

# **POSC-1100-R05: INTRODUCTION TO POLITICS**

Instructor: Boris Heersink

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Faber Hall 667

Office Hours: Monday and Thursday, 12:30 – 1:30 PM and by appointment

Class Location and Time:

Faculty Memorial Hall 321

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 in class 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). Note that 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 will result in a lowering of your participation grade.

### Office Hours

If you have any questions or want to chat about the course, you can come to my office hours on **Monday and Thursday between 12:30 and 1:30 PM** (unless otherwise noted). My office is in 667 Faber Hall. If you want to meet but cannot make that time, 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. Office hours do not require an appointment so if you want to chat feel free to drop by. Also, you should not feel like you can only stop by if you have really specific questions: it's fine to stop by if you want to talk about the course more broadly.

### Grade

*Components:* Your grade is based on participation in class (20%), two midterms (25% each), and a final (30%).

The midterms 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 midterms will be held in class on **February 27 and March 26**. The final will be held **at the assigned time and location for this course**.

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. Raising your own questions also counts as participation. There may be a limited number of opportunities to earn participation credit through activities outside of class, such as participating in a department sponsored event during the semester. However, you should not count on those events occurring and if you are unable to attend them, there will not be alternative opportunities to earn extra credit.

*Grading Scale and Calculation of Final Course Grade:* For the midterm and final exam 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 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 a midterm adds 1 point ( $4 * 0.25$ ) out of a total of 4 points you can earn for your final grade. Your final letter grade is based on the following scale:

Weighted Average of Points	Final Letter Grade
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

*Grade Complaints:* I will grade your performance in this course (on the exams and your participation) in comparison to your fellow students as well as predetermined expectations. This means that the grade you earn should be a fair representation of how you have performed 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. 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 bring with you the copy of your exam and a written description (approximately half a page) comparing your answers to those listed in the answer key that will be made available online after the exam, and explaining 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. A regrading process can thus result in a higher grade, the exact same grade, or 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. 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. While I understand that both of those feelings can be very frustrating, they are not arguments for why a grade is not correct and I will not entertain grading challenges based solely on these arguments.

Finally, grades are not a negotiation: if you believe I made a mistake, you should feel free to challenge the grade. But 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 not on trying to haggle about a grade afterwards.

*Plagiarism and Other Violations of Code of Conduct:* All assignments in this course fall under Fordham University's code of conduct. Any violation (including, but not limited to, cheating on exams, and plagiarism) will result in the student being held accountable to the full extent of university guidelines.

### Notes

Fordham 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, do not hesitate to let me know. You can do so in class, during my office hours, or by e-mail – whichever you prefer.

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).

## 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, as well as online bookstores.

## Course Syllabus

*January 13*

Topic: What is Political Science?

Readings:

No readings.

*January 16*

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.]

*January 20*

Topic: **Martin Luther King Jr. Day – no class**

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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.

Readings:

No readings.

*January 23*

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

Readings:

Andrew Reynolds, "[North Carolina is no longer classified as a democracy.](#)" *The News and Observer* (December 22, 2016).

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

["Methodology: Freedom in the World 2016,"](#) *Freedom House*.

*January 27*

Topic: Do democratic institutions make a nation democratic?

Readings:

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

*January 30*

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.

*February 3*

Topic: How can we tell who governs in a democracy?

Readings:

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

*February 6*

Topic: Power and democracy: the second and third faces 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.

*February 10*

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.]

*February 13*

Topic: Why do democracies do better?

Readings:

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

*February 18*

**Note:** We have class on Tuesday this day because of President's Day.

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.]

### *February 20*

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).

### *February 24*

Topic: Voting in a democracy: who gets to do it, and 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).

### *February 27*

Topic: **Midterm I**

Readings:

No readings.

### *March 2*

Topic: Electoral systems and their consequences

Readings:

Richard Benschel, "The American Ballot Box: Law, Identity, and the Polling Place in the Mid-Nineteenth Century," *Studies in American Political Development* vol. 17 (Spring 2003) 1-27.

*March 5*

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).

*March 9*

Topic: The American president

Readings:

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).

*March 12*

Topic: No class.

Readings:

No readings.

*March 16*

Topic: No class due to spring break.

Readings:

No readings.

*March 19*

Topic: No class due to spring break.

Readings:

No readings.

*March 23*

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).

*March 26*

Topic: **Midterm II**

Readings:

No readings.

*March 30*

Topic: Political parties in the US: party government in Congress, pt. 1

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.

*April 2*

Topic: Political parties in the US: party government in Congress, pt. 2

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.

*April 6*

Topic: The Effects of Gender and Race in American Elections

Readings:

Tali Mendelberg, *The Race Card: Campaign Strategy, Implicit Messages, and the Norm of Equality* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001) Chapters 1 and 6.

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.

*April 9*

Topic: No class due to Easter break.

Readings:

No readings.

*April 13*

Topic: No class due to Easter break.

Readings:

No readings.

*April 16*

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.

*April 20*

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.

*April 23*

Topic: Democracy and IR: Do democracies make more credible threats?

Readings:

Kenneth A. Schultz, "Why We Needed Audience Costs and What We Need Now," *Security Studies* vol. 21 no. 3 (2012) 369-375.

Alexander B. Downes and Todd S. Sechser. "The Illusion of Democratic Credibility," *International Organization* vol. 66 no. 3 (2012) 457-489.

*April 27:*

Topic: Does democracy work?

Readings:

Lynn M. Sanders, "Against Deliberation," *Political Theory* vol. 25, no. 3 (1997).

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).

*April 30:*

Topic: Catch-up day / Q&A

Readings:

No readings.