

**Introduction to Political Science
POLS 101
CRN 40126**

Dr. Christopher Sprecher
Class Time: M W 9:30 a.m.-10:50 a.m.
Office Hours: Monday
8:30 a.m.-9:30 a.m. or by appointment.

Spring 2023
Allan Hancock College, LVC 104
christop.sprecher@hancockcollege.edu

General Overview

This course introduces the scientific study of politics. The process of logic and scientific inquiry are presented to provide the student with the basic conceptual, statistical, and philosophical tools to conduct, criticize, and evaluate political arguments and research.

The main focus of this course is to encourage students to think theoretically about politics, and how to make reasoned arguments.

The main focus of this course will be on the role that institutions play in the analysis of politics. How were rules and norms created to govern (and continue to govern) political behavior, in both democracies and non-democracies. In doing so, however, we will address who has traditionally had access to these institutions, who has been marginalized from full participation in political society, and how this imbalance has been and continues to be addressed and remedied.

The best way to learn this material is to have read the assigned readings **BEFORE** the class date in which it is discussed. This will enable you to be familiar with the new concepts as I discuss them in lecture and for you to ask questions.

I am available for office hours each week, as well as available electronically via email.

Teaching Philosophy

Since this is a smaller class, I utilize both lecture and small group activities. My teaching style is a combination of lecture and Socratic exchange. *Each class period has a question posed to help guide you in thinking about the topic being discussed that day.*

Books

There is one required textbook for this course.
It is available for free online on the website below.

<https://openstax.org/details/books/introduction-political-science>

You will need to create an account with your Hancock e-mail address to access it.

Hard copies will be available in the campus bookstore if you desire them.

Hardcover:
ISBN-13: 978-1-711470-68-9

Digital:

ISBN-13: 978-1-951693-56-5

I will also be making some readings and recordings available outside of the textbook. They will be posted on Canvas and labeled (CV) on the syllabus.

Course Requirements and Grades

In the course there will be 3 exams, 2 short writing assignments and **class participation**. Each exam is worth 100 points and the writing assignments are worth 50 points each. **Class participation is worth 100 points**. Thus there are 500 possible points available for the course. All course materials are graded by me. In the event you are dissatisfied with your grade on any component, you must write up a statement explaining why you think your grade should be changed and submit it to me. I will then review the grade once your statement has been received, along with the ORIGINAL exam or paper. Please realize that I reserve the right, upon regarding your exam or essay, to increase or decrease the grade.

Grading Scale

The following scale will be used for calculating final grades for this course. Please note that I do not curve grades. Final grades are based out of 500 total points for the course.

90-100- A

80-89- B

70-79- C

60-69- D

0-59- F

*****THERE IS NO GRADING CURVE IN THIS COURSE*****

*****THERE IS NO EXTRA CREDIT IN THIS COURSE*****

Required Readings

Readings for the course are mainly from the textbook. I will be making use of videos occasionally in this class, both documentaries and full-length films. You are responsible for knowing the material presented via video.

Attendance and Missed Assignments

You are expected to attend class regularly and take notes. Although I will not take attendance, most of the material for the exams is taken from lecture. I will use material for lecture that is not covered in the readings. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to get the lecture notes from a classmate. I will not, **under any circumstances**, give my lecture notes to students.

The handouts used in this course are copyrighted. By "handouts," I mean all materials generated for this class, which include but are not limited to syllabi, quizzes, exams, lab problems, in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets. Because these are copyrighted, you do not have the right to copy the handouts, unless I expressly grant permission

As a rule, I do not give makeup exams or quizzes, except in the case of extreme sickness or family emergency. If you must miss an exam due to illness or emergency, you must do everything in your power to notify me **before** the exam. I have provided you with an e-mail address that I check regularly. Thus, saying you are unable to contact me is not an excuse. All makeup examinations must be made up within a week of your return to class, or you will receive a 0 on the missed exam. I also require some form of documentation as to why you missed the exam. I will reiterate illness or family emergencies are the only excuses I will accept. All makeup exams are essay exams.

Incompletes

I will only grant an incomplete if 75% or more of the coursework has been completed, and at the time the student's grade is 2.0 or better. My policy on incompletes is as follows. **Incompletes will only be given in extreme circumstances and must be completed within six weeks of the semester's end, or the portion of the class that is unfinished becomes a 0.0.** If you feel that you warrant an incomplete, you must contact me **at least** a week prior to the final exam. Once the final exam has been given, I will not grant Incompletes for the course, regardless of the reason.

Expectations

(1) Students are expected to attend class regularly, even when attendance is not an explicit part of the course's grade. If you are not responsible enough to come to class regularly, or if you feel that you have higher priorities in life than attending a lecture for which (or your parents) are paying good money, then do not be surprised if the instructor starts to show you the same amount of respect that you have shown for him or her.

(2) Students are expected to have read the assigned material before coming to class. Each student in class will benefit from having read the material before hearing my lecture, because the lecture will be reinforcing prior knowledge instead of introducing new topics. The entire class also benefits when students are prepared -- the quality of discussion will be higher, students can ask better questions, and the class period will not be burdened by a focus on basic issues that should have been answered by the readings.

(3) Inside the classroom, students are expected to devote their full attention to the course. This means that distractions like newspapers, magazines, beepers, and cellular phones **will not be tolerated**. If you insist on reading the newspaper or being accessible by beeper or cell phone during the class period, please do so at home (or somewhere else outside of the classroom); such activities only serve to disrupt the course and to distract people who really want to be there. This also means that talking with your neighbors or passing notes during class will not be tolerated. If you absolutely must talk about last night's party or your plans for the weekend, please do so outside of the classroom, so that you do not disturb students who actually attend class to learn the material.

I want you to be familiar with significant current political events, and exam questions may assume that knowledge or may directly ask about those events. Each of you may, then, want to pay close attention to newspapers and periodicals that have adequate coverage political events.

Plagiarism

As commonly defined, academic dishonesty/plagiarism consists of passing off as one's own ideas, the words, writings, etc., that belong to another. In accordance with this definition, you are committing plagiarism if you copy the work of another person and turn it in as your own, even if you have the permission of the person. It does not matter from where the material is borrowed — a book, an article, material off the web, another student's paper — all constitute plagiarism unless the source of the work is full identified and credited. It is important when using a phrase, a distinctive idea or concept, or a sentence from another source to credit explicitly that source either in the text, a footnote, or endnote.

Plagiarism is a violation of academic and personal integrity and carries grave consequences. Scholastic dishonesty (including cheating and plagiarism) will not be tolerated. The full consequences of scholastic dishonesty will be pursued consistent with College policy. If you have any questions, please consult the course instructor. Be especially careful with your written assignments to make certain that all sources are explicitly acknowledged in writing. If you plagiarize in this course, you will fail the course. Period.

Grading and Course Requirements

Your course grade is based on your performance on 3 exams, discussion board activity and a participation grade. The distribution of your final grade in the class is as follows: There are a total of 500 points.

Exam 1	100 points
Exam 2	100 points
Exam 3	100 points
Short Writing Assignments	200 points

Exams

The exams will cover any material from the previous exam through the day before the exam. They will include short essays and multiple choice. Each exam is worth 100 points.

Short Writing Assignments

At two times in the course, I will assign you a short (5 page) writing assignment on a topic relevant to what we have studied. It will be due, typed, a week from the date it is handed out. Each assignment must answer the question asked and provide 5 external citations that are not from the textbook. I will discuss the writing assignments in more detail in the second week of class.

Course Objectives

- Comprehend the scope and methods of the field of political science

- Learn to think analytically and critically about political events, institutions, policies, and issues.
- Become familiar with the political approach to thinking, including steps appropriate to problem solving and theory generation.
- Understand the political philosophies of the framers of the Constitution and the nature and operation of the United States political institutions and processes under that Constitution as amended and interpreted, and how these compare to other political systems.
- Become knowledgeable about the American political system in comparative perspective.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to describe the major concepts used in the study of political science; evaluate how individuals participate in, and effect, political actions; and compare the ideas behind different forms of government systems and their implications.

Americans with Disabilities Act

Any personal learning accommodations that may be needed by a student covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) must be made known to the instructor as soon as possible. This is the student's responsibility. Information about services, academic modifications and documentation requirements can be obtained from the Learning Assistance Program (LAP).

Syllabus Change Policy

Except for changes that substantially effect implantation of the evaluation (grading) statement, this syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to chance with advance notice.

Course Outline

Monday, January 23 Class Introduction

Wednesday, January 25 What is political science? Definitions and theories
Readings: Ch. 1

- Cameron, Charles. (2009) “What is Political Science?” In *A Quantitative Tour of the Social Science*, ed. Andrew Gelman and Jeronimo Cortina. Cambridge University Press, 207–222. (CV)

Question: If we apply the scientific method to the study of politics, is it universal, or country/region specific?

Monday, January 30 Research Methods and Theories
Readings: Ch. 2

Question: Are theories and methods universal, or do they vary by society?

Wednesday, February 1 Political Theories and Ideologies
Readings: Ch. 3

- Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*. (CV)
- *Triumph of the Will* (clip) (CV)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hu-CK47NM8E>

Question: The classics of political theory tend to emphasize Western philosophers. How does our understanding of politics increase if we examine non-Western philosophies as well?

Monday, February 6 The Concept of the “State”
Readings: Ch. 13

Question: If we move beyond the traditional Westphalian conceptions of the state, how do we see society organizing itself to survive politically?

- Wendt, Alexander. 1992. “Anarchy is What States Make of It” *International Organization* 46(02) (CV)
- Long, Tom. 2022. *A Small State’s Guide to Influence in World Politics*. Oxford University Press. Chapter. 2 (CV)

Wednesday, February 8 Exam review

Monday, February 13	EXAM 1
Wednesday, February 15	Short Writing Assignment discussed
Monday, February 20	WASHINGTON DAY NO CLASS
Wednesday, February 22	Constitutions and Rights Readings: Ch. 4, 7

- Hannah-Jones, Nikole. 2021. "Democracy", in *The 1619 Project*, created by Nikole Hannah-Jones. (CV)
 - Constitution of the Iroquois Nation (CV)

SHORT WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1 HANDED OUT

Question: Do constitutions always adhere to the ideals they outline in their documents?

Monday, February 27	Constitutions and Rights Readings: Ch. 4, 7
---------------------	--

- Martin Luther King, Letter from Birmingham Jail (CV)
- – Fish, M. Steven. 2002. "Islam and Authoritarianism." *World Politics* 55 (1): 4–10.(CV)
- Blues Brothers Illinois Nazi scene (clip).
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZTT1qUswYL0> (CV)

Question: Are political rights guaranteed to all segments of society, or do they evolve/devolve?

Wednesday, March 1	Public Opinion and Political Participation Readings: Ch. 5
--------------------	---

- Sarlamanov, Kire, and Aleksandar Jovanoski 2014. "Models of voting." *Researchers World* 5 (1): 16-24. (CV)

SHORT WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE

Question: What linkages do we see between opinion on politics and participation in the political arena?

Monday, March 6	Public Opinion and Political Participation Readings: Ch. 5
-----------------	---

Question: What factors explain why various minority groups minimize their participation in democratic politics? Is it different in non-democracies?

Wednesday, March 8	Political Socialization Readings: Ch. 6
--------------------	--

- Abramowitz, Alan I., and Kyle L. Saunders. 2008. "Is Polarization a Myth?" *The Journal of Politics* 70 (2): 542–555. (CV)

Question: What sort of life events form an individual's political beliefs? Is it similar across states?

Monday, March 13 Exam Review

Wednesday, March 15 **EXAM 2**

Monday, March 20 **NO CLASS SPRING BREAK**

Wednesday, March 22 **NO CLASS SPRING BREAK**

Monday, March 27 Political Parties
Readings: Ch. 8

- Lipset, Seymour Martin, and Stein Rokkan. 1990. "Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments," in *The West European Party System*, ed. Peter Mair. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 91-138. (CV)

Question: How should a political party recruit candidates in an ideal situation?

Wednesday, March 29 Political Parties
Readings: Ch. 8

- Samuels, David J. and Matthew S. Shugart. 2010. *Presidents, Parties and Prime Ministers: How the Separation of Powers Affects Party Organization and Behavior*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1 and 2. (CV)

Question: Do political parties 'function differently in non-democracies than democracies? What implications are there for minorities in both types of society?

Monday, April 3 Legislatures
Readings: Ch. 9

Question: Do single member district systems help or hurt minority parties?

Wednesday, April 5 Legislatures
Readings: Ch. 9

- Anna Palmer, "So Did the Year of the Woman Really Change Anything?" *Politico*, Dec. 10, 2019 (CV)

Question: Why has the US Congress been predominately white and male? Is there a difference in other countries?

Monday, April 10 Executives
Readings: Ch. 10

Readings: Ch. 15

- Hurd, Ian. 1999. "Legitimacy and Authority in International Politics." *International Organization* 53 (2): 379–408. (CV)

Question: In an international system defined by anarchy, how do international organizations enforce legal norms?

Wednesday, May 10

International Political Economy
Readings: Ch. 16

Question: How does opening up trade help or hurt countries in the Global South?

Monday, May 15

International Political Economy
Readings: Ch. 16

- – Dabla-Norris, Era, et al. 2015. "Causes and Consequences of Income Inequality: A Global Perspective" *International Monetary Fund* 5-33. (CV)

Question: Does a decline in US hegemony help or hurt the global economy?

Wednesday, May 17

Concluding Thoughts

Wednesday, May 24

FINAL EXAM 8:00 a.m.-10:00 a.m.