Introduction

This is a course you want to take. This is a course you need to take—not only because it fulfills your general education criteria for a UIUC Social Sciences course, but also because the world around us is getting increasingly more complex, and it might behoove you—as students at this great institution—to be equipped with the tools to understand it.

Across the nation, students are taking a greater interest in politics, and the University of Illinois is no exception. In just the past seven years, the number of political science majors here at Illinois has more than doubled, from 500 to over 1200, making it one of the largest majors on campus. Surely, there are a variety of reasons behind this upsurge in interest in politics and political science. Perhaps it is a response to the events of 9/11 and the sudden realization that there is a lot in the world of politics that lies beyond our borders. Perhaps it is in response to contested elections and domestic political scandals. Or maybe it is attributable to the barrage of political-themed Hollywood movies, from Hotel Rwanda to Syriana to Charlie Wilson’s War, and late-night political satire programs like The Daily Show and The Colbert Report.

Ultimately, why you are here is less important than the fact that you are here in PS100, which serves as the gateway to understanding the history, approaches, concepts and defining debates that mark the study of politics. This course aims to not only give you the “lay of the land” when it comes to the
study of politics and its numerous sub-fields—political theory, international relations, comparative politics, American politics, law, and policy studies—but also to help you appreciate politics in all of its forms in a broader context. In particular we look to examining global politics and understand the role of the United States plays in it, as well as examining American politics to understand the role you play in it!

Assignments and Grading

Grading will be based upon participation in discussion sections as well as three in-class assignments: two mid-term examinations (the form of which will be announced later), as well as a final examination.

The grade breakdown is as follows:

Section participation: 15%
First mid-term exam: 20%
Second mid-term exam: 30%
Final exam: 35%

Grading Scale:
100—97%: A+
96.9—93%: A
92.9—90%: A-
89.9—87%: B+
86.9—83%: B
82.9—80%: B-
79.9—77%: C+
76.9—73%: C
72.9—70%: C-
69.9—67%: D+
66.9—63%: D
62.9—60%: D-
Below 60%: F

Section Participation

Your TA will determine your section participation grade based upon classroom attendance and participation. It is necessary that you regularly attend both lecture and discussion sections. Missing a class does not exempt you from the materials covered on that day. You may want to exchange e-mail addresses with some of your classmates to get notes and other materials you might have missed. Just showing up to class will not ensure that you receive a satisfactory class participation grade. You will be expected to come to class having read all of the assigned readings for that week, and had time to think critically about them. Ensuring that everyone is familiar with the arguments put forth in the various readings is the minimum condition for developing an effective classroom environment.

A key aspect of maintaining an interesting and energetic discussion environment is to ensure that all participants in discussions feel free to express their ideas and opinions without fear of scoffs or condescension. To that end, it is incumbent upon everyone to treat everyone—and their ideas—with respect, especially when another student’s perceptions may not align with your own. Of course when speaking of politically charged topics disagreements will surely arise, yet please be aware of and show respect for others’ ideas and feelings. If at any time you feel offended, please try to raise your concerns in a constructive, level-headed manner—either in class, with your TA or with me directly, or even anonymously—to amicably resolve the situation. Many times, interpersonal conflicts are rooted in simple misunderstandings, other times they reflect serious issues that need to be resolved before the class can continue.

Exams

The exams will be cumulative in that there will be a continuity of similar topics, concepts and perspectives throughout the class, but the focus of each exam will primarily concern the materials which immediately precede each exam. Lecture and discussion materials, as well as topics covered in the assigned readings—whether addressed directly in lecture—are all fair game for exam questions. Topics brought to the fore in discussion section are especially prone to ending-up on an exam.
Make-Up Exams?

Make-up exams will only be granted under extreme circumstances, resulting either from 1) genuine family emergencies, 2) travel associated with university obligations (academic or athletic), or 3) severe illness or injury. If you are traveling due to university obligations, you must inform us at least two weeks prior to the event. If you are genuinely ill or injured, you will need proper documentation from your physician. *These regulations will be rigorously enforced!!!*

Questions on Exams

Invariably throughout the semester, students have questions about the grade they received on a particular assignment or test that goes beyond the given comments on the essay itself. If you feel that you did not deserve the grade you received on a test assignment, I am certainly open to discussing the matter. However, I will insist upon the following:

1) **A 24-hour “cooling off” period.** Please do not approach your TA or me with questions about “why did I receive this grade” within 24-hours of having your assignment returned to you. This will allow you time to re-read the comments, and understand whatever short comings or other issues may be in question.

2) **Come to office hours.** The TAs and I will not discuss individual grades during, before or after either discussion section or lecture. Questions about grades will only be considered in face-to-face discussions with your TA or myself. In the end, it is exceedingly rare that a grade will be altered – but if you can persuade me that the evaluation was in error, I am not opposed to re-evaluating the grade. Of course, a re-visited grade may ultimately end-up being either higher or lower than the one originally received, as the quality of the response warrants.

Grade Entitlement

A recent UC Irvine study found that 1/3 of all students surveyed expected a course grade of “B” just for attending lectures, while 40 percent expected a “B” simply for completing the required readings. Moreover 2/3 of all students surveyed claimed that explaining to a professor that they “worked hard,” it should be factored into the calculation of a grade. This trend increasingly mistakes effort for quality of work. I strive to objectively assess the quality of assignments in this class against a uniform standard, nothing more. Course grades should not be thought to be a reflection of either the amount of effort exerted or some sort of evaluation of the personal worth of the student.

Extra Credit?

**No.** Let me clarify that: if there comes a situation where extra credit would be appropriate, it would be offered on an equal-opportunity basis to all students, and that would be exceptionally rare. Individual extra-credit opportunities distort the baseline of evaluating every student by the same standard (as do requests for extensions). This is to say, please do not approach us at the end of the semester asking for some extra-credit opportunity to make-up for a poor performance on an earlier assignment. While you might think that such a request conveys a notion of additional dedication to achievement in the course, in reality, the message received is quite different: such requests are based on two implicit assumptions: 1) that the student in question wishes to be held to a different (lower) standard than the rest of the class, and 2) that the professor is willing to bend the rules and sacrifice objective standards of evaluation. As a result, I tend to find such requests to be rather off-putting, even though that was surely not the student’s intent, which is subsequently why I feel compelled to spell-out the justifications for this policy here in the syllabus.
Online Lectures and Materials?

No. Let me clarify that: lecture notes or slides will not be posted online, so please do not ask for them to be. Similarly, review sheets are not used in this class. It is not the duty for the TAs or the lecturer to provide notes to you: we cannot do the learning for you. We suggest that you exchange your e-mail and contact information with the people seated next to you (or other friends in the class) to obtain notes if you happen to miss lecture on a given day. This interpersonal contact may stimulate the development of study groups, and has generally been the way courses have been conducted since time immemorial.

Why not? Here are our reasons, in order of ascending importance: 1) Technical issues: the huge file size precludes uploading. 2) Legal issues: effectively “publishing” lectures online violates the “fair use” doctrine of intellectual property rights protections, by which we may utilize many of the copyright-protected images and other lecture materials. 3) Negative effects on attendance and grades: pedagogical studies have shown that online materials, notes, and review sheets lead not only to dramatic drops in attendance, but also grades. Students tend to become overly-reliant on the printed word, which is often just a stepping-off point for a more important discussion (which in turn is missed if all you focus on is the content written on the power-point slides). These studies demonstrate that students become passive observers rather than active participants in learning, leading to worse correspondingly worse grades. 4) Finally, there is the more existential aspect: if the entire learning experience boils-down to an instructor writing outlines and students reading them, what is the point? What is my raison-d’être at this university: professor, or outline-writer? For that matter, what is yours: student, or outline-consumer? To that end, why not just get an online degree? The answer to all of these questions is in the mix: the traditional dynamic of classroom lectures, discussions, and the exchange between instructors and students that is the hallmark of the university learning experience, which prepares you to become a well-rounded and competent individual, and ultimately prepares you for life outside of academia, where very little is scripted in advance, and available on-demand.

All of these elements are damaged, rather than helped, by posting lectures, notes, slides, and other review materials online. We heartily suggest that, in lieu of such aids, that you take responsibility for your own education. Come to lectures. Come to discussion sections. Raise questions with your TAs and professors during their office hours. Use e-mail. Post questions on the online review website. Create your own study groups. It is our responsibility to teach, it is your responsibility to learn; and while we will do our best to help you in that endeavor, you likewise have an important role to play.

Accessibility

Generally speaking, I am a fairly easy person to get in contact with. I encourage you to e-mail either me or your TA with questions, clarifications, and concerns as they appear throughout the semester, and I especially encourage you to come speak with me face-to-face during my office hours, or by appointment: nothing beats old fashioned interpersonal interaction. Additionally, preceding the exams, I will open-up a discussion tab on the Compass website for review where you can feel free to post questions and build upon the concerns of others. For questions asked of me personally on the review thread, I will try to answer them as quickly as possible, given my other duties and obligations.

Course Website

This syllabus, along with relevant class announcements, review materials, reading assignments, and other information will be available on the course website, located at http://compass.uiuc.edu.
Readings

○ The following required books are available for purchase at the usual bookstores around campus. I would suggest that you go buy them. Or have your parents buy them for you. Think of it as an extremely early holiday gift. Anyway, what is more important is that you read the materials, rather than who actually buys it.


- The 2009 (paperback) edition has a new preface which is part of the assigned reading. For those that have a 2008 (hardback) edition that does not have the new preface, I will post the preface as part of the online reserves, or on the Compass website.

- All remaining materials will be included in a course reading packet that will be available for purchase at Notes & Quotes (502 East John Street. http://www.notes-n-quotes.com/), as well as being available on electronic reserve through the Undergraduate Library website.

Semester Topics and Reading Schedule:

○ = Required reading from books (Van Belle & Mash or Zakaria)

● = Required reading from online reserve/reading packet.

Part One: Nuts and Bolts of the Study of Politics

Week 1: Introduction

Lecture: Tuesday, August 25
Thursday, August 27

Discussion: Friday, August 28


Week 2: Political Development in Historical Context

Lecture: Tuesday, September 1
Thursday, September 3

Discussion: Friday, September 4


Week 3: Political Ideologies

Lecture: Tuesday, September 8
Thursday, September 10

Discussion: Friday, September 11


Week 4: Democracy

Lecture: Tuesday, September 15
Thursday, September 17

Discussion: Friday, September 18


Week 5: Catching-Up and Looking Back: Review and Midterm

Lecture: Tuesday, September 22
Thursday, September 24—Midterm Exam #1

Discussion: Friday, September 25—Cancelled!

(Unofficial TA appreciation day.)

Part Two: Explaining Variation in Politics and Policies

Week 6: Power, Governance, and Collective Action

Lecture: Tuesday, September 29
Thursday, October 1

Discussion: Friday, October 2


Week 7: Political Institutions I

Lecture: Tuesday, October 6
Thursday, October 8

Discussion: Friday, October 9

Week 8: Political Institutions II
Lecture: Tuesday, October 13
Thursday, October 15
Discussion: Friday, October 16

Week 9: Political Culture
Lecture: Tuesday, October 20
Thursday, October 22—Midterm Exam #2
Discussion: Friday, October 23—Cancelled!


Part Three: The Local and the Global Political Contexts

Week 10: Introduction to Global Politics
Lecture: Tuesday, October 27
Thursday, October 29
Discussion: Friday, October 30

Week 11: Issues in Comparative Politics
Lecture: Tuesday, November 3
Thursday, November 5
Discussion: Friday, November 6

Week 12: Approaches to International Relations
Lecture: Tuesday, November 10
Thursday, November 12
Discussion: Friday, November 13
Week 13: Law, Media, and American Government
Lecture: Tuesday, November 17
Thursday, November 19
Discussion: Friday, November 20

Week 14: No Class – Thanksgiving Break!
Lecture: Tuesday, November 24
Thursday, November 26
Discussion: Friday, November 27
Please don’t be here for any of these dates. We won’t be.

Week 15: America’s Place in the World
Lecture: Tuesday, December 1
Thursday, December 3
Discussion: Friday, December 4

Week 16: Concluding Thoughts
Lecture: Tuesday, December 8

Final Exam:
1:30pm – 4:30pm, Wednesday, December 16, 2009: 149 National Soybean Research Center