

Intro to Politics

Course Description

The aim of this course is twofold. First, to introduce students to the field of political science and studying politics more generally. Secondly, to help students develop the ability to understand and analyze how different issues—power, identity, race, ethics and the media, to name just a few—are thought about, discussed and studied within political science and popular culture more generally.

Some of the questions we will explore include: What does it mean to study politics? What is the role of power in shaping how people think about politics? How has our understanding of what is “political” changed over time? What is the role of public opinion and public policy in shaping political discourse, and how much information does the public need in order to evaluate government decisions? What is the role of the state in an increasingly globalized world? Is liberal democracy the best form of politics?

Course Goals

Throughout this course we will examine numerous issues, many of which don’t have simple explanations or clear solutions. Many of the topics we will be covering are extremely contentious issues--such as the role of liberalism in modern states, critiques of federal interventions into our private lives, public opinion on issues like racism, money in politics, socialism and capitalism, the never ending war on terrorism, social media politics and even Occupy Wall Street. We will engage these various issues with a critical eye, doing our best to understand various claims on their own ground. In the end, we seek to expand what we know on a wide range of political issues today.

Course Texts

Politics: A Very Short Introduction. Kenneth Minogue. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2000.

Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt. Chris Hedges and Joe Sacco. New York: Nation Books. 2012.

I, Avatar: The Culture and Consequences of Having A Second Life. Mark Meadows. Berkeley: New Riders. 2008.

Additional course materials will be posted on the class Blackboard site.

Course Requirements

Class Participation

Students are expected to read and reflect on the assigned material before class, and to actively participate in the seminar in an informed and respectful way throughout the semester. You are expected to bring any assigned readings with you to class .

Class Assignments

- **Quizzes:** Students will take several quizzes throughout the course of the semester. Quizzes will cover material from both the assigned readings and the class lecture.
- **Political Essay:** Students will write a 5-7 page political essay on a topic of their choice. Papers must argue for or against a particular position, and will be due in week .
- **Exams:** Students will take a mid-term exam and a final exam covering material from both course readings and class lectures. The mid-term exam will cover the first half of the class, while the final exam will cover material from the second half of the class.

Grading Breakdown

Class Participation – 10% Final Exam – 30% Political Essay – 10%
Midterm Exam – 20% Quizzes – 30%

Policies and Procedures

Attendance

Per Fordham policy, more than 4 unexcused absences can result in a grade reduction for the course. Coming to class significant late will count as one unexcused absence. The full attendance policy is available in Fordham's [Student Handbook](#).

The only exceptions are as follows:

- Personal illness or death in the immediate family (documentation required)
- Observance of a religious holiday
- Participation in university-sanctioned activity
- An act of nature or cosmic event making attendance impossible (flood, earthquake, apocalypse)

Electronic Distractions

All laptops, cell phones, and other electronic devices should be turned off and put away during class, unless the computer is being used for note taking. Violation of this policy may result in a reduced letter grade or possible failure of this course. Facebook and Gchat do not constitute active class participation.

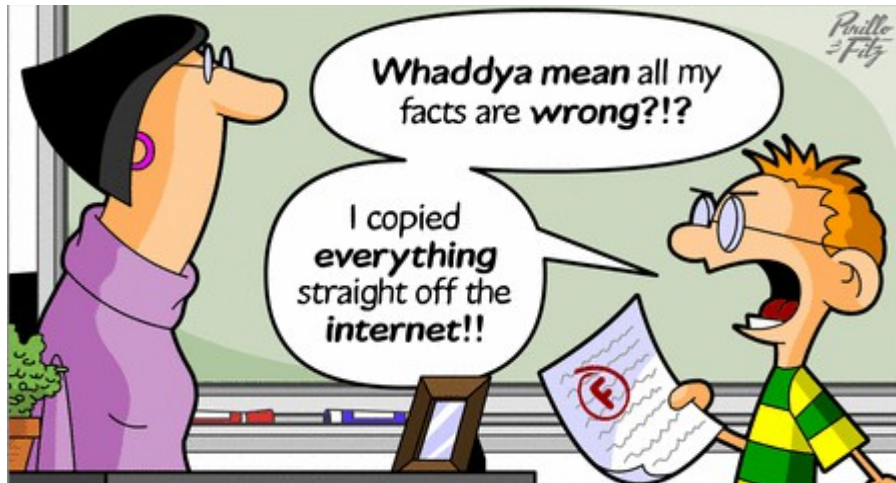
Due Dates

Any late assignments will have points deducted from the total. This is a firm policy, except in the extenuating circumstances noted above (documentation is required). There are no makeup assignments or extra credit papers. No credit will be given for any assignment more than a week late (7 days).

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a sign of poor academic skills and laziness, and will not be tolerated. Any student found guilty of plagiarism will receive an automatic F for the class, no exceptions. Fordham's statement on plagiarism can be found in the Student Handbook under [University Regulations, Undergraduate Policy on Academic Integrity](#):

"Plagiarism occurs when individuals attempt to present as their own what has come from another source. Plagiarism takes place whether such theft is accidental or deliberate. It is no defense to claim that one has "forgotten" to document ideas or material taken from another source."



Writing Help

Students needing additional writing help should contact the Writing Center, which is located on the 5th floor of Dealy Hall. More information is available at: www.fordham.edu/writingcenter

Disabilities

Any students who requires differently-abled assistance is encouraged to contact Disability Services. http://www.fordham.edu/campus_resources/student_services/disability_services/

Part I: Foundation of Politics

Week 1 (1/14 and 1/17): Welcome

Intros. Hand out and review course syllabus and class logistics. Discuss basic approach to the course, goals of the semester and structure of how the class will operate. Discussion about politically charged topics and contentious issues, and creating a safe space for difficult dialogue in the classroom.

Readings: (read for Thursday)

- 1) *“Why Despots Don't Belong in Politics”*; *“The Classical Greeks”*; *“The Romans”* (pgs 1-24). Politics: A Very Short Introduction. Kenneth Minogue.

!!Note: No class on Mon (1/21) - Martin Luther King Jr. Day !!

Week 2 (~~1/21~~ and 1/24): Political Structures

***No class on Monday (1/21)*

Readings:

- 1) *“Christianity and the Rise of the Individual”*; *“Constructing the Modern State”*; *How to Analyze a Modern Society*; *“Relations Between States”* (pgs 25-60). Politics: A Very Short Introduction. Kenneth Minogue.

Week 3 (1/28 and 1/31): Politics in Action and Theory

Readings:

- 1) *“The Experience of Politics I”*; *“The Experience of Politics II”*; *“The Experience of Politics III”*; *Studying Politics Scientifically*; *“Ideology Challenges Politics”*; *“Can Politics Survive 21st Century?”* (pgs 61-111). Politics: A Very Short Introduction. Kenneth Minogue.

Week 4 (2/4 and 2/7): Gun Control in America

Readings:

- 1) *“Sandy Hook Elementary - NRA Press Conference”*. Wayne LaPierre. Dec 21, 2012. Video of Full Speech (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gGzXkZDT0cc>).
- 2) *“Self-Interest, Symbolic Politics, and Public Attitudes toward Gun Control”* (pgs 241-262) in *Political Behavior*, (Sep. 1998, 20:3). Robert Wolpert and James Gimpel.
- 3) *“The Cost of Gun Violence Against Children”* (pgs 86-99) in *The Future of Children: Children, Youth, and Gun Violence* (Summer -Autumn, 2002 12:2). Philip J. Cook and Jens Ludwig.

Week 5 (2/11 and 2/14): In Defense of Guns

Readings:

- 1) *“Tough Targets: When Criminals Face Armed Resistance from Citizens”* (pgs 1-60) Cato Institute White Paper #33 (2012). Clayton Cramer and David Burnett.

!! Note: No class on Mon (2/18) – President's Day !!

Week 6 (~~2/18~~ | 2/19 and 2/21): Midterm Exam

Midterm exams will take place in class on **Thursday 2/21**.

****No class on Monday (2/18), class meets Tue (2/19) instead**

Readings:

1) TBD...

Part II: The Politics of Critique

Week 7 (2/25 and 2/28): Part 1

Readings:

1) “*Days of Theft*” (pgs 1-58) in *Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt*. Chris Hedges and Joe Sacco.

Week 8 (3/4 and 3/7): Part 2

Readings:

1) “*Days of Siege*” (pgs 59-114) in *Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt*. Chris Hedges and Joe Sacco.

!! Note: Spring Break – No classes !!

Week 9 (~~3/12~~ and ~~3/15~~): Spring Break – No Class

Week 10 (3/18 and 3/21): Part 3

Readings:

1) “*Days of Devastation*” (pgs 115-176) in *Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt*. Chris Hedges and Joe Sacco.

****Political essay due in class Monday 3/18 (5-7pgs)**

!! Note: No class Thu (3/28) – Easter Recess !!

Week 11 (3/25 and ~~3/28~~): Part 4

****No class on Thursday (3/28)**

Readings:

1) “*Days of Slavery*” (pgs 177-224) in *Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt*. Chris Hedges and Joe Sacco.

!! Note: No class Mon (4/1) – Easter Recess !!

Week 12 (~~4/1~~ and 4/4): Part 5

****No class on Monday (4/1)**

Readings:

- 1) “*Days of Revolt*” (pgs 225-272) in *Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt*. Chris Hedges and Joe Sacco.
- 2) “*Image, Space, Revolution: The Arts of Occupation*” (pgs 8-32) in *Critical Inquiry*, (Autumn 2012, 39:1). W. J. T. Mitchell.

Week 13 (4/8 and 4/11): Occupy Wall Street in Perspective

Readings:

- 1) “*American Autumn*” (online 2011). National Review. Mark Steyn.
- 2) “*Repo Men*” (online 2011). National Review. Kevin Williamson.
- 3) “*Occupy Wall Street 101*” (online 2011). National Review. Charles Cooke.

Part III: Virtually Political

Week 14 (4/15 and 4/18): Avatars

Readings:

- 1) I, Avatar: The Culture and Consequences of Having A Second Life (pgs 1-49). Mark Meadows.
- 2) “*Cyberkids? Exploring Children's Identities and Social Networks in On-Line and Off-Line Worlds*” (pgs 302-319) in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* (Jun. 2002, 92:2). Gill Valentine and Sarah L. Holloway.

Week 15 (4/22 and 4/25): Virtual Ethics

Readings:

- 1) I, Avatar: The Culture and Consequences of Having A Second Life (pgs 50-95). Mark Meadows.
- 2) “*Regulating Violence in Virtual Worlds: Theorizing Just War and Defining War Crimes in World of Warcraft*” (pgs 159-172) in *Pacific Coast Philology, Violence and Representation* (2009, 44:2). Elizabeth Losh.

Week 16 (4/29 and 5/2): Virtual Agency

Readings:

- 1) I, Avatar: The Culture and Consequences of Having A Second Life (pgs 96-132). Mark Meadows.
- 2) “*Communicative Spaces Of Their Own: Migrant Girls Performing Selves Using Instant Messaging Software*” (pgs 55-78) in *Feminist Review, Media Transformations* (2011, 99). Koen Leurs and Sandra Ponzanesi.

Week 17 (5/6 and 5/9): Final Exam

****No class Mon 5/6**

Final exams will take place in class on Thursday May 9th.

Cheers. Sayonara. Mahalo. Adios.

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