

**Michigan State University**  
**ISS 308: *Trust in Government***  
Spring 2021



**Location:** Online (Zoom)

**Class Day/Time:** Monday (asynchronous) & Wednesday at 10:20 AM-12:10 PM (synchronous via Zoom)

**Instructor:** Joe Hamm

**Office Hours:** Online (by appointment)

**Contact Information:**

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**Course Summary:**

Trust is an innate part of the human experience. Our lives are punctuated—and even, to some degree, defined—by the various individuals and groups that we do or don't trust. Nonetheless, we spend relatively little time thinking deeply about trust actually means. This class will deconstruct the social scientific concept of trust in “government” through the lens of a few recent crises.

Students in this course will use original research and reports as fodder for discussions addressing two overarching questions:

1. What is trust, really?
2. How can a nuanced understanding of trust help us better navigate governance crises?

**Learning Objectives:**

At the completion of this course, students will be able to identify the major elements of a trusting relationship, use research and reports to identify from among those elements the issues that are most salient in a given context, and offer practical suggestions for addressing them.

**Reading Materials:**

Readings for this course will come from original research articles and other documents, all of which will be available online. *There is no textbook for this course.*

**Assignments:**

Each week of this course will include an asynchronous day devoted to engaging with the course material (Monday) and a synchronous day devoted to discussion (Wednesday). Our Monday course time will be your time to review the course video and assigned reading(s) for the week. Most of the class (except the discussion leaders) will meet on Wednesday at 10:40a on Zoom (link above). Discussion leaders will sign into the Wednesday meeting at 10:20a.

Our course will be divided into three modules focused on the Flint Water Crisis (Module 1), the COVID-19 Pandemic (Module 2), and the Black Lives Matter movement (Module 3). We will spend one week discussing each of four major questions for understanding a trust relationship as focused on that context:

- Who? Who or what is or is not trusting [the trustor] and who or what is or is not being trusted [the trustee]?
- For what? What is the nature of the relationship between the trustor and trustee?
- Why? Why would that trustor trust the trustee?
- So what? Why does, or should, anyone care whether that trustor trusts?

*Participation.* Each week, we will meet synchronously via Zoom to discuss the materials for that week. Students are expected to come to class having engaged with all course material. Students who are not assigned as discussion leaders should sign into the Zoom meeting at 10:40a.

- Participation will be graded based on willingness to participate and the extent to which the student is aware of the course material. Thus, students do not have to speak in every class and do not need to not be wrong about the course material, but they must be willing to speak as called on and must have engaged with the material.

*Discussion Questions (due Mondays).* Each week all students are expected to prepare two questions for discussion. These questions should be submitted to me through D2L by the end of the day on Monday. I will compile them and assign two students per week as discussion leaders. Discussion leaders will log in to our class meetings at 10:20a and will work with me to use those questions to direct our class discussion.

- These questions will be graded based on the extent to which they represent honest engagement.

*Exam Questions (due Fridays).* During most weeks, students will be required to turn in one exam question covering the material discussed during that week. These questions should be designed to assess whether the person taking the exam has achieved the learning objectives of the course and should be turned in via D2L by the end of the day on Friday. These questions will be compiled to create the final exam at the end of the course.

- These questions will be graded based on the extent to which students are aware of the course content and objectives and are truly trying to design a question that addresses them.

*Memoranda (due Feb. 19, Mar. 26, & Apr. 23).* At the end of each module, students will be responsible for completing an email memo helping a hypothetical individual think through a specific trust problem. Students will have the choice between two scenarios and these memos will be “open book” such that students may refer to any part of the course materials in preparing them.

- These email memos should be 1-2 single-spaced, printed (e.g., Word) pages long and will be primarily graded based on the extent to which the student is able to show mastery of the four major questions, apply them to the hypothetical scenario, and highlight issues that need specific attention. To do this, you should first address each of the four questions as applied to this situation. You should then identify at least one element of the situation that you think is especially important. You should then explain why it’s important and what you think the person who emailed you should do about it. Note that distracting errors, typos, and the like will be reflected in your grade.

*Final Exam (due April 29<sup>th</sup>).* The final exam will be comprised of the exam questions created by the students over the course of the semester. We will have a review session on the 21<sup>st</sup> of April. The final exam will be completed on D2L. It will open on the 26<sup>th</sup> of April and must be completed by the end of the day on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Grading Scale:**

Assignment	Value	Total Points
Participation	<i>prepared and participating (or excused) = 17, phoning it in (or unexcused) = 0</i>	17
Discussion Questions	<i>trying = 1, phoning it in = 0</i>	13
Exam Questions	<i>trying = 1, phoning it in = 0</i>	10
Memo 1	<i>excellent (exemplary with virtually no issues) = 17, very good (strong with</i>	15*
Memo 2	<i>small issues) = 15, good (strong with noteworthy issues) = 13, fair</i>	15*
Memo 3	<i>(noteworthy issues) = 10, poor (major issues) = 5</i>	15*
Final Exam	<i>% of questions answered correctly</i>	15
<b>Total Points Available</b>		<b>100</b>

*Note. 4 = 100 - 95pts; 3.5 = 94.9 - 90pts; 3 = 89.9 - 85pts; 2.5 = 84.9 - 80pts; 2 = 79.9 - 75pts; 1.5 = 74.9 - 70pts; 1 = 69.9 - 60pts; 0 = less than 60pts.*

**Housekeeping:**

I have long been of the opinion that the core of a successful class is students and teachers who fulfill their responsibilities to each other. I offer you a considered and deliberate guided tour through the social science of trust in government. From you I simply ask your genuine engagement. This means that I will expect you to all of the readings and turn in all assignments on time.

**Absences:**

Please reach out ahead of time if you will need to miss our synchronous meeting to ensure you don’t lose points.

**Late Assignments:**

Technically, late assignments are missed assignments which merit a zero. I do understand that things happen. Please talk to me if you are having issues in the course but know that I will be far more understanding if you contact me sooner than later.

**Academic Integrity:**

Article 2.3.3 of the Academic Freedom Report states "The student shares with the faculty the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards." See

<http://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/honestylinks.html> for further clarification.

Violations of academic integrity will not be tolerated and will be reported to university officials for proper action. Any student engaging in any form of academic dishonesty in this class will receive a failing grade for the entire course. While not an exhaustive list, the following behaviors constitute academic dishonesty: cheating on exams; plagiarism; fabricating or falsification of source materials; and, having someone else complete your assignments.

**Special Accommodations:**

MSU's portal for formally addressing accommodations is here:

<https://www.rcpd.msu.edu/services/accommodations>.

If you feel that you have needs that are not addressed there, please contact me directly to discuss. I am more than happy to work with you, but it is your responsibility to engage me if there is an issue.

**Schedule (subject to change):**

Wk	Dates	Module	Topic	Video (Monday)	Readings (Monday)	Discussion Leaders (Wednesday)	Turn In (Friday)
1	Jan 11 & 13	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	Jan 19 & 20	Overview	Intro to Trust	0 & 1	Syllabus & Hamm <i>et al.</i> , 2016;		Exam Q1
3	Jan 25 & 27	1-FWC	Who?	2	MCRC, 2017		Exam Q2
4	Feb 1 & 3	1-FWC	For what?	3	Prudham, 2004		Exam Q3
5	Feb 8 & 10	1-FWC	Why?	4	Earle <i>et al.</i> , 2010		Exam Q4
6	Feb 15 & 17	1-FWC	So what?	5	Sobeck <i>et al.</i> , 2020		Memo 1
7	Feb 22 & 24	2-COVID	Who?	6	Williams & Tsiligianni, 2020; Phelan <i>et al.</i> , 2020		Exam Q5
8	Mar 1 & 3				<i>Break</i>		
9	Mar 8 & 10	2-COVID	For what?	7	Kickbusch, 2007		Exam Q6
10	Mar 15 & 17	2-COVID	Why?	8	Plohl & Musil, 2020		Exam Q7
11	Mar 22 & 24	2-COVID	So what?	9	Sibley <i>et al.</i> , 2020		Memo 2
12	Mar 29 & 31	3-BLM	Who?	10	Buchanan <i>et al.</i> , 2020		Exam Q8
13	Apr 5 & 7	3-BLM	For what?	11	Hamm & Wolfe, 2020		Exam Q9
14	Apr 12 & 14	3-BLM	Why?	12	Blount-Hill, 2020		Exam Q10
15	Apr 19 & 21	3-BLM	So what?	13	Akbar, in press		Memo 3
16	Apr 26-29	-	-	-	-		Final Exam