INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL SCIENCE

Course Aims

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to a broad array of issues and concepts that are central to the study of political science. During the course of the semester we will examine the nature of political authority, the philosophical foundations of different types of political systems, and the various responsibilities and obligations that constitute democratic citizenship. While we will explore each of these issues in different historical contexts, we will also consider how they inform our understanding of contemporary political issues, such as voting, civil disobedience, and the war on terrorism. The reading, writing, and classroom assignments are designed to bring together the theory of politics with the actual practice of it in ways that I hope will be both interesting and fun. In addition to providing students with the basic tools to analyze politics, this course will also enable students an opportunity to establish their own opinions, or challenge existing opinions, on the ultimate aims of politics.

Course Requirements

Participation and Attendance

Your daily participation is one of the most important features of this course. Each of us will bring different ideas to class discussions and the course is designed for us to share our different opinions in an intense, yet polite, manner. I do not claim to dispense Truth with respect to political science, and it is my hope that we will learn from each other over the course of the semester. Thus, there will be very few traditional lectures given. Instead, each class I will choose - at random - two to three students to lead class discussion for that day. I will ask questions concerning the assigned readings and students will be expected to have read the material closely enough to respond in a thoughtful manner. Because you never know when your number may turn up, it is best to be prepared each class for your turn in the “hot seat.” Your class participation grade will depend on how prepared you are when you are one of the leaders of class discussion. You are allowed to pass on your role as class leader one time without any penalty. If you pass more than once, your class participation grade will be lowered. If you are absent when called on, it will be counted as a pass. Regular attendance is required for this course and more than one absence will lower your class participation grade.

While this process may seem intimidating at first, it will become more familiar to you over the course of the semester and will help you learn how to construct, and deconstruct, arguments. One of the major reasons the class is designed in this manner is because the ability to make reasoned arguments and engage one another in serious conversation is one of the hallmarks of effective citizenship. In addition, practicing these skills on a daily basis will prove to be helpful for the midterms, the short paper, and the final exam.

Examinations

There will be one midterm examination on March 11. This examination will cover all the material assigned up to that date unless specified differently by the instructor. The final will be cumulative and will be on May 23 (11-1 pm). Both the midterm and final will be closed book exams.
Journal

You will be required to read a newspaper on a daily basis and look for one article a week that relates to something we have discussed in class or that was covered in the readings. You must find your article from one of the following papers: The New York Times (www.nytimes.com), The Los Angeles Times (www.latimes.com), or The Wall Street Journal (www.wsj.com). You will write a one-page critical analysis of the newspaper article (double-spaced, 12 point font, one-inch margins). You will complete seven journal entries for the semester.

Your final grade will be based on the midterms, the journals, the final exam and class participation.

Under no circumstances - except serious illness or serious family emergency - will you be allowed to take the midterm or final at an earlier or later date. You may not email assignments unless I have given you prior permission. Missed exams or late papers will not be accepted unless students notify me before the absence or late paper and have a written verifiable medical excuse. If you do not provide such notification, all late papers or missed exams will receive a zero. Those who present me with a verifiable medical excuse will be allowed to take a makeup exam that will be scheduled for the last day of the semester.

Academic Integrity

I expect you to comply fully with the standards of academic integrity set forth by the University of San Diego. Any incident of academic dishonesty (as defined in the Undergraduate Bulletin) will be punished to the full extent allowed by the University.

Grading

Midterm: 20%
Participation: 20%
Journals: 20%
Final: 40%

Books and Other Materials

All of these books should be available in the bookstore. The other materials for the course are on E-Reserve and traditional reserve with Copley Library. These materials are designated with an “ER” in the syllabus. The class password to access the E-Reserve readings is: ps100. Please notify me as soon as possible if any of these materials are not available.

- Jean Anouilh, Antigone (1996)
- Margaret Atwood, The Handmaid’s Tale (1985)
- Readings on E-Reserve [ER]

Course Outline and Assigned Readings

Jan. 31 Introduction to class

Section I: Political Power, the Aim of Politics, and the Study of Politics

Feb. 2 Various articles on war on terrorism [ER]
Feb. 4 Library Visit (meet in Copley Library lobby at 9:30 am)
Feb. 7  Anouilh, *Antigone* (entire)

Feb. 9  Nozick [ER]

Feb. 11  Rawls [ER]

Feb. 14  Sandel [ER]

Feb. 16  Lipset [ER]

Section II: Philosophical Justification for Authoritarian and Oligarchy Regimes

Feb. 18  Hobbes [ER]

Feb. 21  Burke [ER]; Letters between Adams and Jefferson [ER]

Feb. 23  Aristotle [ER]

Feb. 25  Machiavelli [ER]

Feb. 28  Bellow [ER]

March 2  Arendt [ER]

March 4  Mirskii [ER]

Section III: Philosophical Justification for Democratic Regimes

March 7  Atwood, *The Handmaid’s Tale* [entire]

March 9  Atwood, *The Handmaid’s Tale* [entire]

March 11  Midterm

March 14  Movie

March 16  Locke [ER]

March 18  Mill [ER]

March 21  No Class

March 23  No Class

March 25  No Class

March 28  No Class

March 30  Rousseau [ER]

April 1  Madison and Hamilton [ER]

April 4  Glendon [ER]
April 6  Glendon [ER]; Tocqueville [ER]
Journal #3 Due

Section IV:  The Origins and Meanings of Democratic Citizenship

April 8  Plato [ER]
April 11  Kestnbaum [ER]
April 13  Huntington [ER]
Journal #4 Due

Section V:  Political Participation I: Persuading Government

April 15  Keyssar [ER]
April 18  Tocqueville [ER]; Putnam [ER]
April 20  Raskin [ER]
April 22  Phillips [ER]
April 25  Ibsen [ER]
Journal #5 Due

Section VI:  Political Participation II: Resisting Political Authority

April 27  Thoreau [ER]; King [ER]
April 29  Morris [ER]
May 2  Vanden [ER]
May 4  Scott [ER]
May 6  Du Pisani, Broodryk, and Coetzer [ER]
Journal #6 Due

Section VII:  Liberty and Security in Times of Insecurity

May 9  Various articles on the First Amendment [ER]
May 11  Bird and Brandt [ER] (maybe drop this or shorten it)
May 13  Cole [ER]
May 16  Hamdi v. Rumsfeld, (2004) [ER]
Journal #7 Due
May 23  Final Exam (11-1 pm)