

## **POSC-1100-R06: INTRODUCTION TO POLITICS**

**Fall 2023**

Instructor: Boris Heersink

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Faber Hall 667

Office Hours: Monday, 12:30 – 2:30 PM and by appointment on other times

Class Location and Time:

Faber Hall 668

Monday and Thursday, 10:00-11-15 AM

### **Course Description**

#### Aim of the Course

This course will introduce you to the different approaches – in terms of perspective, goal, and methodology – political scientists bring to studying politics. We will engage all four subfields of political science (American Politics, Comparative Politics, International Relations, and Political Theory) by looking at how each subfield has dealt with questions regarding democracy. We will be dealing with questions such as: what does it mean to say a country is democratic? How do we know if it is? Why are some countries democratic and others authoritarian? Why do some countries have a two-party system while others have many more? Does democracy actually work? We will learn about the different ways political scientists have responded to these questions, and how and why they disagree about what the correct answers are.

#### Basic Rules

*In-Class:* You are expected to be present every session and to participate in Q&A during class. You should make sure that you come to class having read all the readings for each day, and you should participate actively in our conversation about those readings.

To create an atmosphere in which all students feel comfortable participating and have the ability to achieve their full potential, civility during the discussions is vital. During our conversations we will inevitably come to talk about day to day politics, and it is very much possible that you will find yourself disagreeing strongly with points put forward by your fellow students (and, they with you!). While you should absolutely feel free to challenge other students, it is crucial that you should do so in a respectful way (and, of course, you can expect the same of your fellow students towards you).

*Absences:* If for some reason you cannot be present for understandable reasons (illness, personal circumstances clearly beyond your control, etc.) you should contact me as soon as

you can (if at all possible, before the start of class). In line with Fordham's attendance policy you should report any excused absences with documentation by filling out the [Excused Absence Form](#).

I keep attendance and unexcused absences result in a lowering of your participation grade. Note that Fordham's official attendance policy is that for courses that meet twice a week it is not allowed to have more than four absences in total across the course – while having more than four unexcused absences does not automatically result in failing this course, excessive absences make it very difficult to receive a passing grade.

*Covid Policies:* As of right now there are no specific Covid policies in place in this course. However, if conditions were to change we may have to adjust. That being said, if you are sick – Covid or otherwise – stay home, let me know, fill out the excused absence form, and get medical care if necessary. If you have any concerns or questions about any of this, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me.

### Office Hours

If you have any questions or want to chat about the course, you can come to my office hours on **Monday between 12:30 and 2:30 PM** (unless otherwise noted). My office is in 667 Faber Hall. You do not need to make an appointment for this time slot - so if you want to chat feel free to drop by! Also, it's fine to stop by if you want to talk about the course more broadly and you don't really have specific questions. Office hours are also a really helpful way to get feedback and questions answered about upcoming exams or assignments, so make sure you use them! If you want to meet but cannot make it during my office hours, send me an e-mail and we will schedule a meeting. You can also e-mail me with any questions or concerns – I try to respond to every e-mail within 24 hours.

### Grade

*Components:* Your grade is based on participation in class (20%), a midterm (25%), a research proposal paper (25%), and a final exam (30%).

The midterm and final will follow the same format. The questions will be a mix of multiple choice questions, ID terms, and open ended essay questions regarding both the readings and the material discussed in class. The midterm will cover all the material dealt with up until then; the final covers all material from the course but the multiple choice and ID term questions will predominantly focus on the material covered after the midterm. The midterm will be held in class on **October 23**. The final exam will be held on our assigned day and time during finals week.

The research proposal will exist of a 10-to-12-page double-spaced paper engaging a specific puzzle regarding political science in relation to the readings you will read in this course. The goal of this paper is for you to come up with an original research question, a set of hypotheses derived from this question, and a research design that – if executed – would allow us to test these hypotheses and answer your question. You will not actually execute

the proposal, but the goal is to think critically about what methodological approach would allow you to do so if you would – that is, what data you’d have to collect, how you would do so, etc.

On **October 30** we will use our class time to begin workshopping your paper ideas. On **November 1** you will submit a one-page description of your research proposal on Blackboard: this assignment is not graded but you will receive feedback from me on it. On **November 10** you will share a three-page double spaced outline of your planned research proposal with other students – you will read the papers shared with you and will discuss them with the other students in class on **November 13**. On **December 2** you will share a full draft of your final paper with your group members and you will read and discuss each other’s papers in class on **December 4**. You will submit your final paper on Blackboard on **December 8**.

For participation, you are expected to actively engage in class discussion during each session. Your physical presence in class is a necessary but insufficient element of participation. That is, if you miss class for unexcused reasons you are not adding to your participation grade. However, being present but not participating does not add much either. The best way to participate is to make sure you have done the readings ahead of class and to answer questions raised by the instructor or other students. Asking questions about the material also counts as participation.

*Grading Scale and Calculation of Final Course Grade:* For the exams you can earn up to 100 points. Those points subsequently are converted to a letter grade which builds towards your final course grade in line with the scale below. For the paper and your participation you will receive a single letter grade which follows the point value outlined below.

| Exam Points  | Letter Grade | Points toward Final Grade |
|--------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| 100-93       | A            | 4.0                       |
| 92-90        | A-           | 3.7                       |
| 89-87        | B+           | 3.3                       |
| 86-83        | B            | 3.0                       |
| 82-80        | B-           | 2.7                       |
| 79-77        | C+           | 2.3                       |
| 76-73        | C            | 2.0                       |
| 72-70        | C-           | 1.7                       |
| 69-60        | D            | 1.0                       |
| 59 and below | F            | 0.0                       |

Your final grade is based on a weighted average of each of the points earned towards your final grade based on the percentages outlined above. That is, an A for the midterm adds 1 point ( $4 * 0.25$ ) out of a total of 4 points you can earn for your final grade. A B+ for your paper adds another 0.825 points ( $3.3 * 0.25$ ). Your final letter grade is based on the following scale:

| Weighted Average of Points | Final Letter Grade |
|----------------------------|--------------------|
|----------------------------|--------------------|

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|                |    |
|----------------|----|
| 4.0 – 3.84     | A  |
| 3.83 – 3.50    | A- |
| 3.49 – 3.17    | B+ |
| 3.16 – 2.84    | B  |
| 2.83 – 2.50    | B- |
| 2.49 – 2.17    | C+ |
| 2.16 – 1.84    | C  |
| 1.83 – 1.34    | C- |
| 1.34 – 1.00    | D  |
| 0.99 and below | F  |

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*Grade Complaints:* I will grade your performance in comparison both to my general expectations of all participants as well as your fellow classmates' work in this course. It is possible that you may be unhappy with a grade, and I am always willing to discuss your progress during the course to help you improve.

If you believe the grade you received is an **incorrect** assessment of the quality of the work you produced, you can challenge your grade. If you want to do so, please email me to set up an appointment and send me a copy of your work and a written description explaining in detail why you believe your grade does not accurately represent the quality of the work you submitted. We will subsequently discuss your work and I will assess whether I believe your grade should be changed. Before you contact me about your grade(s), consider the following things.

First, the goal of a grade reassessment is to produce a grade that is a fair representation of your performance: this means that any errors that lowered your grade will be corrected, but any potential errors that *increased* it will also be adjusted. The re-grading process can thus result in a higher grade, the exact same grade, but also of a lower grade than what you received through the original grading process.

Second, a grade challenge means you must make a **specific argument** about why you think the grading does not reflect the **quality** of your work. This is a non-negotiable part of a grade challenge: it is not enough to state that you are confused by your grade, or that you feel that it does not reflect the amount of time and effort you put into the course. Both of those feelings can be very frustrating! But they are not arguments for why a grade is not correct, and I will not entertain grading challenges based on these arguments.

Third, as you are assessing your work in comparison to the answer keys or my comments, make sure you do not just look at the things you did right: you also have to incorporate those things you missed or got wrong. For example, if you received an A- for a midterm, it is easy to list a variety of things you got right. But those things are what likely earned you the A-. The point of a grade challenge is to show that I incorrectly withheld points for things you got wrong or failed to discuss (in enough detail).

Fourth, students sometimes try to ‘challenge’ their grade through a roundabout way – effectively having the instructor defend why they graded the work the way they did. Often, those students do not provide arguments for why they disagree with the grade. If you are unsure what you did wrong and you would like me to clarify, I am of course always happy to do so. But I will not engage the ‘roundabout grade challenge’: if you think the grade is incorrect, then you think I made one or more mistakes and you have to identify what I did wrong. If you cannot articulate why you think the grade is wrong, then that might just mean it is in fact a correct assessment of your performance.

Finally, grades are not a negotiation. The correct use of this process is not to look at your different grades at the end of the semester and to try to up one, or multiple, grade(s) with the sole goal of collecting enough points to increase your final letter grade. If you want to ensure you get the highest grade possible I would advise you to spend your time reaching out to me with questions *before* the exams and paper deadline, and not on trying to haggle about a grade afterwards.

*AI Use, Plagiarism and Other Violations of Code of Conduct:* All assignments in this course fall under Fordham University’s code of conduct. Generative AI tools are not permitted in this course. Students must rely on their own originality, creativity and critical thinking skills to complete assignments and engage with course material. Any violation (including, but not limited to, cheating on exams, relying on AI, and plagiarism) will result in the student being held accountable to the full extent of university guidelines. This includes self-plagiarism – meaning, cases where students re-use material they wrote themselves for other courses.

### Notes

Fordham generally provides me with a class list that includes your legal name. If you prefer to be addressed by an alternate name and/or gender pronoun, please do not hesitate to let me know. You can do so in class, by email, or during an office hour appointment – whichever you prefer. Also, please correct me if I ever mispronounce your name or use an incorrect gender pronoun!

Fordham’s Writing Center (in Walsh Library at Rose Hill and in Quinn Library at Lincoln Center) provides individualized assistance to students for writing assignments. You can make an appointment – free of charge! – to meet with someone who will read your paper and discuss it in detail with you. I strongly recommend using this system for your paper in this class and in other classes. You can sign up for an appointment at [https://www.fordham.edu/info/20126/writing\\_center](https://www.fordham.edu/info/20126/writing_center).

As a faculty member, I am – by law – a mandatory reporter and I am required to contact and provide information to Public Safety, the Dean of Students, or Fordham’s Title IX Coordinator if I am provided with any information indicating that a Fordham student has been sexually harassed (verbally or physically), sexually assaulted, stalked, had domestic violence or dating violence occur in a relationship, or been a victim / survivor of any behavior that is prohibited by Fordham’s Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedures. Once reported, Fordham will seek

to support any student and make efforts to stop the negative behavior, prevent it from recurring, and remedy its effects. It is important for you to be aware that there are three confidential places on campus where you can seek support or guidance from Fordham staff members who are **not** mandatory reporters: clinical counselors in Counseling & Psychological Services, pastoral counselors in Campus Ministry, and medical service providers in University Health Services. You can read more about this in the Student CARE brochure or visit [www.fordham.edu/care](http://www.fordham.edu/care) or [www.fordham.edu/sexualmisconduct](http://www.fordham.edu/sexualmisconduct) for more information.

If you or someone you know is struggling with emotional or mental health concerns, and/or gender, sexual, or domestic violence, Fordham's Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) can provide free assistance. The Rose Hill office of CPS is open Monday through Friday and can be reached by phone at 718-817-3725. If you, or a student you know, is experiencing a mental health crisis or emergency that requires immediate attention contact Fordham's office of Public Safety at Rose Hill at 718-817-2222 (available 24/7). If you prefer to access mental health services outside of Fordham, New York City provides free mental health support through NYC Well (<https://nycwell.cityofnewyork.us/en/>).

### Course Materials

Nearly all readings for this course will be made available online through Blackboard. The only exceptions concern:

Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty* (Crown Business, 2013).<sup>1</sup>

Robert A. Dahl, *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City* (Yale University Press, 2005).<sup>2</sup>

These books are available through the Fordham bookstore, though note that they may be available for less money online. Note that the Fordham bookstore [matches online prices](#), so if you buy the books from them make sure to check online to see if there is a lower price.

### Course Syllabus

*August 31*

Topic: No class due to conference travel.

Readings:

No readings.

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<sup>1</sup> This refers to the 2013 paperback edition – earlier versions are fine as well.

<sup>2</sup> This refers to the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition – the 1<sup>st</sup> edition is fine as well.

*September 4*

Topic: No class (Labor Day)

Readings:

No readings.

*September 6*

**Note: this class is on Wednesday.**

Topic: What is Political Science?

Readings:

Amelia Hoover Green, "How to Read Political Science: A Guide in Four Steps."

*September 7*

Topic: What is democracy?

Readings:

Colin Bird, *An Introduction to Political Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), Chapter 9.

Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (Routledge, 2003), Chapters 21-22. [Note that the PDF on Blackboard consists of the entire book – you only need to read the assigned chapters.]

*September 11*

Topic: How do we know whether a country is democratic?

Readings:

Daniel Politi, ["Sorry, North Carolina, But You Don't Really Qualify as a Democracy Anymore."](#) *Slate* (December 23, 2016).

Andrew Gelman, ["The bad research behind the bogus claim that North Carolina is no longer a democracy."](#) *Slate* (January 4, 2017).

"Freedom in the World 2023: Methodology Questions," *Freedom House*.

*September 14*

Topic: Do democratic institutions make a country democratic?

Readings:

Jennifer Gandhi and Ellen Lust-Okar, "Elections Under Authoritarianism," *The Annual Review of Political Science* (2009) 403-422.

*September 18*

Topic: Power and democracy: the first face of power

Readings:

Robert Dahl, *Who Governs?*, Chapter 1.

Robert Dahl, "A Critique of the Ruling Elite Model," *American Political Science Review* vol. 52, no. 2 (1958) 463-469.

*September 21*

Topic: Who governs in a democracy?

Readings:

Robert Dahl, *Who Governs?* Chapters 6, 10, 13, 14.

*September 25*

Topic: Power and democracy: the second and third face of power

Readings:

Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz, "The Two Faces of Power," *American Political Science Review* vol. 56, no. 4 (1962) 947-952.

John Gaventa, *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley* (University of Illinois Press, 1980), Chapter 1.



Paula D. McClain, Gloria Y.A. Ayee, Taneisha N. Means, Alicia M. Reyes-Barriénte, and Nura A. Sedique, "Race, Power, and Knowledge: Tracing the Roots of Exclusion in the Development of Political Science in the United States," *Politics, Groups, and Identities* vol. 4, no. 3 (2016) 467-482.

*September 28*

Topic: Does wealth make countries democratic?

Readings:

Seymour M. Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy," *American Political Science Review* 53 (March 1959) pp. 69-85. [Note that the article is longer – you only need to read through page 85.]

*October 2*

Topic: Why do democracies do better?

Readings:

Acemoglu and Robinson, *Why Nations Fail*, Chapters 1, 4, 12.

*October 5*

Topic: Democratization and path dependence

Readings:

Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson, James A. Robinson, and Pierre Yared. "Income and Democracy," *The American Economic Review* vol. 98, no. 3 (2008). [Note: you only need to read the introduction and conclusion of this article – skip everything in between!]

*October 9*

Topic: No class (Indigenous People's Day / Columbus Day)

Readings:

No readings.

October 12

Topic: Designing a democratic system: the U.S. Constitution

Readings:

The United States Constitution.

["Excerpts from Brutus No. 1"](#) (18 October 1787).

Alexander Hamilton, ["The Federalist Papers: No. 1,"](#) (October 26, 1787).

James Madison, ["The Federalist Papers: No. 10,"](#) (November 29, 1787).

["Speech of Patrick Henry,"](#) (June 5, 1788).

October 16

Topic: Voting in a democracy: who gets to do it? Why do we bother?

Readings:

Richard M. Valelly, "How Suffrage Politics Made, and Makes, America," in Richard M. Valelly, Suzanne Mettler, and Robert Lieberman (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of American Political Development* (Oxford University Press, 2016).

October 19

Topic: Parliamentary and presidential systems of democracy

Readings:

Terry M. Moe and Michael Caldwell, "The Institutional Foundations of Democratic Government: A Comparison of Presidential and Parliamentary Systems," *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics* vol. 150, no. 1 (1994).

Richard Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents* (1960), Chapter 3.

Terry M. Moe and William Howell, "Unilateral Action and Presidential Power: A Theory," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* vol. 29 (1999).

October 23

Topic: Midterm

Readings:

No readings.

October 26

Topic: Political parties and democracy

Readings:

Peter C. Ordeshook and Olga V. Shvetsova, "Ethnic Heterogeneity, District Magnitude, and the Number of Parties," *American Journal of Political Science* vol. 38, no. 1 (1994).

October 30

Topic: Paper Workshop I

Readings:

Lisa A. Baglione, *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science: A Practical Guide to Inquiry, Structure, and Methods* (Sage, 2016) Chapter 7.

November 2

Topic: Political parties in the U.S. Congress I

Readings:

Gary W. Cox and Mathew D. McCubbins, *Legislative Leviathan: Party Government in the House* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993 – 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2007) Chapters 5 and 7.

November 6

Topic: Political parties in the U.S. Congress II

Readings:

Gary W. Cox and Mathew D. McCubbins, *Setting the Agenda: Responsible Party Government in the U.S. House of Representatives* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005) Chapters 1 and 2.

*November 9*

Topic: American elections: do campaigns matter?

Assignment: Submit a one-page description of your current research proposal idea on Blackboard.

Readings:

John Sides and Lynn Vavreck, *The Gamble: Choice and Chance in the 2012 Presidential Election* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013) Chapters 5 and 7. [**Note:** The PDFs include Chapter 1 – you do not have to read that chapter.]

*November 13*

Topic: Paper Workshop II

Readings:

Read your group mates' paper proposals.

*November 16*

Topic: American elections: how does race and gender affect voting and running for office?

Readings:

Richard L. Fox and Jennifer L. Lawless, "Uncovering the Origins of the Gender Gap in Political Ambition," *American Political Science Review* vol. 108, no. 3 (2014) 499-519.

Antoine J. Banks, *Anger and Racial Politics: The Emotional Foundation of Racial Attitudes in America* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014) Chapter 1.

*November 20*

Topic: Democracy and IR: are democracies more peaceful?

Readings:

John M. Owen, "How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace." *International Security* vol. 19 no. 2 (1994) 87-125.

Sebastisan Rosato, "The Flawed Logic of Democratic Peace Theory," *American Political Science Review* vol. 97 no. 4 (2003) 585-602.

*November 23*

Topic: No class (Thanksgiving)

Readings:

No readings.

*November 27*

Topic: Democracy and IR: are democracies more likely to win wars?

Readings:

Dan Reiter and Allan C. Stam. "Democracy, War Initiation, and Victory," *American Political Science Review* vol. 92, no. 2 (1998) 377-389.

*November 30*

Topic: Does democracy work? Are there reasonable alternatives?

Readings:

Ross Mittiga, "Political Legitimacy, Authoritarianism, and Climate Change," *American Political Science Review* vol. 116, no. 3 (2022) 998-1011.

Jason Brennan, "The Right to a Competent Electorate," *Philosophical Quarterly* vol. 61 (2011).

Alexander A. Guerrero, "Against Elections: The Lottocratic Alternative," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* vol. 42, no. 2 (2014).

*December 4*

Topic: Paper Workshop III

Readings:

Read your group mates' draft papers.

*December 7*

Topic: Make-up class / Q&A

Readings:

No readings.