.

**Course Policies:**

**You are responsible for knowing all required dates in this Syllabus including dates assignments are due and exam dates. If you do not attend an exam on the day set or fail to turn in an assignment when due, you will receive a 0 on the exam or assignment. I do not consider excuses for missing**

**assignments or exams.** I pay close attention to the dates in this document and expect you to do so as well.

I do quickly input final grades at the end of the semester and will not change grades. If you receive a lower grade than you expect on an assignment or exam, the answer would have been to work hard during the semester and study before the exam. I do NOT give extra credit. I do not accept requests to change grades or to give extra credit. I do not round up. The grades below are generated from the Grade Center and the various exams and projects count for a number of points and are weighted. If your grade is 89.95, that will be a B+. I do not round up to 90, etc. If your score is a 75.65, that is a C. I will not round up to a 76. These are just examples of anything that could happen this semester. You earn the points you earn by studying, listening, taking notes, outlining the material, attending and participating, and scoring high on assignments and exams.

Final grades will be entered into the Registrar's system immediately after the final exam and grades and will not be changed.

I have created the materials in this course for your use during this course. **These materials are not to be reproduced in any other format and may not be posted online or shared in any way outside of this course.** This especially applies to exams. I will record classes in Zoom and you will be able to review these recordings after each class. As this is an online class, students need to have laptops or other technology to be able to log into Blackboard and Zoom to attend and participate in class. Students should log into class at least five minutes before class and ensure your audio and cameras are working. I keep my camera on and expect students to be on camera as well. I try to make this as close to a real classroom as possible.

Again, **please have your cameras turned on during class and the audio muted until you plan to speak.** If you have a question or comment, you **must use the "raise hand" button** found on the toolbar in Zoom. As we will be on camera, please aware of your surroundings and the background of the camera view and also be respectful in your dress and appearance. Please be respectful of your peers and instructor and do not engage in activities that are unrelated to class.

**The exams will be open book and open note and you can use notes you take during classes as well as use the recordings I make of each class. These will be stored in Zoom. You must do your own work and not communicate with anyone during the exam. You may not use Quizlet or any other Internet site or App that could be viewed as cheating. The materials in this course were created by me only for your use in this course. You may not copy and/or post any materials outside of this course, period.** You may not post exams or notes online. Government corruption is a violation of laws and ethics so do not violate the GMU Honor Code or the rules of my class by cheating. This would demonstrate you do not understand the concepts being taught in this course and will result in a failing grade.

**On another note, the point values are clearly articulated in this document. As noted throughout, I do not give extra credit.** I do not accept requests to bump up any grades because you believe you tried, worked hard, have a scholarship, or you work two jobs to get through school, etc. The grades and points are assigned in this document and we all must follow these. I can't bump up your grade by a couple points just because. This is not how it works. The way it works is to come to class, study hard, participate, follow instructions and do a good job on the exams and papers. If you do this, a higher grade may result.

**Attendance/Class Participation:**

Class attendance is mandatory and will impact your grade. I will take attendance during each class using **the Quickly Attendance** tool in Blackboard. I will provide you the attendance code when class starts and you must enter that code into Quickly to receive attendance credit. When Blackboard provides the log in code for attendance, this code is to be used by you only. You can provide the code to someone in class, but do not give the code to a student who does not show up in class and then asks you for the code in order to log an attendance when they were not in class. Again, please ensure you are online in the class several minutes before the start to assist me with taking attendance.

I understand work schedules and related issues, but this course should be your priority and attendance is required. You should ensure you are available during our block of class instruction. If you have an issue, contact me ahead of time to discuss. Do not skip classes and/or fail to communicate with me as you will lose significant points in this course.

**The key is communication. If I think you are not communicating, not paying attention, not following instructions, etc., I will reduce your grade by at least one full letter.** You should have your camera on during classes. Use the raise your hand tool in Zoom if you wish to say something, and I expect students to ask questions and add value to the course.

**Honor Code:**

George Mason University has an Honor Code, which requires all members of this community to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. All students are expected to be familiar with this Honor Code. Cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing are prohibited. I program the exams to end at certain times and I can monitor these and when students are finished. If the exam does not automatically stop at the allotted time, students are responsible to monitor the time and stop at the end time. Students must monitor their GMU email as I will send notices throughout the exam, especially noting when it has ended. Failure to stop at the allotted time could be construed as cheating. All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee. See [honorcode.gmu.edu](http://honorcode.gmu.edu) for more detailed information.

**Students with Disabilities:**

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodation, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Resources at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodation must be arranged through that office. Again, if you believe you have an impediment to your learning, you need to talk to the Disability Resources Office at the above number, they will assist you with a plan, and give me a document in writing to attempt to assist you. If you are feeling stressed, anxious or any other feelings that are hindering you, please seek assistance through GMU's resources. Do not simply stop attending class and/or stop communicating with your professors. **If you do not follow these procedures, I will not be able to make any accommodation for you.**

**Add/Drop Period and Spring 2024 Calendar:**

Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in class. Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Schedule of Classes. Available from the Registrar's Website at [registrar.gmu.edu](http://registrar.gmu.edu). After the last day to drop a class, withdrawing from the class requires the approval of the dean and is only allowed for nonacademic reasons. Undergraduate students may choose to exercise

a selective withdrawal.

See the Schedule of Classes for selective withdrawal procedures.

Please review the full GMU Spring 2024 calendar.

### Grading:

**Your final grade will be calculated with four weighted components as follows:** The below factors are in addition to my rules, policies, and comments in this document above and throughout. I will enforce these policies as I require. The way to earn a good grade in my class is to attend, read, take notes and make outlines of the materials for yourself, participate in the class and do not be a distraction, turn in your assignments on time and in good form meeting all requirements, and answering correctly questions on the exams. I may also reduce your grade and/or remove points from you based on the information I set out above in this document.

1. Attendance/**Participation**: 15 points (15% of your grade) – missing 2 classes will result in only 5 points being awarded and I will lower your final grade by an additional ½ grade (e.g., A to A- or B- to C+) – missing 3 classes or more will result in 0 points here and I will also lower your grade by one full letter grade. I will keep track of whether you are participating and attending class and will assess this as part of your final grade.
2. Exam #1 Midterm (30 points/30% of your grade)
3. Exam #2 Final (35 points/35% of your grade)
4. Two research papers (10 points each/20% of your grade) – **NOTE** – If you miss one of the key requirements listed below, you will receive 0 points on your papers. Also, if you demonstrate a lack of effort, poor organization, writing or editing skills, you will lose points. There is a rubric in the Grade Section listing the points for the papers.

I also consider things that impede, disrupt, detract or distract the class as part of this e.g. demonstrating you are not reading the Syllabus, materials or demonstrating an inability to follow instructions (for example turning in projects on the wrong topic), not fully participating, not returning emails when I send these to you, never turning on your camera in Zoom or speaking, not raising your hand in Zoom when you want to speak, will result in a reduction in your grade. This is not an exhaustive list. The point is that communicating is critically important in the government, business, or any professional employment. I watch your communication skills during this class and it can impact your grade. I expect you to begin practicing professional communication and conduct in this course. I can lower your grade by at least one full letter grade if I determine you are doing any of the above.

You will be able to see your grades in Blackboard as completed and I will post midterm and final grades in GMU's system immediately after the exams and will not be able to change grades.

### **Grading Scale:**

Letter Grade	Total Points
A+	97 – 100
A	93 – 96
A -	90 – 92
B+	86 – 89
B	82 – 85
B-	80 – 81
C+	76 – 79
C	72 – 75
C-	70 – 71
D	65 – 69
F	64 and Below

### **Exams:**

The midterm and final exams will be open book, open notes (your own notes), and will be multiple choice and True/False. You may use materials from class, materials I posted in Blackboard, class recordings from Blackboard Collaborate Ultra, or the textbook. You **may not** collaborate, text, email, call other students during the exams. **You may not use outside resources such as Quizlet, tests you may find posted online, Google or researching the Internet or GMU Library during the exams.** Collaboration is great in law enforcement and the intelligence community but not on exams in this course.

Make-up exams will only be given under exceptional, unavoidable circumstances with proper documentation. If you know in advance that you will have to miss an exam, please notify me ASAP. Taking an exam late may result in a penalty.

### **Research Papers:**

Students will complete two research papers during this course, and the due dates are listed below. I do use a rubric to grade these. You can see the rubric in your grade list.

Each paper will be **three pages in length (single spaced) including footnotes or endnotes for citations.** Each paper will be a research and writing project regarding any corruption case you find interesting. I will be grading all aspects of the reports including grammar, punctuation, and spelling in addition to the substance. Students must write clearly and concisely. If you do not follow these instructions, I will deduct at least 6 points from the total points of these reports.

**I will also be grading based on the criteria below:** Again, if you miss **one** of these in your papers, you will receive **0 points on your paper.**

Each paper will demonstrate your understanding of the key concepts of the corruption investigation and prosecution of a government official including: **You must specifically write about each one of these**

points. If you miss one, you will receive a zero on the paper. Use these bullet points to organize your papers.

**Hint:** You may want to use these as headings in your papers so I know you addressed each. If you do not follow these instructions, you may receive zero points and I do not accept excuses for not following instructions.

- the type of scheme involved in the corruption (bribe, extortion, government fraud)
- the level of government of the government official(s) (local, state federal)
- the branch of government (executive, legislative, judicial) what were the charges filed by the government, what statutes were used for the prosecution? Was the defendant or defendants not charged, and why?
- students will note problems that may have occurred during the investigation and prosecution (for example, was the government accused of wrongdoing during the investigation and/or prosecution. If yes, describe in detail) and
- whether the outcome was a conviction, prison sentence, acquittal.
- what were the defenses introduced by the defendant?

#### **Privacy Policy:**

Please respect the privacy of any students (and the instructor) who may disclose personal information in the class. Please respect everyone's right to freely choose whether to disclose or not disclose personal information.

#### **Bad Weather and Other Emergencies:**

Check Mason's homepage at [www.gmu.edu](http://www.gmu.edu) or call GMU's closing line at 703-993-1000 to see if classes are cancelled for inclement weather or other emergency circumstances. You can also register for Mason's emergency alert system at <https://alert.gmu.edu>. I expect as an online course we will continue with most classes despite the weather, but we will follow university guidance. If I have to cancel class due to an emergency, I will attempt to email you ASAP at your GMU email address. I encourage you to check your GMU email the night before class or the morning of to ensure there have been no cancellations.

**Notice of Mandatory reporting of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking:** As a faculty member, I am designated as a "Responsible Employee," and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason's Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1202. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason's confidential resources, such as Student Support Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703-380-1434 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 703-993-2380. You may also seek assistance from Mason's Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing [titleix@gmu.edu](mailto:titleix@gmu.edu).

#### **Course Schedule**

This is the intended course schedule. As the semester progresses and evolves, some of these dates and scheduled items may change due to weather closures, emergencies, guest speakers' schedules, or other circumstances. Changes will be provided as necessary and as soon as possible.



Keys to this course:

- Read and know the **required** textbook cited above. We will discuss many of the concepts and specific information but outlining it and having a good understanding of the terms in the book will enhance your knowledge of corruption and certainly help on assignments and tests.
- Review the PowerPoint outlines of key concepts and questions I will place in the Content section of this course in Blackboard, and
- Review and understand the lectures and the additional PowerPoints used in class and which will be maintained as recordings in Blackboard's Zoom.
- The exams will be open book and open note. It is highly recommended you read all the materials and outline key points before the exams. Students who do not do this and then try to sift through all of the material on the exam generally do not achieve high scores on the exams.
- You must meet time deadlines and the administrative requirements listed in this Syllabus and other instructions I provide to you during this course.
- Communicate!

In addition to reviewing the chapter information, the classroom sessions will include lectures, guest lectures, discussion, and case studies. Ask questions! Provide input!

Tues Jan. 16 Introductions and Welcome to the course – Review of Syllabus, Goals, Objectives, and Expectations – Discussion of path to FBI

What is Corruption and the Basics

Tues Jan.23 What is Corruption and the Basics

Tues Jan. 30 What is Corruption and The Long War Against Corruption

Tues Feb. 6 What is Corruption Bribery of Domestic Officials

The Hobbs Act **(First Research Paper Due)**

Tues Feb. 13 [Honest Services Fraud](#)

The Speech or Debate Clause and Renzi

Tues Feb. 20 *Citizens United*

Inspectors General – Traits and the case of SNF Billing

Tues Feb. 27 Mid Term Exam During Class Time – No other class work this day



- Tues Mar. 5     SPRING BREAK ALL WEEK – NO CLASSES
- Tues Mar. 12    State and Local Corruption – 18 USC § 666
- State and Local Corruption - McDonnell*
- Tues Mar. 19    State and Local Corruption -- Blagojevich
- State and Local Corruption – Reducing Fraud Waste and Abuse and Dixon, Illinois  
(Comptroller steals \$53 million)
- Tues Mar. 26    Police Corruption -- From the Suites to the Streets
- Police Corruption -- Reforming Police Use of Force
- Tues Apr. 2     Police Corruption -- Police Culture Ends Orientation **(Second Research Paper Due)**
- Police Corruption -- DOJ Investigations
- Tues Apr. 9     Police Corruption -- Police Culture
- Foreign Corrupt Practices Act – An Examination of Cases
- Tues Apr. 16    Foreign Corrupt Practices Act – Complying with the FCPA
- Foreign Corrupt Practices Act – Dealing with Crime and Corruption
- Tues Apr. 23    LAST DAY OF CLASS
- Foreign Corrupt Practices Act - Bribing Your Way Into Trouble
- Corruption in Government Outside the United States
- Corruption in Government Outside the United States (Petrobras)

**FINAL EXAM:** The final exam is scheduled for May 7<sup>th</sup> from 4:30 pm until 7:10 pm. Please make plans now to complete this exam at this time. I will not accept excuses for missing the exam on this day and time.

- The Final Exam will cover the entire course and key concepts but will **focus** on the chapters we examined after the Mid Term. Students must complete exams within time limits set.
- The Mid Term and Final Exams will be online, and I will be monitoring in our Blackboard Collaborate classroom. The Final Exam date will be posted by the university. Students must complete exams within time limits set.

**Other, Mandatory Reading:**

Refer to the Content section of our Blackboard class for additional readings, especially regarding conspiracy and 18 USC 1001.