SCHAR SCHOOL OF POLICY AND GOVERNMENT, GMU
PRELIMINARY DRAFT SYLLABUS
CORRUPTION, ELITES, AND PUBLIC POLICY

Course: Undergraduate Seminar (490)                      Dr. Janine R. Wedel
Semester: Spring 2020                                      University Professor
Place: Arlington, Van Metre Hall, Room TBA                 Telephone: 703-993-3567
Time: Tuesdays, 1:30-4:10 pm                                Fax: 703-993-8215
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 4:30-5:30, Rm 638, and by appointment E-mail: jwedel@gmu.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

“Elite corruption” is blamed for fomenting the anti-system movements that have animated the election of Donald Trump and other “populist” leaders across Western liberal democracies, as well as Brexit in the UK. “Institutional corruption,” systemic and fully legal, is said to be widespread in the United States. Politicians and celebrities the world over have found new ways to hide often ill-gotten money and evade taxes, as exposed by the Panama and the Paradise Papers. And a new breed of influencers, with “shadow elites” at the helm, have arisen amid seismic transformational developments over the past several decades.

How did we get to now? This course examines “elites,” “corruption,” and “elite corruption” in liberal democracies in comparative and historical perspective. Special attention is paid to government reforms and court decisions, as well as to the growth over recent decades of enabling industries that facilitate money laundering, offshoring, and reputational laundering. We also consider post-Cold War international anti-corruption regimes and ask why Western elite corruption has proliferated over roughly the same timeframe as these regimes established themselves.

Learning outcomes will be assessed in terms of having learned to:

- Analyze corruption and elites in historical, political, and societal contexts;
- Identify key points in the readings; and
- Write clearly, succinctly, and reflectively.

PROFESSOR INFORMATION:

Janine R. Wedel, award-winning author and University Professor, writes about governing, corruption, and elite influencers through the lens of a social anthropologist. A five-time Fulbright fellow, she is also the first anthropologist to win the Grawemeyer Award for Ideas Improving World Order, an honor typically reserved for political scientists (previous recipients include Samuel Huntington and Mikhail Gorbachev). She also has won awards from the MacArthur Foundation, National Science Foundation, Ford Foundation, Institute for New Economic Thinking, German Marshall Fund, among many others.

A public intellectual, Wedel’s books include Unaccountable: How Elite Power Brokers Corrupt our Finances, Freedom, and Security (Pegasus, updated kindle & paperback 2016); Shadow Elite: How the World’s New Power Brokers Undermine Democracy, Government, and the Free Market (Basic Books 2009); Collision and Collusion: The Strange Case of Western Aid to Eastern Europe (Palgrave 2001); and The Private Poland (1996). She has contributed analysis pieces to more than a dozen major outlets, including the Financial Times, New York Times, Foreign Policy, Washington Post, USA Today, and the Wall Street Journal Europe, and her work has been reviewed or translated into more than a dozen languages. Wedel is co-founder and past president of the Association for the Anthropology of Policy (ASAP), a section of the American Anthropological Association.
REQUIREMENTS:

**Thinking Points (30%):** Two written thinking points (up to three single-spaced pages, with paragraph breaks) are expected of each student for two sessions during the semester for which readings have been assigned. Thinking points must be written in essay form. They must critically review the readings of the week or address a specific question or questions (outlined in the syllabus) for that week. Thinking points are due on the day of class, preferably before class. You MUST put the following information on the top of each assignment: (1) full name; (2) course number; (3) phone number and e-mail address; (4) topic number and due date; and (5) all literature covered in your essay.

**Exam (20%):** One multiple choice exam will be given during the semester.

**Major Project or Paper and Annotated Bibliography: (30%):** The main written assignment of the course, a major project or paper, will be on a topic mutually agreed on with the professor. The paper should analyze a particular issue involving corruption and elites (10-12 pages) and include an annotated bibliography of the sources consulted (2-6 pages). You MUST put the following information on the top of the assignment: (1) full name; (2) course number; and (3) phone number and e-mail address.

**Class Presentation, Participation, Effort, and Approach (20%):** Students will be asked to critically review the literature in class and sometimes to lead class discussion. Please note: Because it is impossible to participate in class without being present, class attendance is REQUIRED. Also, while speaking in class is important, the amount of speaking time needs to be balanced with the need for other students to have air time, the quality of listening, efforts to build on the contributions of others, and thoughtfulness of comments. The professor keeps weekly notes on students’ participation for grading at the end of the semester.