

POSC-1100-R05: INTRODUCTION TO POLITICS

Instructor: Boris Heersink

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Faber Hall 667

Office Hours: Monday, 12:30 – 2:30 PM (Zoom or in person), and by appointment on other times

Class Location and Time:

Dealy Hall 206

Monday and Thursday, 8:30-9:45 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.

Please read the below sections of the syllabus carefully.

Covid Policies

Note: At the time of writing we are facing a resurgence of the Covid pandemic due to the Delta variant. Because of this, there is a possibility that any of the rules outlined below may change at the direction of the university.

The class is scheduled to be taught in-person. Currently, the university requires all students and staff to provide evidence of full vaccination against Covid. Additionally, everybody is **required to wear masks** while indoors. Please follow these requirements in this class.

If during the semester you find yourself experiencing symptoms of a possible Covid infection, or if you were in close contact with someone who has Covid, you should **not come to class** and instead contact Fordham student health services (health@fordham.edu or at 718-817-

4160). Your absence will not be held against you in any way. Just let me know through email, and I am happy to meet with you on Zoom to discuss any material you missed in detail.

The pandemic has thus far affected all of us in some way, though the extent to which it has is likely to be different for each of us. However, I imagine that at this point we are all, if nothing else, tired, frustrated, and facing all types of motivational issues. This is completely understandable. And of course some of us may be dealing with much more serious possible issues caused by Covid-19 – including its effect on our own physical and mental health, that of our family and other loved ones, as well as any economic struggles caused by the pandemic. If you are facing issues limiting your ability to participate and perform fully in this course, please do not hesitate to reach out so we can work on solving those problems.

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). 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.

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. I will send out a Doodle to sign up for meetings at the beginning of each week. You can choose whether you want to meet in person or on Zoom. If you want to meet in person, please make sure you wear a mask at all times while you are in the political science department and in my office.

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. 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 **September 30 and November 1**. The final will be held as a take-home exam.

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.

Grading Scale and Calculation of Final Course Grade: For the midterms 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. A B+ for your second midterm 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
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, 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. A re-grading 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. I understand that 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 solely 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. It is quite common for students who received, for example, an A- to list the things they got right. But those things are what earned you the A-. The question is whether there were things that reasonably cost you enough points to keep you below an A.

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'd 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, you have to identify what it is you think I did wrong and engage with me on that basis. 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. They should reflect the quality of the work you produced. 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 paper deadline, 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. 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 mispronounce your name or use the 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. While we do not have paper assignments in this class, I strongly recommend using this system for other classes. You can sign up for an appointment at 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 or 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).¹

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

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

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

² This refers to the 2nd edition – the 1st edition is fine as well.

September 2

Topic: What is Political Science?

Readings:

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

September 6

Topic: No class (Labor Day)

Readings:

No readings.

September 8

Note: this class is on Wednesday.

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 9

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).

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

September 13

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 16

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 20

Topic: Who governs in a democracy?

Readings:

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

September 23

Topic: Power and democracy: the second 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.

September 27

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

Readings:

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

Clarissa Rile Hayward, "De-Facing Power," *Polity* vol. 31, no. 1 (Autumn 1998) p. 1-22.

September 30

Topic: Midterm I

Readings:

No readings.

October 4

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 7

Topic: Why do democracies do better?

Readings:

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

October 11

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

Readings:

No readings.

October 14

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 18

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 21

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 25

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).

October 28

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).

November 1

Topic: Midterm II

Readings:

No readings.

November 4

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).

November 8

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 – 2nd edition, 2007) Chapters 5 and 7.

November 11

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 15

Topic: American elections: do campaigns matter?

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 can but do not have to read that chapter.]

November 18

Topic: American elections: how does 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.

November 22

Topic: American elections: how does race affect American voters?

Readings:

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 25

Topic: No class (Thanksgiving)

Readings:

No readings.

November 29

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.

December 2

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.

December 6

Topic: Does democracy work? Are there reasonable alternatives?

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).

December 9

Topic: Catch-up day / Q&A

Readings:

No readings.