



Foundations of Government & Politics/POLS 2523
Prothro-Yeager College of Humanities and Social Sciences
CRN 12456– Section 102
Fall 2020, MWF 11-11:50am, PY 2019

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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 outline, introduction, rough draft, and final draft forms.

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

Students are expected to 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: [2019-2020 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.

[Office of Student Conduct](#)

Electronic Devices:

Laptop computers and tablets are 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. Tests and exams will 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 or a compatible program for written assignments. 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 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. When the university transitions to fully online after Thanksgiving we will review during the last week of class and hold our finals virtually. 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.

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:

Student performance will be evaluated on the basis of the following (detailed info below):

- News Focus
- Reading quizzes, due each Sunday by 11:59 PM, taken in D2L
- Three Exams, multiple choice and some long answers
- Original research paper

Assignments	Points
News Focus (Participation)	10
Reading Quizzes	15
Exam 1	15
Exam 2	15
Exam 3	15
Research Paper	30
Total	100

Grading Scale:

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

News Focus:

Each student will have one date that s/he will be responsible for locating and posting a link to a current news story that matches a topic we are covering during the term. On your assigned date, you will post the news story link to a discussion forum in D2L. You will also include 2 discussion questions that tie the story to the reading for that class day. For you to receive your full credit, you must post this **no later than 24 hours before the class** date. In class, I will ask you to briefly about why you chose this news story and how you felt it relates to the reading topic for the class.

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. 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.

Exams:

These can 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: Monday, September 28
- Exam 2: Monday, October 26
- Exam 3: Friday, December 4-December 7 at 12 noon

“Choose Your Own Adventure” Research Paper:

The critical thinking required of political science research cannot be easily developed or tested using traditional exams. Writing encourages research, formulation of argument, and articulation of supportive statements. Therefore, in this course you will be required to write an 8-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. 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 argument in sections, and then write and edit the draft. Together these steps will help you grow in your knowledge of politics AND develop 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. The paper sections are submitted as follows:

1. *Thesis statement* (a brief paragraph explaining your core argument; 3-5 sentences only), and *Outline* (3 main points plus supporting sentences). 5 points, due Monday, **October 5**, 11:59 PM.
2. *Research question and introduction* (a clear question that you use to argue for why this research project is important to political science, and an introduction paragraph that tells me what you are about to explain in the details of the full paper), *Bibliography of resources* (8-10 reputable sources from news, professional journals, or books). 5 points, due Monday **October 19**, 11:59 PM.
3. *Rough draft* (the full 8-page paper, 12-point font, double-spaced, not counting bibliography). 10 points, due Monday, **November 9**, 11:59 PM.
4. *Final draft* (the edited paper, with changes made after I returned the first draft to you). 10 points, due Monday, **November 30**, 9 AM.

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 **December 4, 2020 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 to the university whether students have participated at least once. If you have never attended this class when I have to submit my report to the university, it is possible that the university will drop you from the course, potentially impacting your academic record and financial assistance.

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. All reading quizzes are due by Friday of each week. *See next page for schedule.*

Course Schedule

Dates	Readings/Assignments/Exams	Assignment Due Date
Introduction Mon., Aug. 24	Introduce course, review syllabus, how to read chapter content	
What is political science? Wed., Aug. 26	“What is Political Science” by Cameron pgs. 207-top of 213 including section on Political Theory – PDF online	
Fri., Aug. 28	Chapter 1: “What is Political Philosophy” by Leo Strauss in <i>Political Theory Reader</i> – PDF online	
Political Theories; Making sense of politics through the lens of theory Mon., Aug. 31	Chapter 7, “The Contractual Origins of Society” by Thomas Hobbes in <i>Political Theory Reader</i>	
Wed., Sep. 2	Chapter 3, “Why Liberalism Works” by Paul Starr <i>In Political Theory Reader</i>	
Fri., Sep. 4	Chapter 2: Marx and Engel’s, “Communist Manifesto”	Reading Quiz 1 due Friday, September 4, 11:59PM
Mon., Sep. 7	<i>NO CLASSES – Labor Day Holiday</i>	
States & Governments Wed., Sep. 9	O’Neil, Chapter 2 – “States”	
Fri., Sep. 11	Charles Tilly, Chapter 3, “How War Made States” from <i>Coercion, Capital, and European States</i> – PDF online	
Political Ideologies Mon., Sep. 14	“Traditional Ideologies” pgs. 117-137, by Robert Garner – PDF online; will discuss how to read an academic journal article	
Wed., Sep. 16 Citizenship	Citizenship and Immigration, by Irene Bloemraad -- PDF online	
Fri., Sep. 18 Skills: Social Science Research	O’Neil, Chapter 1, “Comparative Political Science Research”	
Mon., Sep. 21 Political systems: Regime Classifications	O’Neil Chapter 5 – “Democratic Regimes” pgs. 134-145	
Wed., Sep. 23	O’Neil, Chapter 6, “Non-Democratic Regimes”	
Fri., Sep. 25 Skills: Locating Data online	Locating Data Friday: World Bank, Freedom House, OECD, etc. – Read Freedom House - PDF online <i>Students are strongly encouraged to bring your laptop to use during this class, as we will review websites for research data. If you do not have a laptop or tablet you can use for this class, please let me know we can make alternative arrangements.</i>	Reading Quiz 2, due Friday, September 25, 11:59PM
Mon., Sep. 28	Exam 1	

Dates	Readings/Assignments/Exams	Assignment Due Date
Wed., Sep. 30 Institutions: Constitutions	Caramani Chapter 9, by Alec Stone Sweet, “Constitutions, rights, and judicial power” – PDF	
Fri., Oct. 2 Institutions: Courts	O’Neil Chapter 5 – “Democratic Regimes” pgs.148-150 and Christopher Larkins 1996 article, “Judicial Independence & Democratization...” – PDF online –	
Mon., Oct. 5 Institutions: Bureaucracy	“Politics as a Vocation”, by Max Weber - PDF online	PART 1 OF PAPER DUE 11:59PM
Wed., Oct. 7 Institutions: Executive Branch & Governments	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”	
Fri., Oct. 9	Presidentialism vs. Parliamentarism by Fred Riggs – PDF online	Reading Quiz 3 due by 11:59PM on Friday, October 9
Mon., Oct. 12 Institutions: Legislatures and Electoral Systems	Caramani, Chapter 7: Legislatures, by Amie Kreppel – PDF online	
Wed., Oct. 14	O’Neil Chapter 5, “Electoral Systems, Referendum”, p. 157-165	
Fri., Oct. 16	What is minority/group representation? Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005 article, “Women’s Representation” – PDF online	
Mon., Oct 19 Political Parties and Interest Groups	Great Political Theories Chapter on Elitists – Michels on Political Parties and Chapter 12 by Richard S. Katz, “Political Parties” pgs. 208-222 – both PDFs online	PART 2 OF PAPER DUE 11:59PM
Wed., Oct. 21	“The Federalist No. 10” by James Madison and Chapter 13 by Daniele Caramani, “Party Systems”, pgs. 225-233	
Fri., Oct. 23	Grossman & Helpman 1996 article, “Electoral Competition and Special Interest Politics” – PDF online	Reading Quiz 4 due by Friday, October 23, 11:59PM
Mon., Oct. 26	Exam 2	
Wed., Oct. 28 Domestic Economics & Welfare State	O’Neil: Chapter 4 – “Political Economy”, pgs. 96-118	
Fri., Oct. 30	O’Neil: Chapter 4 – “Political Economy”, pgs. 119-132	
Mon., Nov. 2	Pgs. 1-15 in “Welfare States and Welfare Theory”, by – Jørgen Goul Andersen - PDF online	

Dates	Readings/Assignments/Exams	Assignment Due Date
Wed., Nov. 4 Actors & Behavior: Civil Society & Media	Almond & Verba, <i>Civic Culture</i> , p. 1-32 and “The Strange Disappearance of Civic America” by Robert Putnam in <i>Political Theory Reader</i> Both PDFs online	Reading Quiz 5 due by 11:59PM on Weds. , Nov. 4
Fri., Nov. 6	Mancur Olson excerpt from 1971 book, <i>The Logic of Collective Action</i> ”, excerpts from p. 5-52 and Sidney Tarrow, excerpt from 1998 book, <i>Power in Social Movement</i> , Chapters 1 and 5. – PDF online	
Mon., Nov. 9	“Media & Politics”, pgs. 324-334 by Peter Ferdinand– PDF online	Rough Draft due at 11:59PM
Wed., Nov. 11	Case: Black Lives Matter Read: The Atlantic and NY Times articles on Black Lives Matter movement – both PDFs online	
Fri., Nov. 13	O’Neil: Chapter 7 – “Political Violence”	Reading Quiz 6 due by 11:59PM on Friday, Nov. 13
Mon., Nov. 16 Actors & Behavior: Anti-State Efforts	Case: Hong Kong Protests Read: “Hong Kong in Protest”, by Melvin Barnes, Jr. – PDF online	
Wed., Nov. 18	Case: Brazil O’Neil Chapter, “Brazil” – PDF online and Sad Decline article – PDF online	
Fri., Nov. 20 Case Countries	Case: China Lawrence, “China’s Political Institutions and Leaders...” – PDF online	
Mon., Nov. 23	Case: South Africa O’Neil Chapter 13, “South Africa” – PDF online	
24-29 NOV	Thanksgiving Break	
Mon., Nov. 30	Case: The United Kingdom O’Neil Chapter, “United Kingdom” – PDF online	Final Draft of Paper due, 11:59PM
Wed., Dec. 2	Online virtual hours for review/questions	
Fri., Dec. 4	Exam 3 Opens ONLINE; stays open until Monday Dec. 7 at 10 am.	