

Intro to Politics

Course Description

The aim of this course is twofold. First, to introduce students to the four main sub-fields within the discipline of political science: political theory, international relations (IR)/global politics, comparative politics and American politics. Secondly, to help students develop the ability to understand and analyze how different issues—power, identity, justice and media, to name a few—are thought about and discussed within these four fields, as well as in 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 end of history?

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 long-term impacts of industrial civilization, critiques of federal interventions into our private lives, public opinion on recent issues like oil and gas drilling, indefinite detentions, our never ending war on terrorism, economic recession and even Occupy Wall Street. We will engage these issues with a critical eye, doing our best to weigh the merits of 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

Oxford Handbook of Political Science. Robert Goodin, Editor. Cambridge: Oxford University Press. 2011.

Democracy: A Very Short Introduction. Bernard Crick. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2003.

Ideology: A Very Short Introduction. Michael Freeden. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2003.

Capitalism: A Very Short Introduction. James Fulcher. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2004.

The Power Elite. C.Wright Mills. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1956.

Additional course materials will be posted on the class website: <https://sites.google.com/site/posc1100/>.

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

- **Weekly Blog Posts:** Every week you will be asked to either write a blog reflecting on class readings and discussions, or to respond to a specific question from the professor or class group.
- **Group Projects:** Students will be broken into 6 groups as part of the class, and each group will be responsible for leading discussion on one portion of the readings in class.
- **Final Project:** The final project will take the form of a political essay or analysis on a topic of the student's choosing, and should be 10-12 pgs (12 pt font, double spaced, 1/2" margins). Topics may include reflections on a substantive question in the field or a general political topic. Projects may take the form of a paper, multimedia presentation or other approved mediums.

Grading Breakdown

Class Participation – 20% Blog Posts – 30%
Group Projects – 25% Final Paper Assignment – 25%

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. Your friends can wait 2 hours for your text. Facebook and Gchat do not constitute active class participation.

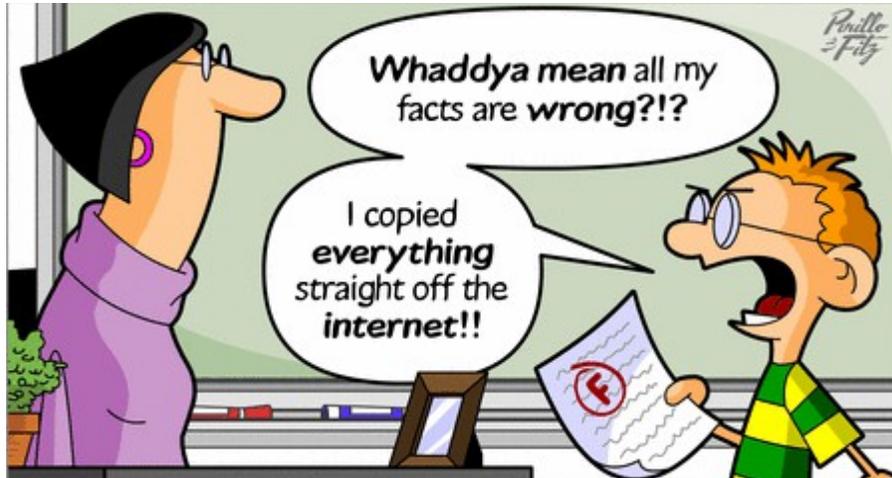
Due Dates

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: Welcome to the Discipline

Week 1 (1/16 and 1/19): Welcome

No class readings

Class will not meet the first Monday (1/16) of the semester. Thursday (1/19) will be our first class. Intros. Hand out and review course syllabus and class logistics. Discuss basic approach to the course. What do we mean when we talk about “politics” in this course. What’s the difference between “Big P” -vs “Little p” politics?

Week 2 (1/23 and 1/26): Intro to Political Theory I

Read: Part II: Political Theory in *Oxford Handbook* (pgs 61-126)

Overview of Political Theory – Dryzek

Normative Methodology – Hardin

Theory in History – Pocock

Justice After Rawls - Arneson

Hand out writing assignment #1: What is the value of theory?

Week 3 (1/30 and 2/2): Intro to Political Theory II and The Importance of Context

Read: Part VI: Contextual Political Analysis in *Oxford Handbook* (pgs 431-477)

Overview: It Depends – Tilly and Goodin

Political Ontology - Hay

Read: Part II: Political Theory in *Oxford Handbook* (pgs 127-138)

Modernity and its Critics - Bennett

***Writing Assignment #1** due in class Thursday (2/2).

Week 4 (2/6 and 2/9): Intro to American Politics

Read: Part III: Political Institutions in *Oxford Handbook* (pgs 141-175)

Old Institutionalism – Rhodes

New Institutionalism – March and Olsen

Read: Part IV: Law and Politics in *Oxford Handbook* (pgs 241-252, 305-318)

Law and Politics – Whittington, Kelmen & Caldeira

Feminist Theory and Law - Baer

Read: Part V: Political Behavior in *Oxford Handbook* (pgs 321-364)

Overview – Dalton & Klingemann

Psychology and Choice – Mutz

Hand out writing assignment #2: Making sense of American politics today?

Week 5 (2/13 and 2/16): Intro to Comparative Politics I

Read: Part VII: Comparative Politics in *Oxford Handbook* (pgs 543-592)

Overview – Boix & Stokes

War, Trade and State Formation – Spruyt

***Writing assignment #2** due in class Monday (2/13).

Hand out writing assignment #3: Apples to oranges or orangutangs?

!! Note: No class on Monday (2/20) – President's Day !!

Week 6 (2/20 and 2/23): Comparative Politics II

Read: Part VII: Comparative Politics in *Oxford Handbook* (pgs 593-672)
What Causes Democratization – Geddes
Party Systems – Kitschelt
Clientelism - Stokes

Week 7 (2/27 and 3/1): Intro to International Relations (IR) and Global Politics I

Read: Part VIII: International Relations in *Oxford Handbook* (pgs 675-729, 748-775)
Overview: Beyond Utopia and Reality – Reus-Smit & Snidal
New Liberalism – Moravcsik
From IR to Global Society – Barnett & Sikkink
Big Questions in World Politics - Keohane

***Writing assignment #3** due in class Monday (2/27).

Hand out writing assignment #4: Making sense of a globalized world. (*Last short writing assignment*)

Week 8 (3/5 and 3/8): IR and Global Politics II

Read: Part IX: Political Economy in *Oxford Handbook* (pgs 785-809, 826-848)
Overview – Weingast & Wittman
Capitalism and Democracy – Iversen

Read: *The Power Elite* by C. Wright Mills (pdf online pgs 1-29, 269-297)

***Writing assignment #4** due in class Thursday (3/8).

!! Note: Spring Break – No classes !!

Week 9 (3/12 and 3/15): Spring Break

No class...

Part II: The Politics Behind Politics

Week 10 (3/19 and 3/22): Ideology – The Power of Political Persuasion

Read: *Ideology: A Very Short Introduction* (pgs 1-66)

In this week of the class we will step back from the four sub-fields we have been looking at and consider how certain political ideas become dominant in the public mind through the twin concepts of ideology and hegemony. Ideologies are overarching system of beliefs, values and institutional practices

which we all reproduce on a daily basis, even if we aren't always aware of it. The power behind the seeming invisibility of our views and values is often referred to as a hegemony. We'll unpack these concepts and see how they play out in the field of political science as well as popular culture.

*First draft of project proposals due in class Thursday (3/22)

****Group #1 Presentation**

Week 11 (3/26 and 3/29): Ideology II

Read: Ideology: A Very Short Introduction (pgs 67-128)

In this week we will look at capitalism, the dominant ideology in the world today. From its origins as an economic theory to its role as the driving force behind globalization today, we will attempt to gain a better understanding of just what this thing called capitalism really.

****Group #2 Presentation**

!! Note: No class on Thursday (4/5) – Easter Recess !!

Week 12 (4/2 and 4/5): Understanding Capitalism

Read: Capitalism: A Very Short Introduction (pgs 1-67)

In this week we will look at capitalism, the dominant ideology in the world today. What will the future bring for our increasingly globalized world economy? From its origins as an economic theory to its role as the driving force behind globalization today, we will attempt to gain a better understanding of just what this thing called capitalism really is.

****Group #3 Presentation**

!! Note: No class on Monday (4/9) – Easter Recess !!

Week 13 (4/9 and 4/12): Capitalism Reconsidered

Read: Capitalism: A Very Short Introduction (pgs 68-128)

Free market advocates praise it while progressives attack it. Is something wrong with capitalism, and are there any real alternatives? We'll survey some of the common critiques, and counter-arguments, from various political perspectives about capitalism today.

****Group #4 Presentation**

Week 14 (4/16 and 4/19): Democracy...

Read: Democracy: A Very Short Introduction (pgs 1-68)

In this week of the class we will consider one of the most important yet most debated ideas in the world today: democracy. What are democratic politics and what aren't? Is democracy an idea or a system, or both? Direct democracy versus representative democracy, what's that all about? We'll explore the ancient Greek origins of the *demos* and the *polis*, while also tracing its evolution up to today. Briefly;

*Final draft of project proposals due in class Thursday (4/12)

****Group #5 Presentation**

Week 15 (4/23 and 4/26): ...and its Discontents

Read: *Democracy: A Very Short Introduction* (pgs 69-120)

From Occupy Wall Street's chants of "Whose Streets, Our Street!" and the Tea party's "Don't Tread On Me!" flags to youth uprisings in Europe and the Arab Spring, it seems people around the world have many ideas about what democracy should be. Do some people really hate democracy, or is something else going on? We'll explore some of these questions and more.

****Group #6 Presentation**

!! Note: Last Week of Classes !!

Week 16 (4/30 and 5/3): Politics Grab Bag

We'll play some political games drawing from everything discussed in our class—readings, blog posts, discussion, and the whole shebang. Come prepared for some stimulating end of semester review fun!

!! Note: No Classes – Reading Week !!

Week 17 (5/7 and 5/10): Reading Week

Work on final projects...no classes.

Week 18 (5/14): Final Exam

Final projects are due by **Monday May 14 at 5pm.**

Please remember to e-mail the professor a digital copy.

Cheers. Sayonara. Mahalo.

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