

Political Science 101, Introduction to Politics
Winter 2020, MWF 10:00-10:50, TB-87

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Office Hours: W 2-4pm
by appointment

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the study of politics from the perspective of the discipline of political science. This course will introduce you to some of the language, concepts and theories that political scientists use to interpret the political world around us.

Course Prerequisites: *None*

This course assumes no specific prior knowledge about the topic, and is meant for first-year students.

Course Goals

In November 1979, a group of Iranian students stormed the U.S. Embassy compound in Tehran. It was a siege that lasted 444 days and represents a major flash point in U.S.-Iranian relations that reverberates to this day.

It was, for me, a pivotal moment of political consciousness; that moment when I realized there was a wider political world around me that I didn't understand very well. It is a world that I've been interested in ever since.

The objective of this course is a simple one: to get you jazzed up about the political and familiar with the language and approaches commonly used in political science.

“...we do not say that a man who takes no interest in politics is a man who minds his own business; we say that he has no business here at all.-- Pericles' Funeral Oration

Source: Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans Rex Warner (London: Penguin, 1972), 75.

More explicitly, the goals of this course are:

- Introduce to you to, and familiarize you with, the discipline of political science.
- Prepare you to take on higher-level learning in political science.
- Get you thinking about the importance of “the political” in a variety of different settings.

Class Format

Classes will be organized as lectures. However, I strongly encourage discussion and will frequently deviate from lecture to pursue significant topics as they arise in class. Moreover, while the textbook will serve as the principal basis for our discussions, each week's readings will be augmented by a number of supplemental readings and news items that will be provided by the instructor and discussed in class.

Put more bluntly, it will be hard to get an "A" if you don't show up.

Course Texts

Peter Ferdinand, Robert Garner, and Stephanie Lawson, *Politics* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2018).

Responsibilities, Resources, and Outcomes

Whatever the topic, we will pay close attention to the different analytical techniques scholars use to understand politics and political decisions. I will encourage you to take a critical view of how arguments are framed and made. This will enable you not only to make sense of class readings, but also should help you evaluate and carry out research in other academic and professional settings.

Your university years are not a time to sit back, listen to some nice lectures, and read a few books. As you will discover in your professional lives once you leave the university, time will severely limit your ability to collect and consume the vast amounts of information available. As such, one aim of this course is to channel your efforts toward mining the resources available to you for relevant information, critically evaluating not only the facts presented but the arguments being advanced, and developing your own framework for understanding the function and process of the political world around us.

You are expected to come to each lecture having read the assigned readings and having prepared to engage in the day's topic. The very nature of this course will require you to draw upon your own knowledge and experience with the political. I will regularly (probably daily) draw your attention to relevant current events in an effort to help you cast them against our classroom discussion. As such, I strongly recommend that you stay abreast of current events by reading at least one major newspaper with substantial international coverage (*New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Financial Times*, etc.). Most of these can be read online simply by registering. For those of you with slightly larger budgets, I highly recommend a subscription to *The Economist*.

Requirements and Evaluation

Students should note that in all but exceptional situations, all components of the course must be completed to receive a passing grade. Policy regarding missed term work is outlined in Section 23.4(3) of the University Calendar. Examinations and assignments will be assigned a letter

grade.

Please note that each student's final grade will be based upon a combination of absolute measures of achievement on course work and an assessment of each student's relative performance (ie. a curve).

- Course grades are letter grades; letter grades have numeric values for the purpose of calculating GPAs. Every component of this course—every exam question and every assignment—is graded on the numeric equivalent of the new letter grade scale, but I will award a value of 4.3 to exam questions and assignments that are of A+ quality.
- At the end of the term, I will assign the closest letter grade to your final numeric grade. If your numeric grade is at least half-way between letter grades I will round up to the higher letter grade; if your numeric grade is less than half-way half-way between letter grades I will round down to the lower letter grade. (To earn an A+ for the course your final numeric grade must be at least 4.15. *On your transcript, A+ has a grade point value of 4.0, the same as A.)

Descriptor	Letter Grade	Numeric Grade Point Value
Excellent	A+	4.0
	A	4.0
	A-	3.7
Good	B+	3.3
	B	3.0
	B-	2.7
Satisfactory	C+	2.3
	C	2.0
	C-	1.7
Poor	D+	1.3
Minimal Pass	D	1.0
Failure	F	0.0

Assignments, Exams, and Weighting

Mid-term, February 14, 2020 (take-home), 4pm (30%)

Policy Briefer, Due February 28, 2020, 4pm (25%)

Final Exam, (Take home), due April 9, 2020, 4pm (45%)

Grade Appeals

To appeal a grade on any assignment, your first step is to speak with me about it. I'll do my best to address your concerns. If your concern is not resolved, see Dr. Judy Garber, Undergraduate Chair (12-23 Tory, 780-492-5959). [Faculty of Arts Grade Appeals Procedures](#) come into effect

after any appeal at the Department level.

Late Fees

Late papers are penalized two grades for the first day/part day late and one grade for each day thereafter, up to a maximum penalty of five grades. I make exceptions to the lateness penalty for documentable, genuine emergencies (ie. “dog ate my paper” will receive a hearty laugh in response).

Academic Honesty and Student Behavior

The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (online at www.governance.ualberta.ca) and avoid any behaviour which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.

University of Alberta Sexual Violence Policy

The Sexual Violence Policy was approved by GFC in June 2017. It plays a vital role in ensuring a safe and respectful learning and working environment. As defined in the policy, **sexual violence** is any sexual act or act of a sexual nature, or act targeting sexuality, whether physical or psychological, committed without consent. **Sexual violence** is a complex and serious problem in society and on university campuses. Sexual violence can affect individuals of all gender identities, gender expressions, and sexual orientations, as well as those from all ages, abilities, racial, cultural and economic backgrounds. Through this policy, the University of Alberta recognizes its responsibility to reduce sexual violence in the University community. The university aims to do so by fostering a culture of **consent** and support through education, training and policy. The University recognizes the possible effects of trauma on those who have experienced sexual violence and supports the efforts of individuals to seek support and recover. To read the policy in more detail, please visit:

<https://policiesonline.ualberta.ca/PoliciesProcedures/Policies/Sexual-Violence-Policy.pdf>

Recording of Lectures

Audio or video recording, digital or otherwise, of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the content author(s) or as a part of an approved accommodation plan. Student or instructor content, digital or otherwise, created and/or used within the context of the course is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the content author(s).

Learning and Working Environment

The Faculty of Arts is committed to ensuring that all students, faculty and staff are able to work and study in an environment that is safe and free from discrimination and harassment. It does not

tolerate behavior that undermines that environment. The department urges anyone who feels that this policy is being violated to:

- Discuss the matter with the person whose behavior is causing concern; or
- If that discussion is unsatisfactory, or there is concern that direct discussion is inappropriate or threatening, discuss it with the Chair of the Department.

For additional advice or assistance regarding this policy you may contact the student ombudservice: (<http://www.ombudservice.ualberta.ca/>). Information about the University of Alberta Discrimination and Harassment Policy and Procedures is described in UAPPOL at <https://policiesonline.ualberta.ca/PoliciesProcedures/Pages/DispPol.aspx?PID=110>.

Specialized Support & Disability Services

Students with disabilities or special needs that might interfere with their performance should contact the professor at the beginning of the course with the appropriate documentation. Every effort will be made to accommodate such students, but in all cases prior arrangements must be made to ensure that any special needs can be met in a timely fashion and in such a way that the rest of the class is not put at an unfair disadvantage. Students requiring special support or services should be registered with the office of Specialized Support & Disability Services (SSDS): <http://www.ssds.ualberta.ca/>.

This is particularly important for students requiring special arrangements. Once you have registered with SSDS, it is your responsibility to provide the instructor with a "Letter of Introduction" and, if necessary, an "Exam Instruction & Authorization" form.

Feeling Overwhelmed? (In need of student, social, financial or security services?)

The Student Distress Centre listens, offers support, supplies information and provides services:

- Call: 492-HELP (492-4357)
- Drop in: 030-N in the S.U.B.
- Visit: www.su.ualberta.ca/sdc
- Chat: www.campuscrisischat.com/

Learning and Writing Support

Students looking to improve their essay writing or study habits are encouraged to visit the Student Success Centre at 2-300 Students Union Building. The SSC exists to help students maximize their educational experience. The writing resources staff provide workshops and one-on-one sessions with students, for a small fee. Visit the website at:

www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/academicsupport/writingstaff.cfm

Territorial Statement:

The University of Alberta acknowledges that we are located on Treaty 6 territory, and respects the histories, languages, and cultures of the First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and all First Peoples of Canada, whose presence continues to enrich our vibrant community.

Course Schedule

(subject to change as events warrant)

Part I: Political Concepts and Ideas

Week 1 (1/6, 1/8, 1/10)

Chapter 1: Introduction: The Nature of Politics and Political Analysis

Chapter 2: Politics and the State

Chapter 3: Political Power, Authority, and the State

Week 2 (1/20, 1/22, 1/24)

Chapter 4: Democracy

Chapter 5: Democracies, Democratization, and Authoritarian Regimes

Week 3 (1/27, 1/29, 1/31)

Chapter 6: Nations and Nationalism

Chapter 7: The Ideal State

Part II: Comparative Politics

Week 4 (1/27, 1/29, 1/31)

Chapter 8: Ideologies

Chapter 9: Political Economy: National and Global Perspectives

Week 5 (2/3, 2/5, 2/7)

Chapter 10: Institutions and States

Chapter 11: Laws, Constitutions and Federalism

Chapter 12: Votes, Elections, Legislatures, and Legislators

Week 6 (2/10, 2/112)

Chapter 13: Political Parties

Chapter 14: Executives, Bureaucracies, Policy Studies, and Governance

Mid-Term Exam Due, Friday February 14, 12 noon.

Reading Week (February 17-21)

Week 7 (2/24, 2/26, 2/28)

Chapter 15: Media and Politics

Chapter 16: Civil Society, Interest Groups, and Populism

Policy Briefers Due—Friday February 28, Close of Business

Week 8 (3/2, 3/4, 3/6)

Special Topic I: Sovereignty, the State, and International Order

Special Topic II: Theories of International Relations

Week 9 (3/9, 3/11, 3/13)

Chapter 17: Security, Insecurity, and the State

Chapter 18: Governance and Organizations in Global Politics

Part III: International Relations

Week 10 (3/16, 3/18, 3/20)

Special Topic III: Diplomacy and Foreign Policy

Special Topic IV: The Political Economy of Regionalism

Week 11 (3/23, 3/25, 3/27)

TBA

Week 12 (3/30, 4/1, 4/3 No Class)

TBA

Week 13 (4/6, 4/8)

TBA

Final Exam Papers

Due: April 9, 2020