

POL 101—Introduction to Political Science

Fall 2007

MWF 10:00-10:50—ARH 120

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Office Hours: M 1-2, WF 9-10

Office: Carnegie 311 (x4898)

or by appt.

“A lot has been said about politics; some of it complementary, but most of it accurate.”

-Eric Idle

Course Description and Goals

You see politics everywhere you look. When you hear a news report about tax policy, a new prime minister in the United Kingdom, or tensions between Chad and Sudan over refugees, you’re witnessing political disputes. Political science seeks to understand and appreciate the causes and meanings of such conflicts in a systematic fashion.

Sounds a little boring, right? Well, it doesn’t have to be. We see important political science concepts illustrated throughout popular culture, too—movies, books, and TV shows are full of political science. Mr. Burns stealing the oil under Springfield Elementary? The formation and breakdown of alliances on *Survivor*? The voting on *American Idol*? Terrorist groups working together in *Team America: World Police*? These all illustrate crucial aspects of political science. Over the course of this semester, we’re going to explore some of the most fundamental ideas in political science via both traditional means and popular culture.

This course has two goals. First, you should know, understand, and be able to critically analyze major concepts and issues in the study of political science. The textbook, other readings, and class discussion will all contribute to this goal. To that end, it is *crucially important* that you read all materials carefully before class and actively participate in class discussions. Second, this class will help you develop and hone your critical analysis skills. Critical analysis means posing questions, challenging “common sense,” and expressing yourself verbally to others. Your ideas about politics and political science may or may not change during the course of the semester. The important thing is to understand where these beliefs come from and how others think about these issues. These skills are necessary not just for this class, but for your entire Grinnell career (and after!).

Course Requirements

The grading criteria for this class are:

Mid-semester Exam	35%
Final Exam	30%
Writing Assignments	20%
Attendance/Participation	15%

Participation in class discussions is *vital*. Not only does it demonstrate that you have completed the readings and reflect on them, but the exchange of ideas fosters everyone’s learning. None of us interpret any particular reading in an identical manner. Through discussion and debate, we can all come to understand these issues and see why they inspire such passion throughout the world.

Extensions and Late Assignments

Each student may have *one* (and only one) extension for whatever reason. You must notify me via email 24 hours before the assignment is due, and you must turn in the assignment within 48 hours of when it was originally due. Late assignments face a stiff penalty. You will lose two-thirds of a letter grade (a B+ becomes a B-) for every day that your assignment is late.

A Few Words on Plagiarism

It should go without saying, but I'll say it anyways—*don't plagiarize!* If you use the words or ideas of someone else without providing proper attribution, you're plagiarizing. Cutting and pasting from Wikipedia is plagiarizing, as is passing off someone else's ideas as your own. Not only is plagiarism unfair to the original source's author, but it will cause you to fail this course and possibly face additional sanctions from the College. We'll talk about plagiarism and citing sources during the semester, but if you *ever* have any doubts, *ask first!* Come talk to me, or see the incredibly helpful folks in the Writing Center.

Course Materials

There is one required textbook for this class, available at the College Bookstore:

- Van Belle, Douglas and Kenneth Mash. 2006. *A Novel Approach to Politics*. Washington: CQ Press (ISBN 1-56802-829-6)

How will you know where to find readings?

⇒VBM=*A Novel Approach to Politics*

⇒[R]=on reserve at Burling (either physically at Burling or available as an e-reserve)

⇒+++ =online; you can either use the URL listed or link to it through the course website

You should also keep up with current events. I recommend reading a daily national newspaper, such as the *New York Times* (www.nytimes.com), *Washington Post* (www.washingtonpost.com), or *Los Angeles Times* (www.latimes.com). I also *highly* suggest that you read a non-US news sources at least once a week. Other countries don't always interpret events in the same way we do, and these differences in understanding can be quite telling. National Public Radio also provides excellent coverage of international events and foreign policy, and the local NPR stations often carry the BBC, too. In Grinnell, you can hear NPR on WOI (640 AM), KUNI (90.9 FM), and WSUI (910 AM). The *New York Times*, NPR, and the BBC (among others) also offer free podcasts.

Finally, be sure to check out the class website on PioneerWeb (<http://pioneerweb.grinnell.edu>) if you lose your syllabus, need links to readings, and to keep up on class announcements.

Students with Disabilities

Any student eligible for and needing academic adjustment or accommodations because of a documented disability is requested to speak with me no later than 13 September. You will need to provide documentation of your disability to the Dean for Student Academic Support and Advising, Joyce Stern, located on the 3rd floor of the Rosenfield Center (x3702).

Office Hours

If you have any questions about the class, the readings, political science, Grinnell, have a hankering to see pictures of the world's greatest dog, or just want to chat, feel free to stop by during my office hours or email me to arrange another time to meet.

Schedule of Readings

NOTE: While we will do our best to stick to this schedule, changes can and likely will occur. I will announce any changes in class; you are responsible for keeping up with all the readings.

Getting the Basics Down

- 31 Aug—Welcome and Introduction
- 3 Sep—What is Political Science?
 - ⇒VBM, Ch. 1
- 5 Sep—How Do You Study Political Science?
 - ⇒Shepsle and Bonchek, *Analyzing Politics*, Ch. 2 [R]
 - ⇒Green and Shapiro, *Pathologies of Rational Choice*, Ch. 2 [R]
- 7 Sep—Asking Questions Like a Political Scientist
 - ⇒No readings

Political Theories and Ideologies

- 10 Sep—Theory and Ideology
 - ⇒VBM, Ch. 2
- 12 Sep—Theory and Ideology
 - ⇒Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, Chs. 1-4, 8 +++
 - ⇒Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Chs. 2, 5-8 +++
- 14 Sept—NO CLASS
- 17 Sept—NO CLASS
- 19 Sep—Theory and Ideology
 - ⇒Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*, Ch. 1 +++
- 21 Sep—Theory and Ideology
 - ⇒Fukuyama, “[End of History](#)” +++
 - ⇒Sullivan, “[Why the Old Labels Don't Stick](#)” +++

The Origins and Persistence of Governments

- 24 Sep—Origins of the State
 - ⇒No readings
- 26 Sep—Why Have a Government?
 - ⇒VBM, Ch. 3
 - ⇒Kaplan, “[The Coming Anarchy](#)” +++ ←Writing Assignment Distributed
- 28 Sep—Why Have a Government?
 - ⇒*Lord of the Flies*
- 1 Oct—Why Have a Government?

- ⇒*Lord of the Flies*
- 3 Oct—Why Have a Government?
 - ⇒*Lord of the Flies* ←**Writing Assignment Due**
- 5 Oct—Power, Legitimacy, and Authority
 - ⇒VBM, Ch. 4
 - ⇒Lukes, *Power: A Radical View*, Introduction [R]

Political Institutions and Actors

- 8 Oct—The Economy and the Government
 - ⇒VBM, Ch. 5
- 10 Oct—Institutions
 - ⇒VBM, Ch. 6 ←**Midsem Distributed!**
- 12 Oct—Institutions
 - ⇒VBM, Ch. 7
- 15 Oct—Institutions
 - ⇒VBM, Ch. 8
- 17 Oct—Constitutions
 - ⇒Dahl, *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?* Ch. 3 [R] ←**Midsem Due!**

Having a Say in the Government

- 19 Oct—Representation
 - ⇒Reynolds, “[The Case for Proportionality](#)” +++
 - ⇒Barkan, “[Elections in Agrarian Societies](#)” +++
- 29 Oct—Representation
 - ⇒Barber, *Strong Democracy*, Ch. 6 [R]
- 31 Oct—Parties
 - ⇒Federalist Papers, [#10](#) and [#51](#) +++
 - ⇒Green, “[Surprise Party](#)” +++
- 2 Nov—Elections and Electoral Systems
 - ⇒Clark, “[Why Elections Matter](#)” +++
- 5 Nov—Elections and Electoral Systems
 - ⇒Lewis-Beck, *Economics and Elections*, Chs. 1 and 10 [R]
 - ⇒Amy, *Real Choices/Real Voices*, Ch. 1 [R]
- 7 Nov—Elections and Electoral Systems
 - ⇒FairVote, “[The Electoral College](#)” +++
 - ⇒Mackinac Center for Public Policy, “[Keep the Electoral College!](#)” +++
- 9 Nov—Courts
 - ⇒VBM, Ch. 9
- 12 Nov—Political Culture
 - ⇒VBM, Ch. 13

Democracy in Theory and Practice

- 14 Nov—The Democratic Ideal
 ⇒VBM, Ch. 10
- 16 Nov—The Democratic Ideal
 ⇒Huntington, *The Third Wave*, Ch. 1 [R]
 ⇒Zakaria, “[The Rise of Illiberal Democracy](#)” +++
- 19 Nov—Social Capital
 ⇒Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, Chs. 1 and 16 [R]
- 21 Nov—Social Capital
 ⇒Foley and Edwards, “[The Paradox of Civil Society](#)” +++ ←**Writing Assignment Distributed**
- 26 Nov—Politics and the Media
 ⇒VBM, Ch. 11
 ⇒Start *Bob Roberts*
- 28 Nov—Politics and the Media
 ⇒*Bob Roberts*
- 30 Nov—Politics and the Media
 ⇒*Bob Roberts* ←**Writing Assignment Due**

International Politics

- 3 Dec—International Politics
 ⇒VBM, Ch. 12
- 5 Dec—International Politics
 ⇒Kant, “[Perpetual Peace](#)” +++
 ⇒Rice, “[The Promise of the Democratic Peace](#)”+++
- 7 Dec—International Politics
 ⇒Huntington, “[Clash of Civilizations?](#)” *Foreign Affairs* (Summer 1993) +++
 ⇒Kirkpatrick, “[The Modernizing Imperative](#)” *Foreign Affairs* (Sept/Oct 1993) +++
- 10 Dec—International Politics
 ⇒Nye, *The Paradox of American Power*, Ch. 5 [R]
 ⇒Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, Ch. 1 [R] ←**Final Distributed**
- 12 Dec—International Politics
 ⇒Pirages and DeGeest, *Ecological Security*, Ch. 2 +++
- 14 Dec—Wrap-up and Conclusions

Final Exam Due in my office by 21 December at 9:00am!