

SPP Fall 2019: The Politics of Government Transparency

Professor: Cristina Corduneanu-Huci

Time: Every Friday,
13:30 pm – 15:10 pm

Course Credits: 2

Phone: +36 1 327 3000/ext. 2365

E-mail: Corduneanu-HuciC@ceu.hu

Office hours: Friday, 15:30-17:00 (#238)

Academics and policy makers have started to pay significant attention to how transparent governments are to legislatures, media, courts, and ordinary citizens. Transparency implies opening up the decision making process, as well as publishing reliable and timely data. Without information, citizens are not able to assess the performance of politicians in office and curb abuses such as corruption or rent seeking. Accountability requires some level of transparency. Recent scandals in the United States and Europe about government secrecy raised important issues regarding the nature of public information, as well as the delicate balance between privacy and disclosure. Media censorship has been steadily on the rise in many countries around the world.

This course goes beyond the normative assumptions of openness, and examines several questions. What are the dimensions of government transparency? When do politicians have incentives to disclose information, why, and to whom? When does transparency lead to accountability? Are there any unintended negative consequences of openness?

The readings for the course come from an emerging body of work on the topic. In addition to lectures, students will work in teams on concrete exercises related to the political economy of information flows between states and citizens.

Course requirements

Attendance is mandatory. Exceptions are allowed only in cases complying with the general university attendance policy, and following the approval of the instructor. Students are required to complete all assigned readings prior to class. The course is designed in an interactive manner, and will allocate time for lecture and interactive activities.

Electronics are permitted in class only as long as their use is strictly related to the course.

Good academic practices

Academic dishonesty – plagiarism, cheating, breaking other norms stipulated by the CEU Code of Ethics - will result in a failing grade. For detailed information on what constitutes plagiarism or cheating and their serious consequences, please go to the following link:

http://archive.ceu.hu/sites/default/files/P-1009-1%20v%201211%20Code%20of%20Ethics_final.pdf

Learning outcomes

The course will address the major debates surrounding the emerging questions of how transparent governments should be and to whom.

Pedagogy

Lectures; seminar style discussions; class simulations and case studies.

Grading policy

The final course grade will evaluate the completion of the following assignments:

- 1) *One research note or case brief (40%)*: This short output (around 5 pages) will summarize your efforts to retrieve specific information on government processes, data or institutions in a country of your choice.
- 2) *Final proposal (40%)*: students are expected to write a short research or policy proposal (10 page) on a topic related to government transparency. Some projects may be collaborative. Please consult with the instructor to obtain approval for the topic as well as for co-authored work.
- 3) *Participation and discussion (20%)* To receive the maximum number of points for class participation, you must arrive on time, miss no more than one class, contribute to the class discussion every week, and submit at least five sets of reading notes.

At the end of the semester, the final score is converted to a letter grade according to the CEU grading scale, as follows:

A	3.68 – 4.00
A-	3.34 – 3.67
B+	3.01 – 3.33
B	2.68 – 3.00
B-	2.34 – 2.67
C+	2.33 (minimum pass)

Additional information concerning grading procedures and specifications for turning in the assignments is also included in the CEU School of Public Policy Student Manual.

1. **Introduction (housekeeping: September 20)**
2. **Why is government transparency the new fad in town?**

September 27

Fung, Archon, and David Weil. 2010. "Open Government and Open Society." *Open Government: Collaboration, Transparency, and Participation in Practice*. O'Reilly Media, Inc.: 105-13.

Adsera, Alicia, Carles Boix, and Mark Payne. 2003. "Are You Being Served? Political Accountability and Quality of Government." *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 19 (2): 445–90.

Class simulation

3. **Information asymmetries between governments, bureaucrats, and citizens**

October 4

Fung, Archon. 2013. "Infotopia: Unleashing the Democratic Power of Transparency" *Politics and Society* 41(2): 183-212.

Stiglitz, Joseph. 2008. "Fostering an Independent Media with a Diversity of Views." In *Information and Public Choice: From Media Markets to Policymaking*, ed. R. Islam, 139–52. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Pozen, David. 2019. "Transparency's Ideological Drift." *Yale Law Journal* 100-128. Available at: <https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/ylr128&div=5&id=&page=>

Recommended:

Stiglitz, Joseph. 2002. "Information and the Change in the Paradigm in Economics." *American Economic Review* 92 (3): 460–501.

4. **What kind of transparency? Varieties and dimensions of government transparency**

October 11: Freedom of Information Acts

Berliner, Daniel. 2014. The Political Origins of Transparency. *Journal of Politics* 76(02): 479-491

Escaleras, M., Lin, S. & Register, C. 2010. "Freedom of Information Acts and Public Sector Corruption" *Public Choice* 145(3-4): 435-60.

Lagunes, P, Pocasangre, O. 2019. "Dynamic transparency: An audit of Mexico's Freedom of Information Act." *Public Administration* 97: 162– 176.

Fox, Jonathan, Libby Haight, and Brian Palmer-Rubin. 2010. "Delivering Transparency: To What Degree Does the Mexican Government Respond to Public Information Requests?" Working paper.

Case study

Recommended:

Banisar, D. (2006). Freedom of information around the world 2006: A global survey of access to government information laws. Privacy International.

October 18: Budgets and monetary policy

Alt, James. 2019. "Twenty Years of Transparency Research." A keynote speech given at the conference "Public Sector Economics 2018 – Fiscal openness: transparency, participation and accountability in fiscal policies."

Alt, J., Lassen, D., & Wehner, J. 2014. "It Isn't Just about Greece: Domestic Politics, Transparency and Fiscal Gimmickry in Europe." *British Journal of Political Science*, 44(4), 707-716.

Kopits, George, and J. D. Craig. 1998. "Transparency in Government Operations." Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund.

Andreula, Nicolás, Alberto Chong, Jorge Guillén. 2009. "Institutional Quality and Fiscal Transparency." Inter-American Development Bank. Washington, D.C.: Inter-American Development Bank, Research Dept.

Case study:

Dye, K.M. 2007. "Corruption and Fraud Detection by Public Sector Auditors." *EDPAC: The EDP Audit, Control, and Security Newsletter* 36, (5-6): 6-15.

Recommended:

Geraats, Petra. 2005. "Transparency of Monetary Policy: Theory and Practice." *CESifo Economic Studies*, Vol. 52 (March): 111–52.

Heald, David. 2003. "Fiscal Transparency: Concepts, Measurement and UK Practice." *Public Administration* 81 (4): 723–59.

5. Politics of secrecy

October 25: Channels of opaqueness

Benkler, Yochai. 2014. "A Public Accountability Defense for National Security Leakers and Whistleblowers" *Harvard Law and Policy Review* 1: 281-326.
(http://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/harlpolrv8&div=16&g_sent=1&collection=journals)

Stalder, Felix. 2002. "Privacy is not the Antidote to Surveillance." *Surveillance & Society* 1(1).

Readings on censorship (in China and globally) - TBC

Class debate

November 1 (to be rescheduled): Hiding or lying? Transparency versus Obfuscation

Brosio, Giorgio. 2007. "Cases for and against Transparency/Obfuscation in Intergovernmental Relations." *The Economics of Transparency in Politics*, Aldershot: Ashgate, pages 173-87.

Kono, Daniel Y. 2006. "Optimal Obfuscation: Democracy and Trade Policy Transparency." *American Political Science Review* 100(03): 369-84.

Lindbom, Anders. 2007. "Obfuscating Retrenchment: Swedish Welfare Policy in the 1990s." *Journal of Public Policy* 27(02): 129-50.

Stasavage, David. 2004. "Open-Door or Closed-Door? Transparency in Domestic and International Bargaining." *International Organization* 58(4): 667-703.

Case study

6. Politics of disclosure

November 8

Wehner, Joachim, and Paolo de Renzio. 2013. "Citizens, Legislators, and Executive Disclosure: The Political Determinants of Fiscal Transparency." *World Development* 41 (C):96-108.

Hollyer, James R, B Peter Rosendorff, and James Raymond Vreeland. 2011. "Democracy and Transparency." *The Journal of Politics*, 73 (4):1191-1205.

Vallely, Paul. (2006, May 16). "Transcript of Interview with Mrs. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Nigerian Finance Minister." *The Independent*. Retrieved April, 2012.

Recommended:

Pozen, D. E. 2013. "The Leaky Leviathan: Why The Government Condemns and Condone Unlawful Disclosures of Information." *Harvard Law Review*, 127(2), 512-635.

7. Transparency without accountability

November 15

Schatz, Edward. 2008. "Transnational Image Making and Soft Authoritarian Kazakhstan." *Slavic Review* 67 (1): 50–62.

Kolstad, Ivar, and Arne Wiig. 2009. "Is Transparency the Key to Reducing Corruption in Resource-Rich Countries?" *World Development* 37(3): 521-532.

Carey, John M. 2003. "Transparency versus Collective Action." *Comparative Political Studies* 36 (9): 983–1006

Malesky, Edmund, Paul Schuler and Anh Tran. 2012. "The Adverse Effects of Sunshine: A Field Experiment on Legislative Transparency in an Authoritarian Assembly" *American Political Science Review* 106(4): 762-786.

Recommended:

Prat, Aandrea. 2005. "The Wrong Kind of Transparency." *The American Economic Review* 95(3): 862-877.

Gavazza, A., and A. Lizzeri. 2007. "The Perils of Transparency in Bureaucracies." *American Economic Review* 97 (2): 300–05.

Mattozzi, Andrea, and Antonio Merlo. 2007. "The Transparency of Politics and the Quality of Politicians." *American Economic Review* 97 (2): 311–15.

8. How do we recognize (lack of) transparency?

November 22

Dunning, Thad et al. 2019. *Information, Accountability, and Cumulative Learning: Lessons from Metaketa I*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press (excerpts posted on Moodle).

Humphreys, Macartan, and Jeremy Weinstein. 2012. "Policing Politicians: Citizen Empowerment and Political Accountability in Uganda." Working paper.

Olken, B. 2007. "Monitoring Corruption: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Indonesia." *Journal of Political Economy* 115 (2): 200–49.

Stockmann D, and M. Gallagher. 2011. "Remote Control: How the Media Sustains Authoritarian Rule in China." *Comparative Political Studies* 44 (4): 436–67.

9. Transparency with (some) accountability

November 29

Bauhr, Monika; Carlitz, Ruth. 2019. "Transparency and the Quality of Local Public Service Provision: Street-Level Discretion in Education, Health and Infrastructure." QOG Working Paper Series 5: 1-43.

Keefer, Philip, and Stuti Khemani. 2011. "Mass Media and Public Services: The Effects of Radio Access on Public Education in Benin." *Policy Research Working Paper* 5559, World Bank, Washington, DC.

Besley, Timothy, and Robin Burgess. 2002. "The Political Economy of Government Responsiveness: Theory and Evidence from India." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 117 (4): 1415–51.

Success cases of disclosure

Hemson, David, and Imraan Buccus. 2009. "The Citizen Voice Project: An Intervention in Water Services in Rural South Africa." *IDS Bulletin* 40 (6): 60–69.

Fung, Archon, Hollie Gilman and Jennifer Shkabatur. 2011. Impact Case Studies from Middle Income and Developing Countries, http://www.transparency-initiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/impact_case_studies_final1.pdf.

Reinikka, Ritva, and Jakob Svensson. 2004. *The Power of Information Evidence from a Newspaper Campaign to Reduce Capture*. Washington, DC: World Bank, <http://www.econ.worldbank.org/view.php?type=5&id=34028>.

10. Technology and transparency

December 6

Bauhr, Monika, Ágnes Czibik, Jenny de Fine Licht and Mihály Fazekas. 2019. "Lights on the Shadows of Public Procurement: Transparency as an Antidote to Corruption." *Governance*.

Beck, T. 2005. "Learning Lessons from Disaster Recovery: The Case of Bangladesh. Disaster Risk Management." *Working Paper Series 11*. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

Yildiz, Mete. 2007. "E-government Research: Reviewing the Literature, Limitations, and Ways Forward." *Government Information Quarterly* 24(3): 646-665.