McGill University

POLI200
Fall 2018

INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL SCIENCE

Professor Manuel Balán
Office: Leacock 513
manuel.balan@mcgill.ca
514-398-2363

Class meets: M-W-F 11.35-12.25pm
Class location: MCMED 522
Office location: Leacock 513

TAs:

Course Description:
This course presents an introduction to political science, including the basic theories, concepts, and approaches to the enduring questions that motivate political research. The objective of the course is to prepare students for further coursework in political science, while providing perspective of the relevance of political science, hopefully encouraging students to further their knowledge on the field. The course is organized in substantive units (not by subfields within political science). We will cover approaches to the issues under analysis from the perspective of different subfields in political science. After each unit, students will come out with a better empirical grasp of current political debates, as well as with an overall understanding of some of the approaches to these issues from political theory, comparative politics, international relations, and Canadian politics.

Learning Outcomes:
This course has the following objectives:
1. Be aware, understand and critically discuss, using proper concepts, a set of key questions and issues in political science.
2. Be able to define and correctly employ key concepts in political science
3. Become familiar with the approaches and theories from different subfields in political science, and be able to apply these approaches to the key questions mentioned above
4. Develop solid reading and writing skills in the social sciences
5. Develop good student habits for future courses, such as going to class, doing the readings before class, participating in conference discussions, etc.
6. Be able to identify your interests and inclinations among the subfields in order to inform future course selections.

PLEASE NOTE: THIS IS A MANUAL NOTE-TAKING LECTURE COURSE. THE USE OF ANY MOBILE COMPUTING OR COMMUNICATIONS DEVICES (INCLUDING COMPUTERS, RECORDING DEVICES, PHONES, IPADS, ETC) IS STRICTLY BANNED DURING CLASS, EXCEPT WITH THE EXPLICIT PERMISSION OF THE INSTRUCTOR IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES.
**Grade Components:**
The final grade will be determined as follows:
- Three in-class short answer exams (20% each) 60%
- Written Assignment (2 submissions) 20%
- Conference Participation 10%
- Assessment 10%

You must receive a passing grade (higher than 50%) for each component of the course in order to pass the course. This means regular conference attendance and participation are required in order to pass the course. By remaining in this class, you agree to these terms.

In order to calculate your final grade, I will sum all of the points you have received in the class and convert the points into letter grades using the following scale:
85-100 = A, 80-84 = A-, 75-79 = B+, 70-74 = B, 65-69 = B-, 60-64 = C+, 55-59 = C, 50-54 = D, Below 50 = F
I will round up scores of 0.5 and higher and round down scores of less than 0.5. No exceptions. Please remember: grades are NOT an evaluation of your intelligence or worth. They are simply an assessment of how well you did in the assignments for the course. Nothing more, nothing less.

**Procedure for contesting grades:**
Students who wish to contest a grade for an assignment or exam must do so in writing (by email, sent to me) providing the reasoning behind their challenge to the grade received, within two weeks of the day on which the assignments are returned. The TA who graded the assignment will re-grade your assignment, and may raise or lower the grade. If you are still unsatisfied after the re-assessment, you can re-submit the assignment to me (original copy with TA comments), along with your justification. I will then re-evaluate submission, but also reserve the right to raise or lower the grade.

**Policy for missed exams or deadlines:**
In-Class exams will take place on Sept 26th, Oct 24th, and November 19th. If you are absent for documented emergency medical or family reasons, an alternative exam date will be arranged. The alternative arrangement is only open to those who can provide a valid medical/family reason for missing the exam. If you cannot provide a valid reason for your absence, you will receive an F for the missed exam and will thus fail the course.
Students who need to miss an examination or work assignment due to a religious holiday should notify me via email at least fourteen days prior to the holiday. You will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.
Late penalties. Assignments will be penalized 2/3 of a letter grade if they are turned in within 24 hours, and an additional 2/3 of a grade for every 24 hours thereafter. Assignments will not be accepted after 72 hours. Documented illnesses or family emergencies will be the only grounds for exceptions or extensions.
Description of Grade Components:
In-class short answer exams (20% each):
During the term, we will hold three short answer exams, which will take place in class on Sept 26th, Oct 24th, and Nov 19th. Each exam will consist of 5 short-answer questions that should be answered in 5 sentences or less, based on readings, lectures, and conferences.

Conference Participation and Assignments (10%):
Participation: Conferences provide the opportunity for small setting discussion (each conference will have no more than 20 students). Your participation in discussions is therefore required and expected. Both quantity and quality of participation will be assessed. Please note that your absences to conferences WILL affect your participation grade.

Written Assignment¹ (20%):
Given the importance of learning to write well in an academic setting, throughout the term you will work on a short research paper (1500-1750 words). You will submit two versions of the paper. The first version of the paper will be due on Oct 19th. Your TA will provide you with comments on the paper. Then, you will rework and resubmit the final version of the paper, incorporating the comments you receive, by Nov 23rd. You will turn in these assignments directly to your TA.
Paper topics: We will make available a list of topics for your papers. If you wish to write your paper on a different topic, you need approval from your TA beforehand. By Sept. 28th you must declare which topic you are writing about.
Paper Submission guidelines: Both versions of the paper must be submitted in hard copy, double-spaced, in 12-point font, with proper references. Papers should NOT have a title page, but your title, name, TA name, and final word count² (including footnotes) should be placed at the top of your first page. If using notes, please use footnotes (not endnotes). You can use any reference citation system, as long as it is used consistently. Papers that fail to meet these criteria will be penalized by dropping to the next possible letter grade (e.g., from A to A-). Submissions by email will not be accepted unless arrangements have been made beforehand.
Your second submission must include a copy of your first version with TA comments, which must be attached to the end of your paper.
Marking Criteria: papers will be marked on the following criteria:
1. analytical rigor (logic, precision, clarity, consideration of counterarguments) 5 points.
2. originality / creativity. 2 points.
3. essay mechanics (structure of essay clear and logical, clear thesis, etc.). 3 points
4. sentence mechanics (quality of prose, grammar, spelling, etc.). 2 points
5. scholarship (accurate representation of author’s cited, other works engaged with when appropriate, quality of research, etc.). 2 points
6. miscellaneous (proper citation of sources, etc.). 1 point

¹ “Far from being mindless or mechanical, the process of writing is generative: in writing—and rewriting—we discover, formulate, clarify, and develop our ideas, and, no less important, are sometimes forced to discard them. In short, writing is intellectual work.” Dr. Sue Laver. Director, McGill Writing Centre (http://www.mcgill.ca/tls/teaching/writing-toolkit/introduction).
² The word count is NOT a suggestion. It is there for a reason. If you are over the word limit, you should edit down the paper so that it is within the word limit. If you go over the word limit, your grade will be penalized (1/3 of a letter grade if you are 1-100 words over the limit, 2/3 if you are 101-200 over the limit, and so on).

Syllabus POLI200. Balán / 3
Assessment (10%): During the last class (December 3rd), we will hold a written Assessment, consisting in 2 open ended questions.

Readings: We will use a textbook, available for purchase at the McGill Bookstore. All pages and chapters correspond to the Fifth Edition, Reprint Edition, 5/E. You can use earlier editions, but if you do, it is at your own risk (there are some differences between editions). I also assigned and will assign a number of other readings (an average of 1 or 2 articles per week), which will be made available online.

Course and University Policies:
Integrity: McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/integrity for more information).
Special Needs: As the instructor of this course I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and the Office for Students with Disabilities, 514-398-6009.
Language: In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.
Course-Evaluations: End-of-course evaluations are one of the ways that McGill works towards maintaining and improving the quality of courses and the student’s learning experience. You will be notified by e-mail when the evaluations are available. Please note that a minimum number of responses must be received for results to be available to students.

Classroom Etiquette:
I want to create a nice and stimulating learning environment for you and your peers. To do this, I ask that you respect a few basic ground rules:
1- I will start class on time and expect you to arrive to class on time.
2- Similarly, when attending lecture, I expect you to stay until the end (if you need to leave early for some specific reason, please inform me before the lecture and sit close to the door). Lectures end when the instructor says so.
3- This is a manual note-taking lecture course. The use or display of any mobile computing or communications devices (including computers, recording devices, phones, iPads, or iPods) is strictly banned during class, except with the explicit permission of the instructor in exceptional cases.³
4- Please remember to silence or turn off your cell phones.

Note: In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University’s control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change. The privilege of additional work will not be granted.


SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

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WEEK 1

Monday, September 3rd. Labor Day, NO CLASS.

Wednesday, September 5th.  
Introduction. What are Social Sciences? What is Political Science?  
Introduction. Expectations, assignments, structure of the course. Intro to the subfields.  
What is a social science? How can you better understand the world by better understanding this particular “way of knowing”? Introduction to scientific approach. Comparison between social and natural sciences.  
Readings:  
- Chapter 1 of MCC (Textbook).  
- Wallerstein. “Open the Social Sciences”

Friday, September 7th.  
Explanation and understanding. What is the difference between explanation and description and why this difference matters? What is causal inference? Why does causation matter? How do we categorize and conceptualize ideas and variables. Laws, regularities and singularities.  
Readings:  
- Shively. “Doing Research”  
- White. “Types of Associations and Causality”

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WEEK 2

Readings:  
- Chapter 2 of MCC.  
- “The end of the Nation State?” Parag Khanna.

Readings:  
- Chapter 2 of MCC.  

Friday, September 14th. Ideologies. Right and Left? Liberalism, Conservatism, Socialism, and Fascism.  
Readings:  
- Chapter 3 of MCC.  

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WEEK 3

Monday, September 17th. On Feminisms. GUEST LECTURER: PROF. KELLY GORDON
Readings:
- Chapter 4 of MCC.

Please note: ADD/DROP ENDS SEPT 18th!

Wednesday, September 19th. Culture, Participation, Socialization.
Readings:
- Chapter 5 of MCC.
- “What makes Democracies work?” Robert Putnam.

CONFERENCES START, NO CLASS ON FRIDAY.

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WEEK 4
Readings:
- Chapter 6 of MCC.
- “Parties and Party Systems” Noam Lupu.

Wednesday. September 26th. IN-CLASS EXAM (covers weeks 1-4).

CONFERENCES
*Paper topic due in Conferences

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WEEK 5
Monday. October 1st. Quebec General Election. NO CLASS

Readings:
- Chapter 7 of MCC.

CONFERENCES

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WEEK 6
Monday. October 8th. Thanksgiving. NO CLASS

Wednesday. October 10th. Influencing Politics. Interest Groups, Social Movements and the Media.
Readings:
CONFERENCES

WEEK 7
Monday, October 15th. **Protests and Revolutions.** Conflict, contentious politics, violence, and change.
Readings:
- Chapter 9 of MCC.

**Wednesday, October 17th.** **Democracies and Democratic Governance.** Differences among democracies and Challenges to democratic governance.
Readings:
- Chapter 10 of MCC.

CONFERENCES
First version of the Paper due in Conferences.

WEEK 8
Monday, October 22nd. **Non-Democracies and Hybrid Regimes.** Authoritarian and Hybrid Regimes.
Readings:
- Chapter 11 of MCC.

**Wednesday, October 24th.** **IN-CLASS EXAM** (covers weeks 5-8)

CONFERENCES

WEEK 9
Readings:
- Chapters 12 of MCC.
- Lisa Hilbink, "The origins of positive judicial independence." World Politics 64, no. 4 (2012): 587-621

Readings:
- Chapter 13 of MCC.

CONFERENCES

WEEK 10
Readings:
- Chapters 14 and 15 of MCC.

Wednesday, November 7th. Public Policy and Administration. The outputs of governing, understanding the policy process and evaluating the policy process. Public Administration
Readings:
- Chapter 16 of MCC.

CONFERENCES

WEEK 11
Monday, November 12th. Politics and Governance at the Global Level. GUEST LECTURER: PROF. KRZYSZTOF PELC
Readings:
- Chapter 18 of MCC.

Wednesday, November 14th. Development, Poverty, and Inequality.
Readings:
- Chapter 17 of MCC.

CONFERENCES

WEEK 12
Monday, November 19th. IN-CLASS EXAM (covers weeks 9-11)

Wednesday, November 21st. NO CLASS, finish up your papers!
CONFERENCES (LAST WEEK!)
Final version of Paper due in Conferences on Nov 23rd.

WEEK 13
Monday, November 26th. Refugees and Forced Migration. GUEST LECTURER: PROF. MEGAN BRADLEY
Readings:

Conclusions. A Science of Politics?
Wednesday, November 28th. Neutrality and objectivity in the study of politics and the importance of the possibility of being wrong. The importance of evidence. Testing arguments. Does evidence accumulate? What is “proof”? How do we know what we know? Developing interesting and important research questions in the social sciences.
No readings!

NO CONFERENCES

WEEK 14
Monday, December 3rd. ASSESSMENT

Tuesday, December 4th. NO CLASS