McGill University

POLI200
Fall 2015

INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL SCIENCE

Professor Manuel Balán
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Class meets: M-W 1.05-2.25pm
Class location: STBIO S1/4
Office hours: Tuesdays 10-11am,
Wednesdays 2.30-3.30pm or by
appointment
TAs: Sihem Attalah, Adriana Farias,
Tony Imbrogno, Tamara Lacasse.

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.
Both the beginning of the course and the last unit will address the nature of a social scientific
approach to political phenomena in order to have an overarching view of political science as a
discipline.

Top Hat:
We will be using the Top Hat (www.tophat.com) classroom response system in class. You will be
able to submit answers to in-class questions using Apple or Android smartphones and tablets,
laptops, or via text message (SMS).
You can visit http://tinyurl.com/THStudentRegistration for the Student Quick Start Guide which
outlines how you will register for a Top Hat account, as well as providing a brief overview to get
you up and running on the system. An email invitation will also be sent to your email account (if
you don’t receive this email, you can register by visiting our direct Top Hat course URL
tophat.com/e/887931).
Top Hat will require a subscription. There are three options to choose from:
- $24 for 4 months of unlimited access
- $36 for 12 months of unlimited access
- $72 for lifetime access
Course Requirements:
The final grade will be determined as follows:

Lecture Attendance 5%
Lecture Participation (including Quizzes) 10%
Conference Attendance 5%
Conference Participation 10%
Written Assignments 20%
In Class Midterm Exam (Monday, Oct 26th) 25%
In Class Final Exam (Wednesday, November 25th) 25%

You must receive a passing grade (higher than 50%) for each component of the course in order to pass the course. Note that this means regular lecture and conference attendance and participation are required in order to pass the course, as well as submission of all written assignments and completion of the exams. Any confirmed plagiarism or cheating results in an F for that assignment and, therefore, an F for the class, in addition to disciplinary action. Regular unexcused absence from lectures or conferences will result in failing the class. 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 will be made to the above system of converting points into letter 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 the paper, but also reserve the right to raise or lower the grade, and my decision is final.

In-Class Midterm and Final exams will take place on October 26th and November 25th, respectively. If you are absent for documented emergency medical or family reasons, an
Alternative exam dates will be arranged. The alternative arrangement is only open to those who can provide a valid medical/family reason for missing the midterm or final exams. If you cannot provide a valid reason for your absence, you will receive a 0 for the missed exam and will thus fail the course.

Students who need to miss a class due to a religious holiday should notify me at least fourteen days prior to the holiday. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, 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, resulting in failing the paper, which means failing the course. Documented illnesses or family emergencies will be the only grounds for exceptions or extensions.

**Description of Grade Components:**

**Lecture Attendance (5%)**: Every lecture I will take attendance using the Top Hat platform. You are allowed 3 absences without penalty, no questions asked or excuses needed. After that, all absences, justified or not, will affect your lecture attendance grade.

**Lecture Participation, including Quizzes (10%)**: Although this is a large lecture course, I will use the TopHat platform to assess participation. This will take place in two ways:

1. At the beginning of each lecture, I will run a quiz lottery. The lottery is basically a coin flip. I will ask someone in the class to “call it” (heads or tails), so there is a 50% chance that there will be a quiz on the assigned readings on every class. The question, posed through Top Hat, is a single—very simple—question meant to determine whether you have done the readings for that class. The answer to the question should be fairly obvious if you have read for class, but hard if you have not. If you are absent, you get a 0, if you are present but don’t know the answer, you earn a 1, if you answer accurately, you get a 3. At the end of the semester I drop the lowest score and average the rest. I use the quiz lottery in order to ensure that you do not fall behind in the readings. Until the end of add-drop lottery quizzes WILL NOT count against your grade. We will start them, but they can only count in your favor, and never against you.

2. During lectures I will ask questions that you can answer using Top Hat. Some of these questions will not have a right or wrong answer, but rather ask simply that you participate. In these cases you will be given participation credit for answering the question, regardless of your answer. Others do have a right answer, and you will be given credit only if you get the answer right. In each lecture there will be, on average, one of each type of questions. Same as quizzes, until end of add-drop, participation questions will only count in your favor, never against you.

Please note that your absences to lectures (even if they are within the 3 allowed absences) MAY affect your participation grade.
Conference Attendance (5%): In every conference (week 3 to week 11), the corresponding TA will take attendance. You are allowed 2 absences to conferences without penalty, again, no questions asked. Beyond that, all absences, justified or not, will affect your conference attendance grade.

Conference Participation (10%): Conferences provide the opportunity for small setting discussion (each conference will have no more than 25 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 (even if they are within the 2 allowed absences) MAY affect your participation grade.

Written Assignments (20%): Throughout the term, you will have to complete 3 short writing assignments. The first one is a mini-autobiography, worth 5%. The other two, worth 7.5% each, will be discussed and arranged in Conferences by the TAs. You will have to turn in these assignments directly to your TA.

For the Mini-Autobiography, due on Sept 16th (turn in hard copy at lecture AND via email to me. If you add the course during add-drop, turn in this assignment before Sept 25th), I ask that you write a two-page, double-spaced essay on your interest in politics and the study of politics. Include answers to as many as possible of the following questions in your response. Essays will be graded on language and following directions, not for content. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions.

1. How would you define politics?
2. When did you first become interested in politics?
3. What political events have you followed with the most attention?
4. How did you follow them? Did you read the newspaper? Did you watch the news? Did you listen to the radio?
5. What is your current system for following the news?
6. What current or recent news stories are you the most interested in?
7. What are your current study skills?
8. Evaluate your high school experience. What did you do well? What would you like to do differently in your college career?
9. What are some of your short-term (at college and/or in your twenties) and long-term career goals?
10. What skills or knowledge do you hope to acquire from the study of politics?

In Class Midterm Exam (25%): On October 26th we will hold a midterm exam covering the lectures, readings, and conference materials from weeks 2 through 7. It will include multiple choice questions and short identification questions.

In Class Final Exam (25%): On November 25th we will hold a final, comprehensive exam covering the lectures, readings, and conference materials from weeks 2 through 11. It will include a combination of multiple choice questions and short identification questions.

Readings: We will use a textbook, available for purchase at the McGill Bookstore. All pages and chapters correspond to the Fourth Edition. You can use earlier editions, but if you do, it is at your
own risk (there are differences between editions). I also assigned and will assign a number of other readings (an average of 1 article per lecture), 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: If you have a disability, please contact the instructor to arrange a time to discuss your situation. It would be helpful if you contact the Office for Students with Disabilities at 514.398.6009 before you do this.

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. Note that this right applies to ALL written work that is to be graded, from one-word answers to dissertations.

Course Evaluations: End-of-term course evaluations are one of the ways that McGill works towards maintaining and improving the quality of courses and the students' learning experience. You will be notified by e-mail when the evaluations are available on Mercury.

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. I make important announcements at the beginning of class, plus I take attendance and there is always the chance that there will be a lottery quiz. In addition, people coming in late could disrupt the Professor and their fellow students.

2. Many students prefer to take notes with their laptops/tablets. This is fine (and in fact you will need an electronic device for attendance and quizzes); however, I expect (and kindly ask) you to refrain from activities unrelated to the class (eg. emailing, instant messaging, facebook, etc.).

3. Please remember to silence 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

WEEK 1
Friday/September/4th, NO CLASS.

Monday/September/5th, Labor Day, NO CLASS.

Wednesday/September/9th. Introduction. Expectations, assignments, structure of the course. Intro to the subfields. No Readings!

WEEK 2
Introduction. What are Social Sciences? What is Political Science?
Monday/September/14th. 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”

Wednesday/September/16th. Explanation and understanding. What is the difference is 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”
Mini-Autobiography DUE IN CLASS!

WEEK 3
Part I.
Readings:
- Chapter 2 of MCC.
- TBA (To Be Assigned)

Readings:
- Chapter 2 of MCC.
- TBA (To Be Assigned)

CONFERENCES START

WEEK 4
Part II: Ideals and Ideologies
Readings:
- Chapter 3 of MCC.
- TBA (To Be Assigned)

Wednesday/September/30th. Feminism and Environmentalism. The development of newer perspectives. GUEST LECTURER: PROF. YVES WINTER.
Readings:
- Chapter 4 of MCC.
- TBA (To Be Assigned)

WEEK 5
Part III. Political Organization and Persuasion/
Readings:
- Chapter 6 of MCC.
- TBA (To Be Assigned)

Wednesday/October/7th. Culture, Participation, Socialization. GUEST LECTURER: PROF. DIETLIND STOLLE.
Readings:
- Chapter 5 of MCC.
- TBA (To Be Assigned)

WEEK 6
Monday/October/12th. Thanksgiving. NO CLASS

Readings:
- Chapter 7 of MCC.
- TBA (To Be Assigned)

WEEK 7
Monday/October/19th. Influencing Politics. Interest Groups, Social Movements and the Media.
Readings:
- Chapter 8 of MCC.
- TBA (To Be Assigned)

Wednesday/October/21st. Protests and Revolutions. Conflict, contentious politics, violence, and change. GUEST LECTURER: PROF. WILL ROBERTS.
Readings:
- Chapter 9 of MCC.

Syllabus POLI319. Balán / 7
- TBA (To Be Assigned)

**WEEK 8**
**Monday/October/26th. MIDTERM!**

**Part IV. Regimes, Institutions, and Governing**
**Wednesday/October/28th.** **Democracies and Democratic Governance.** Differences among democracies and Challenges to democratic governance.

**Readings:**
- Chapter 10 of MCC.
- TBA (To Be Assigned)

**WEEK 9**
**Monday/November/2nd.** **Non-Democracies and Hybrid Regimes.** Authoritarian and Hybrid Regimes.

**Readings:**
- Chapter 11 of MCC.
- TBA (To Be Assigned)

**Wednesday/November/4th.** **The Constitution and the Courts.** Constitutions, Judicial Review, and the Role of Courts in political change and stability. GUEST LECTURER: PROF. JACOB LEVY

**Readings:**
- Chapters 12 of MCC.
- TBA (To Be Assigned)

**WEEK 10**
**Monday/November/9th.** **Levels of Government.** Unitary and Federal Systems, Regionalism, and the role of Local Government. GUEST LECTURER: PROF. CHRISTA SCHOLTZ

**Readings:**
- Chapters 13 of MCC.
- TBA (To Be Assigned)

**Wednesday/November/11th.** **Public Policy and Administration.** The outputs of governing, understanding the policy process and evaluating the policy process. Public Administration

**Readings:**
- Chapter 16 of MCC.
- TBA (To Be Assigned)

**WEEK 11**
**Part V. Global Concerns**
**Monday/November/16th. Development.**

**Readings:**
- Chapter 17 of MCC.
- TBA (To Be Assigned)

**Wednesday/November/18th.** **Politics and Governance at the Global Level.** GUEST LECTURER: PROF. KRZYSZTOF PELC

Syllabus POLI319. Balán / 8
Readings:
- Chapter 18 of MCC.
- TBA (To Be Assigned)

CONFERENCES END (Last week with conferences)

WEEK 12
Monday./November/23rd. Review for Final Exam. /
Readings: No readings!
/
Wednesday./November/25th. FINAL EXAM. /

WEEK 13
Conclusions. A Science of Politics?

Readings:
- TBA (To Be Assigned)
/
Wednesday./December/2nd. 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.
Readings:
- TBA (To Be Assigned)

WEEK 14
Monday./December/5th./NO CLASS.