



Foundations of Government & Politics/POLS 2523
Prothro-Yeager College of Humanities and Social Sciences
CRN 21886 – Section 201
Spring 2021, TR 12:30-1:50pm, PY 200

Instructor: Dr. Rebekah Dowd

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Office hours: Zoom Only – MW 1-3pm, Fri. 9-10am, or by appointment

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Course Description

In this course, we will provide an overview of the social science discipline of Political Science. Political theory, political institutions, and how we study political science will be the main themes of the course. Students are assumed to have no prior knowledge of the material. In addition to the foundations of political science, students will also learn critical reading strategies to better understand political science research as well as analytical writing skills needed to perform their own original research. **The syllabus provides a general plan for the course; changes may be necessary. Any changes made will be announced in class and posted to D2L.**

Note: The course fulfills the Cultural and Global Understanding component of the core curriculum and is a requirement for majors and minors in Political Science, as well as social studies education majors. POLS 2523 is a writing intensive course. Assignments include a progressively written research paper, which will be submitted in gradual portions, and feedback offered after each section to improve the quality of your project and grow your research skills.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the semester, you will be able to:

- Identify and explain the various components of Political Science
- Be proficient in critically reading political science research material and understand how to identify the key theories, hypotheses, data and methodology, and conclusion in these works
- Explain the need for states, define what a state is, and describe the main characteristics of states
- Classify regime types along the continuum of democratic and non-democratic governments of states
- List the main political institutions, and describe the characteristics of executive, legislative, judicial branches of government
- Compare types of constitutions and court systems
- Give details on electoral systems and how this impacts political participation

- Define civil society, and articulate some of the causal factors involved in social movements and political conflict
- Utilize data and digital tools to compare political variables across countries
- Produce an original research paper, comparing aspects of politics across countries or regions

Required Textbook & Instructional Materials

- *The Essentials of Comparative Politics*, by Patrick O'Neil; W.W. Norton, ISBN: 978-0-393-62458-8
- Additional readings, posted to D2L in PDF form

I recommend you follow international news through such sources as [The Washington Post](#), [The New York Times](#), [The Wall Street Journal](#), the BBC World News, etc.. You may use this material for class discussions

Student Handbook

Refer to: [2020-2021 MSU Student Handbook](#)

Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Academic Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work not the individuals to whom credit is given). Copying your own work from another class is also considered cheating because it is self-plagiarism. All work submitted for this course must be your own original work, or the sources must be cited appropriately. Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct and at the end of this syllabus.

[Office of Student Conduct](#)

Electronic Devices:

Laptop computers and tablets are ONLY allowed for the purposes of taking notes and completing in-class assignments. Cellphone use is prohibited unless otherwise indicated by the instructor. Please mute all electronic devices before coming into class.

Many assignments in this course will be conducted in D2L. Quizzes and exams may utilize the Respondus Lockdown Browser and Respondus Monitor for testing. In order to install these programs, you will need the following:

- A desktop computer or laptop other than a Chromebook. NOTE: Chromebooks are not compatible with the Respondus Lockdown Browser and Monitor.
- Apple iPads may be used for quizzes and exams, but these are not advised for any assignment with a written component.
- Mobile phones and similar devices are not compatible with the required programs.
- A working webcam on the computing device used for the exam.
- Microsoft Office for written assignments, which must be submitted in Word doc files. Access to Microsoft Office 365 available through the Office 365 for Students on the Microsoft website.

Please note: a limited number of webcams and laptops with cameras are available for check-out through the MSU Texas Moffett Library.

Office Hours:

Please refer to the hours at the top of this syllabus. You can reach me during those times using a Zoom link on D2L, or we can schedule an appointment, which can be arranged via email.

Communication:

The best way to reach me is by email. I will make all attempts to answer emails within 48 business hours unless it is over a holiday break. You must check your email listed as the primary account in your Banner information, as I will use this address to communicate with you outside of class. I will use D2L for posting syllabi, course communication, course schedule, attendance, and gradebook. There may be some online office hours announced through D2L, if they vary from the office hours posted above. You should regularly check D2L and the email hosted via D2L for important course information.

Attendance Policy:

This course has been planned as a fully face-to-face course for Fall 2020. As such, face masks are required to be worn in class at all times, per university policy. The class will meet in its regularly scheduled room but will utilize social distancing and an assigned seating chart. In the event of increased incidence and risk of COVID-19 that results in the university moving back to a shelter-in-place mode, the course instruction will transition to fully online. More instructions will be given at that time. I have extensive experience designing and teaching online courses, so this transition would proceed smoothly.

Disability Accommodations:

Any student having an education disability plan on file with the university needs to inform me within the first week of the class so I can make the appropriate arrangements to accommodate your situation. In accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Midwestern State University endeavors to make reasonable accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for qualified persons with disabilities to participate in all educational, social, and recreational programs and activities. After notification of acceptance, students requiring accommodations should make application for such assistance through Disability Support Services, located in the Clark Student Center, Room 168, (940) 397-4140. Current documentation of a disability will be required in order to provide appropriate services, and each request will be individually reviewed. For more details, please go to [Disability Support Services](#).

Clery Act Notification:

Sexual misconduct includes sexual harassment, sexual assault, and any other nonconsensual behavior of a sexual nature; sex or gender discrimination violate University policies. Any person experiencing such behavior may receive confidential support from the Counseling Center. Counseling Center staff will hold what you share in strict confidence. If you disclose sexual misconduct, domestic violence, dating violence, or sex or gender discrimination occurring on campus, in a University-sponsored program, or involving a campus visitor or University student or employee (whether current or former) to me, I as the instructor of this course am required to forward such information to the MSU Title IX office. This should not prevent you from speaking to me should you wish to do so, but know that

what you tell me in this area cannot be held confidential, but must be shared with the Title IX office.

Grading

There are four graded requirements for the course that will be the basis for assessing student performance:

- Attendance and discussion questions for class
- Reading quizzes, due start of class on the deadline, taken in D2L
- Three Exams, multiple choice and some long answers
- Original research paper

Assignments	Percentage
Attendance and Discussion question	10
Reading Quizzes	15
Exam 1	15
Exam 2	15
Exam 3	15
Research Paper	30
Total	100

Grading Scale:

Grade	Percentage
A	90-100
B	80-89
C	70-79
D	60-69
F	Less than 60

Attendance and Discussion Questions:

Your grade in this area will be split between attendance in person and providing discussion questions for one date of the class. For the attendance: I record attendance randomly, and if you are present, you will receive full credit for attendance. For the discussion questions: you will sign up for one date, and you will create two questions that relate to the assigned reading for your date. For you to receive your full credit, you must post the questions to D2L in the discussion folder **no later than 24 hours before the class** date.

Reading Quizzes:

These are to insure you are reading and understanding the assigned texts each week. Read thoroughly, take notes, jot down questions, and bring these to class, so we can discuss them together. I expect you to complete the readings BEFORE each class. The lectures will be to help you synthesize the concepts across the readings, not only to introduce the readings. The reading quizzes are posted in D2L, under the Quizzes tab. They are open book, and you can take them an unlimited number of times **before** the due date and time. Each quiz will have between 10-20 questions – which may be multiple choice, true/false, or multiple answers. Use them to help you prepare for in-class discussions and the exams. There are six quizzes, and the lowest quiz grade will be dropped. Quizzes expire by the start of class on the date the reading is to be discussed. No extensions are offered for these.

Exams:

These will include multiple choice questions and long answers. Each exam will feature material introduced since the last exam only. Anything I say in the lectures, along with anything in the assigned readings could be used for the exams.

- Exam 1: Thursday, February 25
- Exam 2: Tuesday, March 30
- Exam 3: Thursday, April 29

“Choose Your Own Adventure” Research Paper:

The critical thinking required of political science research cannot be easily developed or tested only using traditional exams. Writing encourages research, formulation of argument, and articulation of supportive statements. Therefore, in this course you will be required to write a 10-page research paper. The good news is that 1) I don't grade solely based on grammar mistakes, and 2), you submit the paper in steps throughout the term, giving you a change to improve each time. In other words, the idea is to teach you how to plan and organize your research, choose reputable data sources, outline the argument, develop your critical analysis of the problem you chose to discuss, and then write and edit the draft. Together these steps will help you grow in your knowledge of politics AND improve professional writing skills that are useful in multiple careers. You can choose ANY topic and any case country(ies), as long as you can logically argue that your topic ties into some concept taught during the course. The paper must be designed according to academic research structure formatting (you will be taught about this), and must be an argumentative, or critical analysis of your topic. A fact-based descriptive paper will receive a poor grade, because it did not test a political theory around a particular problem, using real data. I will teach you how to do these things. The paper sections are submitted as follows:

1. *Research Question* (a clear political problem or puzzle you aim to solve, and why it is important to political science), *and potential bibliography* (8-10 reputable sources from news, professional journals or books), 5%, due Sunday, February 7, 11:59 PM.
2. *Thesis* (a causal argument, with an independent and dependent variable(s)), and *Outline* (3 main points with supporting sentences). 5%, due Sunday, March 7, 11:59 PM.
3. *Rough draft* (the full 10-page paper, 12-point font, double-spaced, not counting bibliography). 10%, due Sunday, April 11, 11:59 PM.
4. *Final draft* (the edited paper, with changes made after feedback to you). 10%, due Sunday, April 25, 11:59PM.

Policy on Missed Work

There will be no makeup for the news focus, reading quizzes, or the last exam. Makeup credit for paper sections and the other exams will only be given in cases of legitimate and documented emergencies such as doctors excuses, college coach-provided travel schedules, or legal court attendance. Do not miss these assignments unless there is a real emergency. All makeup work must be requested by email within 5 days of the regular due date, except for the last exam; this must be taken on time to avoid missing final grade requirements set by the registrar's office.

Last Day to drop with a grade of “W:”

Please note, the semester's midpoint is **April 23 at 4:00pm. This is the last Day for "W"**. Students can **withdraw from the class up to this point and** receive a W for the class. However, there is a limited number of W's a student can receive over their academic career. **Drops after this date will receive grades of "F."** If you intend to withdraw from a course, you must do so yourself. If you are still on the roll when I have to assign grades and you haven't done any passing work, then you will fail. So, if you intend to drop, please make sure you do so in time. Also note, after the first few days of the semester, I have to report student attendance to the university. If you have never attended this class OR have stopped attending when I have to submit my report to the university, it is possible that you will receive less financial assistance in future terms.

Refer to: [Drops, Withdrawals & Void](#)

Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

Extensive use of the MSU D2L platform is a part of this course. Each student is expected to be familiar with this learning platform as it provides a primary source of submitting assignments and general course information. You can log into [D2L](#) through the MSU Homepage. If you experience difficulties, please contact the technicians listed for the program.

Class Behavior Policies

In order to make this a successful class, it is important that we create an environment where everyone has an opportunity to learn. **This includes in-person and online classes**. To this end, you should know that the university policy on disruptive behavior in class applies. Disruptive class behavior for this purpose is defined by the instructor. Such behavior includes, but is not limited to, verbal or physical threats, repeated obscenities, unreasonable interference with class discussion, making/receiving personal phone calls or pages (text messaging) during class, wearing of headphones/earbuds in class, leaving and entering class frequently in the absence of notice to instructor of illness or other extenuating circumstances, and persisting in disruptive personal conversations with other class members. For purposes of this policy, it may also be considered disruptive behavior for a student to exhibit threatening, intimidating, or other inappropriate behavior toward the instructor or classmates outside of class. If your behavior is disruptive to other students or the instructor, this will violate University guidelines, and you will be reported to administrative authorities.

Change of Schedule

A student dropping a course (but not withdrawing from the University) within the first 12 class days of a regular semester or the first four class days of a summer semester is eligible for a 100% refund of applicable tuition and fees. Dates are published in the Schedule of Classes each semester.

Refund and Repayment Policy

A student who withdraws or is administratively withdrawn from Midwestern State University (MSU) may be eligible to receive a refund for all or a portion of the tuition, fees and room/board charges that were paid to MSU for the semester. HOWEVER, if the student received financial aid (federal/state/institutional grants, loans and/or scholarships), all or a portion of the refund may be returned to the financial aid programs. As described below, two formulas (federal and state) exist in determining the amount of the refund. (Examples of each refund calculation will be made available upon request).

College Policies

Campus Carry Rules/Policies

Refer to: [Campus Carry Rules and Policies](#)

Smoking/Tobacco Policy

College policy strictly prohibits the use of tobacco products in any building owned or operated by WATC. Adult students may smoke only in the outside designated-smoking areas at each location.

Alcohol and Drug Policy

To comply with the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act of 1989 and subsequent amendments, students and employees of Midwestern State are informed that strictly enforced policies are in place which prohibits the unlawful possession, use or distribution of any illicit drugs, including alcohol, on university property or as part of any university-sponsored activity. Students and employees are also subject to all applicable legal sanctions under local, state and federal law for any offenses involving illicit drugs on University property or at University-sponsored activities.

Grade Appeal Process

Update as needed. Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University [Undergraduate Catalog](#)

Course Schedule:

You are expected to complete all readings **BEFORE** the class date listed.. *See the next pages for schedule.*

Course Schedule

Dates	Readings/Assignments/Exams	Assignment Due Date
Introduction Tue., Jan. 12	Introduce course, review syllabus, how to read chapter content - Chapter 1: "What is Political Philosophy" by Leo Strauss in <i>Political Theory Reader</i> – PDF online	
What is political science? Thu., Jan. 14	Read "What is Political Science" by Cameron pgs. 207-top of 213, <i>PDF in D2L</i>	
What is the purpose of government? Tue., Jan. 19	Read Chapter 7, "The Contractual Origins of Society" by Thomas Hobbes, <i>PDF in D2L</i>	
Political Theories & Ideologies Thu., Jan. 21	Read Liberalism Philosophy and Traditional Ideologies chapter by Garner <i>Optional: Two Treatises of Government (by John Locke)</i> - <i>All PDFs in D2L</i>	
Tue., Jan. 26	Read Chapter 2: Marx and Engel's, "Communist Manifesto" - <i>PDF in D2L</i>	Reading Quiz 1 due before class
State Formation & Purpose of Governments Thu., Jan. 28	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read O'Neil, Chapter 2 – "States" and 2. Skim Charles Tilly, Chapter 3, "How War Made States" from <i>Coercion, Capital, and European States</i> – <i>PDF in D2L</i> 	
Identity and Belonging Tue., Feb. 2	Read O'Neil, Chapter 3- "Nations & Society"	
Social Science Research Thu., Feb. 4	Read O'Neil, Chapter 1, "Comparative Political Science Research" Focus on research question & literature review	Reading Quiz 2, due before class; Paper Part I due Sunday, February 7, 11:59PM
Tue., Feb. 9	Read O'Neil, Chapter 4, "Political economy", pgs. 96-118 only	
Thu., Feb. 11	Read O'Neil, Chapter 4, "Political economy", pgs. 119-132	
Regime Type Tue., Feb. 16	Read O'Neil Chapter 5 – "Democratic Regimes" pgs. 134-145	
Thu., Feb. 18	Read O'Neil, Chapter 6, "Non-Democratic Regimes"	Reading quiz 3 due before class
Social Science Research Tue., Feb. 23	Read World Bank, Freedom House, OECD, etc. – Read Freedom House - PDF online Focus on finding data – bring your computer if you have one! Also, we will discuss how to read an academic journal article	
Thu., Feb. 25	Exam 1	

Dates	Readings/Assignments/Exams	Assignment Due Date
Institutions: Constitutions Tue., Mar. 2	Read Caramani Chapter 9, by Alec Stone Sweet, "Constitutions, rights, and judicial power", <i>PDF in D2L</i> & performing case studies – comparing variables	
Institutions: Courts Thu., Mar. 4	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read O'Neil Chapter 5 – "Democratic Regimes" pgs.148-150 <p>and</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Christopher Larkins 1996 article, "Judicial Independence & Democratization..." <i>PDF in D2L</i> 	Paper Part II Sunday, March 7, 11:59PM
Institutions: Bureaucracy Tue., Mar. 9	Read "Politics as a Vocation", by Max Weber, <i>PDF in D2L</i>	Reading Quiz 4, due before class
Institutions: Executive Systems Thu., Mar. 11	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read O'Neil Chapter 5, pgs. 146, 147 (sections on Executives and Heads of Government), then skip and read pgs. 150-153 – "Parliamentary, Presidential, and Semi-Presidential Systems" 2. Read Presidentialism vs. Parliamentarism by Fred Riggs - <i>PDF in D2L</i> 	
Institutions: Legislatures Tue., Mar. 16	Read Caramani, Chapter 7: Legislatures, by Amie Kreppel - <i>PDF in D2L</i>	
What is representation? Thu., Mar. 18	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read O'Neil Chapter 5, "Electoral Systems, Referendum", p. 157-165 (stop at "referendum") 2. Skim Read Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005 article, "Women's Representation" - <i>PDF in D2L (skim the methods stuff with the tables, don't worry, I'll explain this in class)</i> 	Reading Quiz 5 due before class
Political Parties and Interest Groups Tue., Mar. 23	Read Chapter 12 by Richard S. Katz, "Political Parties" pgs. 208-222 - <i>PDF in D2L</i>	
Thu., Mar. 25	Read Grossman & Helpman 1996 article, "Electoral Competition and Special Interest Politics" – PDF online	Reading quiz 6 due start of class
Tue., Mar. 30	Exam 2	
Thu., Apr. 1	Holiday Break- No Classes	
Tue., Apr. 6	Write-in workshop. Bring your computer! Time to get advice and help with your project!	
Cases: Social Movements Thu., Apr. 8	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read Skim Sidney Tarrow, excerpt from 1998 book, <i>Power in Social Movement</i>, Chapters 1 and 5. 2. Read NY Times article on Black Lives Matter movement 3. – <i>PDFs online</i> 	Paper Pt III/ Rough draft due, Sunday, April 11, 11:59PM
Cases, States: Tue., Apr. 13	Case: China <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read O'Neil Case Chapter 8, "China" 2. Read: "Hong Kong in Protest", by Melvin Barnes, Jr. – <i>PDFs online</i> 	
Cases, States: Thu., Apr. 15	Case: Read O'Neil Chapter 13, "South Africa" – <i>PDF online</i> – LAST REGULAR CLASS!	

Dates	Readings/Assignments/Exams	Assignment Due Date
Tue., Apr. 20	Meet with students on papers – virtual time sign up for Zoom	
Thu., Apr. 22	Meet with students on papers – virtual time sign up for Zoom	Final Draft of Paper due Sunday, April 25 11:59PM
Thu., Apr. 29	Exam 3 ONLINE	

Basic Citation Guide (for more detail and specific style guides, see citation guide on D2L)

1. If an idea is yours, or if you are stating a well-known fact, you do not need to provide a citation.

Examples: I argue that the presence of nuclear weapons would have prevented war.

The First World War began in 1914.

2. If you borrow an idea from a source but put it in your own words, you must cite the source after you use it. There is no need to use quotation marks. However, changing a couple of words from a source is not enough to “put it in your own words.” Rather, you should incorporate the idea into the context of your argument in a more complete way.

In your citation, put the author’s name in parentheses along with the date of publication. If you are citing a chapter from an edited volume, be sure to use the name of the chapter author rather than the name of the editor. This is in-text citation as used by the APA format you need to follow for your written assignments.

Example: With the withdrawal of American forces from Europe after the Cold War, the chances for another European war increased (Mearsheimer 1990).

3. If you take a quotation word for word from a source, you should put it in quotation marks and cite the author, publication date, and page number. While a well-placed quote can strengthen a paper, however, you should avoid relying too much on the statements of others. In other words, use direct quotes sparingly.

Example: “Moral arguments move and constrain people” (Nye 2005, p. 20).

In addition to citing your sources in the body of your paper, you should include a “Bibliography” page at the end. On this page, you should provide full citations for all of the sources that you used. The following is a guide to proper citation format:

For books: Goldstein, J.S. (2005) *International Relations, Sixth Edition*. New York: Longman.

For articles: Allison, G.T. (1969) Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis. *The American Political Science Review*, 63(3), 689-712.

For chapters in edited volumes:

Wheeler, N.J. and Booth, K. (1992) The Security Dilemma. in J. Baylis and N.J. Regger (Eds.), *Dilemmas of World Politics* (pp. 29-43). New York: Oxford University Press.

For websites: World Bank. Trends in Average Tariff Rates for Developing and Developed Countries, 1980-99 (Unweighted in %). Available from www.worldbank.org/wbiep/trade/data/TR_Data.html. Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2003. (accessed: DATE)

If relying on websites for material, you should also take care that your source is reputable.