

Introduction to Political Science

PL 101-2

Course description:

The course introduces students to basic concepts, methods, and theories of the scientific study of politics. In so doing, the class provides a systematic understanding of the foundations of government, political systems, and political behavior. The course familiarizes students with the functioning of political institutions and political power, constitutional frameworks and procedures to obtain public legitimacy, and approaches to different fields, problems and issues of — domestic, comparative, and global — politics in the 21st century.

Summary of Course Content:

This course attempts to provide the student with a general understanding of the evolution of political science through time and an understanding of contemporary political thought and scenarios. Priority is given to conceptualization of different theories and their historical development. Critical thinking and comparative analysis will be applied to achieve a clear understanding of the foundations of modern political science. The class format includes lectures, discussion, teamwork, presentations, and audiovisual materials. Guest speakers and field trips are planned.

Learning Outcomes:

Students will develop the ability to critically analyze the evolution and the diversity of political speculation. They will be able to relate theories and thinkers with political structures, players, and phenomena within the western and global political context. Students will develop the ability to conduct basic research, and organize and present their findings in a logical and independent way.

Textbook:

- Heywood A., *Politics*. Palgrave Macmillan (4th edition), 2013. ISBN 0230396356
- Rosen M., Wolffs J. (eds.), *Political Thought*. (READER) (Oxford Readers), Oxford, 2000 ISBN 0192892789
- The International New York Times, The Economist, The Guardian: “*On politics*”, 2017-2018.
- Supplementary Reading Materials to be assigned in class during the semester (*assigned readings*)

Required reserved readings:

- Shively W. P., *Power & Choice: An Introduction to Political Science*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2018. ISBN 1538114127
- Swift A., *Rule Breaking and Political Imagination*. University of Chicago Press, 2017. ISBN 022647321X
- Swift A., *Political Philosophy: A Beginner's Guide for Students and Politicians*. Oxford, 2006. ISBN 0745635326

Recommended reserved readings:

- Shepsle K., *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior, and Institutions*. Norton, 2010. ISBN 0393935078
- Danziger J. N., *Understanding the Political World: A Comparative Introduction to Pol. Science*. Pearson, 2013. ISBN 129202688X
- Castiglione D., Hampsher-Monk L., *The History of Political Thought in National Context*. Cambridge, 2011. ISBN 0521174937

Program:

- Unit 1** Introduction. Methodology. Definitions. The Context of Political Science. *(assigned readings)*
(Sep. 3, 5)
- Unit 2** Politics in a Global Age. Political Ideas and Ideologies. Classical Ideological Traditions.
(Sep. 10, 12) *(Heywood, p. 1-55; Rosen, p. 1-33; assigned readings)*
- Unit 3** Politics and the State. The Role of the State. Democracy and Legitimacy. Models of Democracy.
(Sep. 17, 19) *(Heywood, p. 56-107; Rosen, p. 34-72; assigned readings)*
- Unit 4** Nations and Nationalism. Varieties of Nationalism. Varieties of Capitalism. Political Economy and Globalization.
(Sep. 24, 26)* *(Heywood, p. 108-150; Rosen, p. 73-102; assigned readings)*
- * FIRST TEST
- Unit 5** Politics, Society and Identity. Political Culture and the Media. Civic Culture. Political Communication.
(Oct. 1, 3) *(Heywood, p. 151-195; Rosen, p. 102-132; assigned readings)*
- Unit 6** Representation, Elections and Voting. Electoral Systems. Voting Behavior. Parties and Party Systems.
(Oct. 8, 10) *(Heywood, p. 196-243; Rosen, p. 133-171; assigned readings)*
- Unit 7** Groups, Interests and Movements. Models of Group Politics. Governments, Systems and Regimes.
(Oct. 15, 17)* *(Heywood, p. 244-283; Rosen, p. 172-213; assigned readings)*
- * SECOND TEST
- Unit 8** Political Executive and Leadership. Presidents, Prime Ministers, Cabinets. Assemblies. Committee System.
(Oct. 22, 24) *(Heywood, p. 284-330; Rosen, p. 214-247; assigned readings)*
- Unit 9** Constitutions. Classifying Constitutions. Law, Morality and Politics. The Judiciary.
(Oct. 29, 31)* *(Heywood, p. 331-350; Rosen, p. 248-284; assigned readings)*
- * Critical Discussion Report topic approved
- Unit 10** Public Policy and the Bureaucracy. The Policy Process. Role of the Bureaucracy. Sources of Bureaucratic Power.
(Nov. 5, 7) *(Heywood, p. 351-377; Rosen, p. 285-318; assigned readings)*
- Unit 11** Multilevel Politics. Multilevel Governance. Subnational Politics. Transnational and European Regionalism.
(Nov. 12, 14)* *(Heywood, p. 378-398; Rosen, p. 319-358; assigned readings)*
- * THIRD TEST
- Unit 12** Security: Domestic and International. The Police, the Military and Domestic Politics. Human Security.
(Nov. 19, 21) *(Heywood, p. 399-420; Rosen, p. 359-385; assigned readings)*
- Unit 13** World Order and Global Governance. The “New World Order”. The “War on Terror”. The United Nations.
(Nov. 26, 28) *(Heywood, p. 421-442; Rosen, p. 386-402; assigned readings)*
- Unit 14** A Crisis in Politics? The Politics of “anti-politics”. Assessing Political Performance. Conclusion.
(Dec. 3, 5) *(Heywood, p. 443-459; assigned readings)*

(Dec. 10 - 14, t.b.s.)*

* FINAL EXAM

Films/Audiovisual Materials Sessions:

- (1. (date t.b.s.) at 19:30)* “on power”
- (2. (date t.b.s.) at 19:30)* “on diversity”
- (3. (date t.b.s.) at 19:30)* “on ideology”

NOTE:

The syllabus schedule may undergo reasonable changes in relation to guest speakers, field trips, make-ups, discussions, events, and other contingencies.

Course requirements:

Class Attendance and Participation.

Three in-class Tests.

A Critical Discussion Report on a topic selected from the class reader (2,000 words).

A Final Exam.

Class Attendance and Participation:

Regular attendance and active participation in class is required. **Attendance requirements:** A maximum of four absences are allowed throughout the semester. Any additional absence will result in a penalization of one grade level (e.g.: from B+ to B for five absences, B+ to B- for six absences, B+ to C+ for seven absences, etc.). Two latenesses count for one absence. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class by calling students' names. Students not answering will be marked absent. Students arrived late will ask the instructor to be marked late at the end of the class, after which attendance records will not be modified.

Use of Computers in class: The use of personal computers and technological devices in class is not permitted except for taking notes, or contributing to class activity during designated times. Students not respecting the rule will be penalized by getting no points in the Class Attendance and Participation requirement (worth 10% of the final grade). Recording and filming in class is not allowed.

Three in-class Tests:

The in-class tests have the same format. The test consists of ten terms/concepts to be concisely defined.

Final Exam:

The Final Exam consists of ten terms/concepts to be critically analysed and discussed.

Critical Discussion Report:

Each student will write an original Critical Discussion Report. The topic must be based on concept/selections taken from the class READER: "Rosen M., Wolffs J. (eds.), *Political Thought*. Oxford Readers" (see textbook section). This Critical Discussion Report will be 2,000 words. The topic of each student's report must be approved by week nine. An electronic version of the completed report must be given to the instructor in class, in person, during any of the last four classes. Files sent by email are not accepted. The deadline is the last class. No materials will be accepted past the deadline. To produce the Critical Discussion Report, students will receive written instructions in class. During the semester, students will show the professor their work in progress and receive approval checks.

Assessment Methods:

Class Attendance and Participation: 10%

Three in-class Tests: 30%. (No make-ups of tests, even for excused absences. However, average of tests taken is used).

Critical Discussion Report: 30%. (2,000 words).

Final Exam: 30%.

Improvement over the semester will be rewarded.

Letter grades correspond to the numerical scale:

A to A- = 100% to 90%. B+ to B- = 89% to 80%. C+ to C- = 79% to 70%. D+ to D- = 69% to 60%. F = <60%.

Assessment Criteria:

A. Work of this quality directly addresses the question or problem raised and provides a coherent argument displaying an extensive knowledge of relevant information or content. This type of work demonstrates the ability to critically evaluate concepts and theory and has an element of novelty and originality. There is clear evidence of a significant amount of reading beyond that required for the course.

B. This is highly competent level of performance and directly addresses the question or problem raised. There is a demonstration of some ability to critically evaluate theory and concepts and relate them to practice. Discussions reflect the student's own arguments and are not simply a repetition of standard lecture and reference material. The work does not suffer from any major errors or omissions and provides evidence of reading beyond the required assignments.

C. This is an acceptable level of performance and provides answers that are clear but limited, reflecting the information offered in the lectures and reference readings.

D. This level of performances demonstrates that the student lacks a coherent grasp of the material. Important information is omitted and irrelevant points included. In effect, the student has barely done enough to persuade the instructor that s/he should not fail.

F. This work fails to show any knowledge or understanding of the issues raised in the question. Most of the material in the answer is irrelevant.

Guest speakers:

Guest speakers expert in the fields related to the program may be invited during the semester. To be announced.

Field trips:

Field trips may be scheduled during the semester in connection with ongoing cultural events of interest in Rome. To be announced.

Recommended films:

M. Bogdanov, *The Mandrake Root*. L. Megahey, *The Advocate*. A. Wajda, *Danton*. B. H. A. Riefenstahl, *Triumph of the Will*. N. Mikhalkov, *Burnt by the Sun*.

Academic honesty

As stated in the university catalog, any student who commits an act of academic dishonesty will receive a failing grade on the work in which the dishonesty occurred. In addition, acts of academic dishonesty, irrespective of the weight of the assignment, may result in the student receiving a failing grade in the course. Instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of Academic Affairs. A student who is reported twice for academic dishonesty is subject to summary dismissal from the University. In such a case, the Academic Council will then make a recommendation to the President, who will make the final decision.

Students with learning or other disabilities

John Cabot University does not discriminate on the basis of disability or handicap. Students with approved accommodations must inform their professors at the beginning of the term. Please see the website for the complete policy.

This syllabus is on line: www.gabrielesimoncini.it
