

Objectives

after completing this lesson, YOU will be able to



- » Discuss what happens when **the government commits a crime against the people**;
- » Discuss *state and federal government use of citizens as human guinea pigs* and as unwitting subjects of drug and radiation experiments;
- » Discuss *abuses of sovereignty by the US government*, including the Iran-Contra Affair; and
- » Discuss *abuses of power by government agencies*, including the CIA, NSA, FBI, and IRS.

For this lesson, please read:

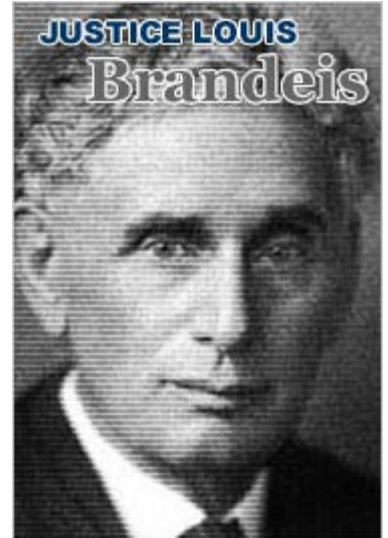
» Rosoff, Pontell and Tillman, *White-collar Crime*:

- **Chapter 9. Crimes by the Government**

» Well over a half-century ago, Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis noted that government lawlessness was "**contagious.**" He argued further that persons in power who disregard or violate the United States Constitution place our political contract in jeopardy.

» "In a government of laws," he said, "**the existence of the government will be imperiled if it fails to observe the law scrupulously.**"

Unfortunately, there have been numerous instances in American history where this has not been the case. As Chapter 9 of *Profit Without Honor* explains, political expediency has sometimes undermined fundamental issues of civil liberty, democracy, and general morality.





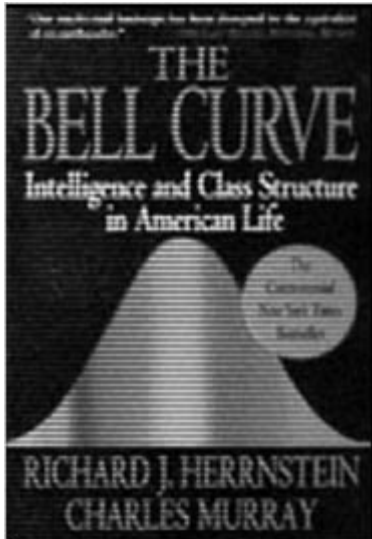
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When one considers officially sanctioned abuses involving human subjects, images of the Third Reich usually come to mind. **There is no doubt that Nazi atrocities, including the hideous experiments performed by military doctors on concentration camp prisoners, were indeed monstrous.** Yet the United States has a shameful history of its own.

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The Nazis were leaders in eugenics — the **"purification"** of the human race by way of selective breeding and compulsive sterilization. **But Germany was not alone in this thought pattern.** Such practices and thought were prominent in parts of the United States as well, beginning in the 1920s.

» The state of Virginia, for example, sterilized more than 8,300 mentally retarded citizens between 1924 and 1972 through compulsory sterilization laws. This was still permitted in 14 states as recently as 1985.



- » More recently, in a California case, a woman's parole was made to depend on her having the contraceptive Norplant surgically implanted in her arm.

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In the 1990s, the book *The Bell Curve* provided pseudoscientific evidence for racial theories of intellectual inferiority. It has been attacked by critics as a basis for eugenics revival in the 21st century.

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- » The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment is the best-documented case in the United States of humans being used as guinea pigs. The study, conducted between **1932** and **1972** by the ***U.S. Public Health Service***, used poor southern African Americans, predominantly from Alabama, in the research.

» In this experiment, **the government intentionally withheld treatment from more than 400 subjects and others whom they infected through deceiving them regarding the nature of their disease.** Once the story broke, the outrage was quite predictable.

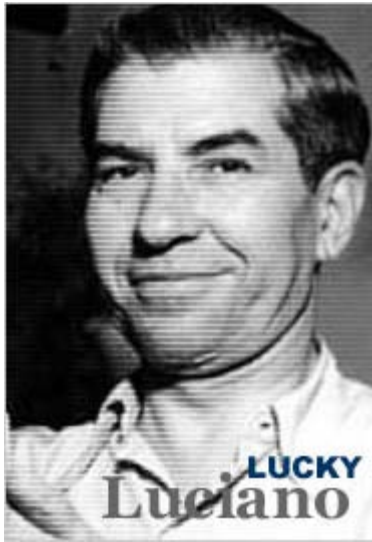
One senator labeled the case a "***frightening instance of bureaucratic arrogance and insensitivity.***" By today's standards this is quite an understatement.





The US military and the CIA have also been complicit in medical abuse regarding experiments involving mind control and the use of drugs. Clearly, national security issues are important, and the government may well be justified in such experiments — under a far different model and with entirely different justifications than were supplied.





- » The government covertly administered LSD to prostitutes, addicts, petty criminals, and even to a lieutenant of mob boss **Lucky Luciano**.

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*Marginal citizens such as these, deemed to be "**less worthy**" of civil rights, are potentially the weakest victims. But even "**stronger**" seeming citizens were victims of these experiments.*

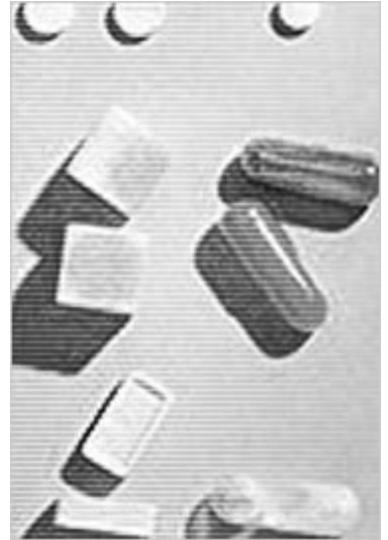
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LSD experiments were also conducted on unsuspecting scientists in the armed forces. One of them allegedly committed suicide after going into a drug-induced psychosis, and the true cause of his death was concealed from his family for 26 years. Later forensic evidence revealed inconsistencies in the CIA's story involving his death.

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The CIA also conducted experiments using knockout drugs and other powerful incapacitating substances on unsuspecting cancer patients at Georgetown University hospital.

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The Army has also had its share of horror stories, especially regarding experiments where subjects were infected with viruses and other germs. One of its most incredible experiments, which occurred over a four-year period in New York City, involved the releasing of the microorganism ***Bacillus subtilis*** into the heart of the **New York City subway system**.



» Records released under the Freedom of Information Act described the event:

*"When the cloud engulfed people they brushed their clothing, looked up at the grating apron and walked on . . . **The experiment was a huge success.** Everyone was breathing the bacteria and no one was ever aware of it."*

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Bacillus subtilis is a very dangerous form of bacteria that may well survive throughout the 21st century. It affects compromised hosts the most seriously.

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- * How could the military do this? The Army's scientific division provided an explanation that demonstrates a degree of bigotry and contempt for humanity that appears to answer this question.



*"When you get on a bus in Philadelphia or New York, you're going to be riding with a bunch of people — **the Chinese, the Vietnamese, the blacks, the lower-class Irish and all these people** — that may have tuberculosis and never know it, and be coughing in your face, and end up exposing you to a far more serious type of organism than what was being sprayed into the air."*



Radiation experiments were also conducted on unsuspecting subjects throughout the latter part of the 20th century.

In fact, government experiments conducted at major universities and hospitals were the norm. Some of these experiments used mentally retarded children.

At **Tulane University Medical Center**, the abuse went so far as using the whole population of the hospital as guinea pigs. Cancer patients, mostly poor and uneducated, at other hospitals were used in such experiments as well, and were given lethal doses of radiation therapy.

*** *Issues of informed consent were raised in these experiments as well as when pharmaceutical companies and others experimented on prisoners.***

Forum *discussion*



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After reading about these cases, ***what conclusions do you come to regarding their relationship to government crime and abuse?***

The United States has a long history of offenses - ranging from bribery and covert manipulation to outright interference in the affairs of other nations during peacetime.

According to some major American corporations, political bribery is a traditional and necessary cost of doing business.



*This is, of course, a self-serving argument that ignores damage to the nation's image abroad. It also disrespects the principle of national sovereignty that is basic to global cooperation. The international havoc caused by such activity should not be underestimated. **The US government has sometimes disregarded the sovereignty of nations more recklessly than corporations.***



- » Among the major examples of covert operations and other abuses of foreign governments by our own stands the ***Iran-Contra Affair***. In fact, this case is virtually alone in terms of exemplifying an "invisible government" sustained through deceit and utter contempt for the rule of law.
- » Possibly the most amazing result of this episode in American history was that the administration under which it occurred suffered no major loss.

Forum *discussion*



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Read through the history of the Iran-Contra case. Discuss the elements that stand out as most clearly showing government crime.

What do you make of the sanctions in this case? Why do you think President Reagan (and his administration) escaped any major fallout?

A number of government agencies have been involved in various abuses of power.



- » The **CIA** has conducted covert domestic operations that violate the civil rights and privacy of various political and social groups.
- » The **Defense Department** collected information on citizens who engaged in "domestic unrest," a term the military used regarding anyone who wanted a change in government policy.
- » The **National Security Agency** compiled files and monitored US citizens and organizations on a "watch list."

» The **FBI** has conducted the most vindictive intelligence campaigns against US citizens, starting with those led by **J. Edgar Hoover**.

Under Hoover, the FBI placed suspected political radicals and liberals — including people such as Fiorello LaGuardia, the mayor of New York City — under surveillance. Even the **“dangerous radical”** Helen Keller, the blind and deaf author (perhaps the easiest target in the history of surveillance?) was targeted by Hoover.

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The Bureau also kept files on such public figures as Supreme Court justices (clearly dangerous individuals!), celebrities such as Jean Seberg, and many political dissidents and civil rights movement leaders, including Martin Luther King, Jr.

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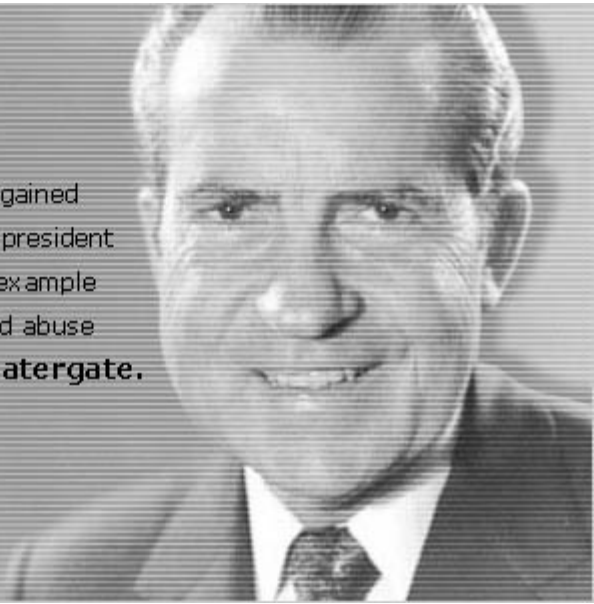


- » The **Internal Revenue Service** may have more information on US citizens than any other government agency. Such records provide a valuable tool in campaigns by the government against political targets.
- » The IRS has been used as a “hired gun” by administrations against chosen targets. Those identified as “Key Black Extremists” by the **FBI** were targeted in this manner. During the Kennedy Administration, these targets included extremist right-wing groups.

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Nixon, of course, later gained even greater notoriety as president in perhaps the greatest example of government crime and abuse of power in US history: **Watergate.**

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*No president, however, used the **IRS** as a punitive weapon more than Richard Nixon, who pressured the government agency to audit those on his notorious “**enemies list.**”*

Forum *discussion*



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After reading the details of the Watergate case, what issues seem most salient to you regarding its relationship to **white-collar crime**? What are the most important lessons to take from it?

Write a few paragraphs, and **read** the responses of others after you post yours.

Summary

a brief overview of what you learned



» **State governments, the US government, the US military, and the CIA have all used citizens as unconsenting or unwitting subjects of experiments without consent.** The Tuskegee scandal and the New York City Subway Experiment are especially egregious examples.

» The United States has a long history of offenses — ranging from bribery and covert manipulation to outright interference in the affairs of other nations during peacetime. According to some major American corporations, political bribery is a traditional and necessary cost of doing business. **The Iran-Contra Affair is a major example.**

» A number of government agencies have been involved in various abuses of power. **The CIA, the Defense Department, the National Security Agency, and the FBI have all monitored citizens and conducted covert domestic operations. The IRS has also been used as a government tool against selected citizens, most notably by President Richard Nixon.**