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## Stonewalling: A Formal Model and New Data on Presidential Scandals

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WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2009  
12:00 PM - UC Spindletop Room 242

Abstract: Despite a wealth of descriptions of political scandals, we have little theoretical understanding of how the White House apparatus acts when confronted with scandal. Existing “research” on scandals tends to be legalistic, moralistic, or journalistic, but not scientific. I utilize a game-theoretic, incomplete-information model of the relationship between the president and his adversaries to predict when the White House will choose to stonewall and how adversaries (e.g., the media, Congress) will react. The conclusions have implications for political accountability and the president as public actor. I also introduce a new dataset comprised by more than 80 scandals over seven presidential administrations, from Nixon to Bush.

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