
Introduction to Political Science PSCI 150 Section A

**Fall 2009
MWF, 8:40 – 9:30 am
Ross 208**

Dr Michael MacLeod
Center Street House, Room 3
Telephone: 503-554-2675
Email: mmacleod@georgefox.edu
Office Hours: MW 3:00-6:00 pm; TTh 3:30-6:00 pm, or by appointment.

Course Description & Objectives

This class provides an introduction to the study of politics. Over fifteen weeks, we will consider the nature and purpose of politics, and introduce you to key concepts, relationships, terminology and methodology used in the study of political science. We will also be introducing you to the three main subfields in the political science discipline: theory, comparative politics and international relations. An additional element in the course will be a consideration of the relationship between Christianity, religion and politics, both in the United States and beyond.

Although this course emphasizes the systematic investigation of the functions and structures of political systems, it is also a survey course. Which means we will cover a lot of territory very fast. Nevertheless, by the end, students completing the course will be able to

- define, understand, and apply the concepts, principles, and practices of politics as background for the study of American and non-American political institutions
- recognize the analytical methods and approaches that political scientists use for the study of politics
- identify and evaluate the relationships among historical, social, political, economic, cultural and global forces, and their effects, on the US and other political systems
- apply and critique a body of factual knowledge and theories relevant to understanding domestic and international political structures
- comprehend and analyze factors influencing contemporary political relations within and between political systems around the world
- recognize and tolerate alternative points of view on historical and contemporary problems in comparative and international politics

About the Syllabus

Please note: unless I clearly and unambiguously change something on this syllabus, which is quite possible, you are responsible for everything on it. You should read it, keep it, and follow it religiously.

Also: we may have to be flexible regarding the schedule and assignments outlined below because of an expected heavy flu season, as you may well know. I have tried to take this into consideration, but other adjustments may be necessary.

Course Materials

1. BOOKS. There are two required texts for this course:

Robert Garner, Peter Ferdinand & Stephanie Lawson, Introduction to Politics. Oxford University Press, 2009.

Iain McLean and Alistair McMillan, Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics. 2nd edition. Oxford University Press, 2003. [referred to as OCDP]

Students are *highly* recommended to utilize the excellent website that was developed for the main text (the first one above), which includes review questions, case studies, a glossary, and Web links. The web address is:

<http://www.oup.com/uk/orc/bin/9780199231331/>

Students should use the OCDP book as a dictionary for words and/or authors or other items they read in the main text and require more information about. As well, I will compile a list of those specific words & terms you will be responsible for from the OCDP, and make that list available via FoxTALE.

2. OTHER. Students are required to read *daily* pieces from the following sources below for political news. Part of our regular discussion & interaction amongst ourselves will be about current events, and trying to relate them to the content of this course. Sometimes this will be easy, sometimes not. But being aware of events and issues, and making intelligent comments and contributions, will constitute a part of your class discussion grade and inform your other work in the course.

The New York Times (you can subscribe free of charge at www.nytimes.com)

Real Clear Politics (www.realclearpolitics.com -- this is a website clearinghouse for views on both sides of the political spectrum)

Note: I have not recommended any specific politically-based blogs/internet sites because a) although I have some of my own, they may or may not be to your personal liking, and b) I want you to find your own site(s) that fit your particular interests and views. If you end up citing one or more in class, you will endear yourself to me in powerful ways. However, I am happy to share my favourites in class if asked.

3. OTHER READINGS. I will assign these as needed and make them available via the FoxTALE system. As with the syllabus, I reserve the right the change or amend the course materials.

Course Requirements & Grading

1. Attendance: Although I will not taking attendance, I expect students to attend class regularly and, more importantly, contribute to it as deemed appropriate. Please note that the content of the classes will not necessarily be identical to the content of the readings, and thus regular attendance is crucial for achieving success.

2. This class meets three days a week. The Monday & Wednesday classes will be mainly lecture format, whereas the Friday class will be more seminar-based and involve more class discussion of various kinds. Lectures/outlines and weekly discussion questions and other items to note will be posted to FoxTALE in due course. Some Fridays we may organize debates, have group presentations, and engage in other activities designed to make politics alive and interesting. Showing up and actively participating (especially, but not only, on Friday) is where you will both gain a) my appreciation, and b) your grade for valuable class participation.

3. Your final grade will be determined on the following basis:

Class Participation	10%
Mid-Term Exam #1	20%
Mid-Term Exam #2	20%
Op-Ed Pieces	20%
Final Exam	30%

Class Participation (10%): Your participation grade will reflect your regular attendance but mostly the quantity and quality of your contributions, for all classes but especially the Friday one. For simplicity sake, I will use a basic letter scale for this component (A = excellent, B = good to very good, C = fair to average, D = barely passing, F = failure) and convert these into the standard numerical grade scale (below). You should come to each class (but especially Friday's) prepared to discuss international events, the week's lectures, readings and questions posted for that week on FoxTALE (these are just a sample of the questions that could be addressed). You should strive to make a meaningful contribution – I am NOT a mind reader. To earn a top grade, you must participate verbally and demonstrate that you are keeping on top of readings, etc, and that you are able to engage the weekly topic. You must also show respect for me and for the other students in the class. Disrespectful, rude, and intimidating behavior will not be tolerated. Please be aware that there is no way to make up your participation grade at the end of the term; if you miss classes or do not participate in the discussion without explanation, you will receive a poor grade or forfeit this mark.

Mid-Term Exams (2 x 20%): The mid-terms exam are scheduled in-class for **Wednesday, October 7** and **Friday, November 13**. The exams will consist of some combination of multiple choice, identification, short answer and/or an essay question, and will take the entire 50 minutes in length. You are responsible for all of the material covered in the classes and the assigned readings. Those students who miss a mid-term exam must present a medical or counseling certificate in order to avoid receiving an F. You should contact me immediately to arrange a make-up exam in the event that you have a valid excuse. There will be a very short time frame for a make-up.

Op-Ed Pieces: Students are required to write two opinion pieces (editorials) based upon your regular readings (noted above) of the political news, i.e. the NY Times and the articles at RealClear Politics. The purpose of these op-ed pieces is for you to engage an audience critically on any issue that strikes you, to use facts and persuasion to rigorously argue a thesis. For examples, you can go to the editorial page of the NY Times and/or read most of the contributions you will see at RealClearPolitics.com. Or you can find various well-known bloggers and their sites for examples (I will discuss the pros and cons of this in class). You do not need footnotes BUT – and this is important – you cannot simply mimic the arguments of others, and you MUST indicate where you obtained a quotation or statistic (unless they are common knowledge). The pieces must be 750 words long (plus or minus 50 words: use your word count function in MS Word or whatever you use), single-spaced. We will discuss this assignment in more detail in class.

These editorials are due by the beginning of class on **Monday, September 21** and **Monday, October 26**. No exceptions will be made. If an assignment is not handed in on time, it will be given a ZERO and make your chances very difficult to obtain a good grade in the course. (I will decide later whether these will be hard copy only and/or uploaded to FoxTALE.

** The ‘third option’: Students have the option of writing a *third* opinion piece and substituting the grade for that assignment for the lowest grade of the other two op-pieces. In others, I will use only the marks from the two highest graded op-ed pieces ... *if* you choose to submit a third one. You do NOT have to submit a third piece and I will not use the grade for your third try if it is lower than either of the other two submissions. If you choose to submit a third editorial, it will be due at the beginning of class on **Monday, December 7**. No exceptions made, and no submissions will be accepted after this time.

Final Exam (30%): The final exam will be comprehensive in nature, i.e. focus on the entire course. It will take place on **Tuesday, December 15 at 8 am** and will be two hours in length.

4. Grading Scale: A final letter grade based upon the percentage of points you earn in this course will be given based on the following scale:

A 93-100	B 83-86.99	C 73-76.99	D 60-66.99
A- 90-92.99	B- 80-82.99	C- 70-72.99	F 0-59.99
B+ 87-89.99	C+ 77-79.99	D+ 67-69.99	

Course Schedule

Here you will find the main theme of the week for the class, the required readings (to be done beforehand, except for the first class), and *some* of the questions that will be used by me to guide discussion during the week (but especially on Friday).

Note: Although the topics & reading schedule follow the textbook, I will NOT be simply re-hashing what the textbook says. Instead, I will be highlighting some points I think worth noting but will also discuss items (issues, terms, thinkers) that are NOT in the text.

Note: there are no classes on September 9 (Serve Day) and 25 (I am away), on October 9 and November 27 (which are holidays).

<i>Week</i>	<i>Dates</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Reading [Text]</i>
1	Aug 31, Sept 2, 4	Introduction	Introduction
2	Sept 7, 11	The 'State' and 'Power'	Chapters 1-2
3	Sept 14, 16, 18	Democratic Governance & Freedom	Chapters 3-4
4	Sept 21, 23	Ideologies (I)	Chapter 5
	** Sept 21: first op-ed piece due		
5	Sept 28, 30, Oct 2	Ideologies (II)	Chapter 6
6	Oct 5: Catch-up and Review for Exam		
	** Oct 7: Mid-term #1		
7	Oct 12, 14, 16	The Modern State & Its Institutions	Chapters 7-8
8	Oct 19, 21, 23	Legislatures & Bureaucracies	Chapters 9-10
9	Oct 26, 28, 30	Political Parties	Chapter 11
	** Oct 26: second op-ed piece is due		
10	Nov 2, 4, 6	Interest Groups & the Media	Chapter 12
11	Nov 9,11	Political Culture	Chapter 13
	** Nov 13: Mid-term #2		
12	Nov 16,18,20	The State in the International System	Chapters 14, 18
13	Nov 23,25	Other Actors in International Affairs	Chapter 19
14	Nov 30, Dec 2, 4	Theories of International Relations	Chapters 15-16
15	Dec 7, 9, 11 Dec 11	International Security & Economy Review of Course & Exam Prep	Chapters 17 and 20 Conclusion

Other Important Information [next page]

Other Important Information

If you have specific physical, psychiatric, or learning disabilities and require accommodations, please contact the Disability Services Office as early as possible so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. You will need to provide current documentation of your disability to the Disability Services Office. For more information, go to ds.georgefox.edu or contact Rick Muthiah, Dean of the Center for Teaching and Learning (503-554-2314 or rmuthiah@georgefox.edu).

The university deals strongly with cases of cheating & plagiarism. Stress is no excuse, so it's better to discuss with me (and other appropriate people) before temptation hits.

The Academic Resource Center (ARC) provides all students with free writing consultation, general tutoring, and learning enhancement strategies (e.g., techniques to improve reading, note-taking, study, time management). Students can make an appointment with the ARC Writing Center for guidance and feedback on written projects. ARC consultants can also provide basic tutoring for many general education and other courses. Go to www.georgefox.edu/arc/ for information about consultants' areas of study, how to schedule an appointment, and helpful learning tools. Call Rick Muthiah, Director of the Academic Resource Center, at x2314 if you have questions.