

POLI 1201.1B
Politics: Contemporary Issues (FALL 2018)

Time: Tues. & Thurs. 10 -11:15am
Class Location: SB 265

Professor: Dr. Alexandra Dobrowolsky
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Office location: MN 405
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Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday
11:30am - 2:30pm
*or by appointment

Calendar Description: 3 credit hours. This course explores the multi-faceted nature of contemporary politics and, in so doing, introduces students to various aspects of the Political Science discipline. The aim of the course is to convey how ideas, frameworks, institutions and actors relate to current political debates and ongoing democratic challenges, both locally and globally. Through a critical examination of significant political theories and practices students will develop a broad and general understanding of the nature, scope and range of political action in the contemporary world.

Course Description / Objectives:

This course introduces students to the study of politics through the lens of current political issues and challenges. “Politics” is broadly conceived and includes a wide range of ideas, institutions, interests, and identities, as well as multiple forms of governance, in a changing, globalizing, political, economic and socio-cultural world.

The course has three interrelated objectives. **First**, students will develop a general understanding of political ideas and practices and their broader relevance. **Second**, students will be encouraged to develop their critical thinking in relation to contemporary political issues. More specifically, students will be required to formulate, articulate and situate *informed* and *appropriately substantiated* views on an array of political concerns. This will be accomplished through required and supplementary course readings, informal class discussions and formal class debates, as well as writing assignments (Reaction sheets and a Critical Commentary). **Third**, the ultimate aim of the course is to aid students in acquiring the necessary analytical tools to become critically sharp and politically aware, active and engaged citizens.

Course Requirements:

Concept Quiz #1 (Oct.18)	10%
Debate Presentation	20%
Critical Commentary (6 pages, due: Nov.8)	30%
Concept Quiz #2 (Nov. 29)	10%
Reaction Sheets (2.5% X 6)	15%
Attendance / Participation	15%

Required Course Texts:

1) Christopher G. Anderson & Rand Dyck eds., ***Studying Politics: An Introduction to Political Science***, 5th ed., Nelson, 2016.

2) J. Tyler Dickovick and Jonathan Eastwood eds., ***Current Debates in Comparative Politics 2nd edition***, Oxford, 2019.



Protestors oppose fake news. Image: Wikimedia Commons.

Overview of Course Requirements:

the descriptions below provide you with brief descriptions of the course requirements. Detailed instructions will be handed out in class and posted on Brightspace, the university's learning management system. If you are unfamiliar with Brightspace see:

<http://www.smu.ca/academics/studio/brightspace-for-students.html> or the Centre for Academic Technologies in the Atrium.

Concept Quizzes (2 x 10%= 20%)

Students will be tested on key concepts and proper names through identify and give the significance type questions. There will be 2 Concept Quizzes each worth 10%: October 18 & November 29.

Debates (20%)

Students will sign up for one of 6 debate topics. They will work in groups outside of class time to develop persuasive, well-supported arguments, building on the ideas / issues raised in the required readings for the debate topic in question. These arguments will then be organized to produce a coherent presentation whereby each group member articulates one dimension of the group's overall argumentation. In class, the two opposing sides will not only present their arguments for an informed debate on the topic, but will also be prepared for a rebuttal. After the debate, both sides will be prepared to take questions from the class on the debate topic. The debate is worth 20%= 10 marks for content; 5 marks for delivery; 5 marks for engagement with the class.

Reaction Sheets (6 X 2.5%= 15%)

For each debate topic, all the students in the class (including the debaters) will complete a Reaction Sheet to be submitted BEFORE the debate in question, i.e., at the start of the class before the scheduled debate begins. The reaction sheet will provide, in written form, students' concise, well-considered responses to the background readings for each debate topic. Each reaction sheet is worth 2.5%.

Critical Commentary (30%)

Students will be required to write a Critical Commentary (due on Nov. 8) which is akin to writing a book review, but instead of reading and commenting on a whole book, they will be asked **to evaluate**, in an informed and substantiated manner, an author's chapter on a topic we cover this term. Students will choose one (1) chapter from the Anderson & Dyck edited collection, *Studying Politics* (2016) that is one of the required readings for this course. They will analyze and assess how the author(s) in question cover(s) the subject matter. They will do so in light of four additional sources (of distinctively different types) on the same topic. Each commentary will be approximately **6 pages** long, including the bibliography.

Class Attendance / Participation (15%)

Students are expected to attend class regularly, come to class prepared, and participate in class discussions. Participation in class includes evidence of having done the readings, and thoughtful contributions to class discussions. Class attendance will be taken regularly.

Marking Scheme: Grade Points Percentage Rating A+ 4.30* 90 - 100 Excellent A 4.00 85 - 89 A- 3.70 80 - 84 B+ 3.30 77 - 79 Good B 3.00 73 - 76 B- 2.70 70 - 72 C+ 2.30 67 - 69 Satisfactory C 2.00 63 - 66 C- 1.70 60 - 62 D 1.00 50 - 59 Marginal F 0.00 0 - 49 Failure or withdrawal after deadline

Policy on Missed Tests: Missed tests may only be made up in extenuating circumstances (e.g., serious illness, death in the family). Appropriate documentation must be provided (e.g., note from a doctor). You must inform me in advance, if you cannot write a test at the scheduled time (unless, of course, your extenuating circumstance prevents you from doing so).

PLEASE NOTE: All components of this course must be completed to receive a passing grade. Your Critical Commentary will require proper English language usage and appropriate referencing, and will be graded accordingly. Please make use of the Writing Centre and consult the *Political Science Style Handbook*, (i.e., **The Writing Centre, APA Style Guide Political Science Department**) for guidance on style and proper referencing. Your Critical Commentary will be handed in **on time**. **No extensions will be granted in this course**. In case of (documented) illness or extenuating circumstances, a penalty of one grade point (e.g., from A to A-, from A- to B+) per day will be imposed on late submissions.

Students with disabilities should meet with the professor at the start of the term to discuss alternative arrangements/accommodations, if necessary, and contact the Fred Smithers Centre of Support for Students with Disabilities or online at <http://www.smu.ca/campus-life/services-for-studentwith-disabilities.html>.

ADDITIONAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Academic Integrity: As a student in this class, you have agreed to abide by the Saint Mary's University policy on Academic Integrity and Student Responsibility. Please refer to the Undergraduate Academic Calendar of Saint Mary's University 2018-2019, pages 19-27: <http://www.smu.ca/webfiles/Academic%20Calendar%202018-2019.pdf> Please note that I will report all suspected cases of academic dishonesty, cheating, falsification, or plagiarism. If you have any questions regarding academic misconduct issues or are unsure about documenting your work, please do not hesitate to come speak to me after class, during regular office hours, by email, or by phone.

PLAGIARISM: constitutes a **serious academic offence**. Copying someone else's work or quoting another person's research/writing without reference; taking unattributed material from the internet; submitting the same piece of work for credit in more than one course, are all examples of academic fraud (see below). Students found committing plagiarism or other academic offences will receive a grade of zero for the work(s) in question and will be reported.

Safety and Respect in the Classroom: My goal is to create a classroom environment where ideas are advanced, questions can be raised, and discussions and debates will proceed in ways that encourage intellectual curiosity, informed, scholarly analysis, and active learning in a context of mutual respect. To this end, students are expected to arrive on time, turn off their cell phones, and refrain from referring to unrelated materials during class time. These are all distractions for other students (and for the professor!). If a student needs to leave the class early, please notify the professor in advance. In case of an emergency, follow directions as described in the Saint Mary's University Emergency Response Brochure, available at <http://www.smu.ca/webfiles/EmergencyBookletMasterv2web.pdf>.

Topics, Readings & Class Schedule

I) Sept. 6: Introductions

Required:

****buy your textbooks and be sure to get the right editions: Anderson & Dyck textbook 5th Edition (2016); and Dickovick and Eastwood 2nd Edition (2019)***

II) Sept. 11: Studying Politics

Required reading:

****Anderson & Dyck, Chapter 1***

Sept. 15: "Studying Politics: An Introduction"= Chapter 1 by Christopher G. Anderson

III) Sept. 13 / 18 / 20: Classical & Contemporary Political Ideas & Why They Matter Now

Required readings:

****Anderson & Dyck, Chapters 2 & 5***

Sept. 13 / 18 : "Thinking About Politics: Ideas & Ideologies in Politics"= Chapter 2 by Richard Sigurdson

Sept. 20 : "States and Economies: Studying Political Economy in Political Science" = Chapter 5 by Rodney Haddow

****Sign up for Group Debates (Debate= 15% of your grade!)**

IV) Sept. 25 / 27: States, Nations & Governments: Ideas & Identities in Flux

Required readings:

****Anderson & Dyck, Chapters 3 & 4***

Sept. 25 : "States & Governments: Perpetual Works in Progress"= Chapter 3 by Christopher G. Anderson

Sept. 27 : "States & Nations: Cultural Pluralism, Nationalism & Identity"= Chapter 4 by Yasmeen Abu-Laban

V) Oct. 2 / 4: Ideas in Action: Parties, Elections, Citizens' Power

Required readings:

***Anderson & Dyck, Chapters 11 & 10**

Oct. 2 : "Political Parties: Imperfect but Essential"= Chapter 11 by Anna Esselment

Oct. 4 : "Democracies in Action: Elections, Political Participation, & Citizens' Power"= Chapter 10 by Amanda Bittner

VI) Oct. 9 Debates Begin

****DEBATE 1, Oct. 9: "Is Democracy in Decline?"**

Required readings from Dickovick and Eastwood:

"End-Times for Liberal Democracy" pp.58-61, by Zachary Laub & Yascha Mounk

"No, People Really Aren't Turning Away from Democracy" pp.61-64, by Erik Voeten

"Was the 2016 U.S. Election Democratic: Here are 7 Serious Shortfalls" pp.64-66, by Dan Slater & Lucan Ahmad

***Hand in Reaction Sheet #1**

VII) Oct. 11: Tips on Critical Commentary Research and Writing

Required reading from Dickovick and Eastwood: "Want to be a better critical thinker: Here's How to Spot False Narratives and 'Weaponized Lies' "pp. 3-4, by Warren Berger

****DEBATE 2, Oct. 16: "Is the Inequality Gap Widening?"**

Required readings from Dickovick and Eastwood:

"Social Policies Don't Always Help Women & Men Equally?" pp.31-32, by Sidita Kushi & Ian McManus

"Put Globalization to Work for Democracies," pp.32-34, by Dani Rodrik

"Proof that Life is Getting Better for Humanity, in 5 Charts", pp.42-51, by Max Roser

***Hand in Reaction Sheet #2**

*******October 18:**

******CONCEPT QUIZ #1 ******

VIII) Oct.23: Constitutions, Institutions & Citizenship

Required readings:

***Anderson & Dyck, Chapters 6 & 8**

Oct. 23 "Designing and Limiting Governments by Constitutions" "= Chapter 6 by Stephen Phillips and "Legislatures: Centre Stage But Not Top Billing"= Chapter 8 by David Docherty & John Kurt Edwards

****DEBATE 3, Oct. 25: "Should Citizens be Active in Constitution Making/Reform?"**

Required readings from Dickovick and Eastwood:

"How to Lose a Constitutional Democracy" pp.83-88, by Aziz Huq & Tom Ginsburg

"Why Referendums aren't as Democratic as They Seem" pp.91-93, by Amanda Taub & Max Fisher

"Why Is Nepal's New Constitution Controversial" pp.93-95, by Charles Haviland

***Hand in Reaction Sheet #3**

IX) Oct. 30 / Nov. 1: Courts & Justice, Human Rights & Indigenous Rights

Required readings:

***Anderson & Dyck, Chapter 9**

Oct. 30: "The Judiciary: Politics, Law, and the Courts"= Chapter 9 by Matthew Hennigar

REMINDER: Nov. 8: Critical Commentaries will be due

****DEBATE 4, Nov. 6: "Are Truth Commissions Useful in Promoting Human Rights and Justice?"**

Required readings on BRIGHTSPACE:

"Are Truth Commissions Useful in Promoting Human Rights and Justice? Issue 16 in Charlton, pp.394-404 {PDF on Brightspace}

"Selected articles on Canada's TRC and Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women & Girls (MMIWG) { PDFs on Brightspace}

***Hand in Reaction Sheet #4**

X) Nov. 8: Civil Society, Mobilization & Contentious Politics

Required readings:

***Anderson & Dyck, Chapter 12**

Nov. 8: "Civil Society: The Study of Power. Intrigue. Passion."= Chapter 12 by Rachel LaForest

*****CRITICAL COMMENTARY DUE NOVEMBER 8th**

FALL BREAK: No classes 12 - 16, 2018

****DEBATE 5, Nov. 20: “Do Protest Movements Add or Detract from Democracy?”**

Required readings from Dickovick and Eastwood:

“App Powered Protests Put Democracy in Peril” pp.129-130, by Bessma Momani

“Here’s How Attention to Gender Affected Columbia’s Peace Process” pp.144-146, by Roxanne Krystalli & Kimberly Theidon

“South Korea’s Candlelight Protests a Peaceful Force” pp.127-128, by Sun-chul Kim

“Climate Change and the Grim Logic of Collective Action” pp.158-159, by Joseph Heath

***Hand in Reaction Sheet #5**

XI) Nov. 22: Im/migration, Citizenship & Security

Required readings:

****Anderson & Dyck, Chapter 16***

Nov. 27: “Security in Pieces: Approaches to the Study of Security in International Politics”= Chapter 16 by Sandy Irvine

****DEBATE 6, Nov. 27: “Will Migration Challenges Help or Hinder Humanity?”**

Required readings from Dickovick and Eastwood:

“Human Migration will be a Defining Issue of This Century” pp.160-162, by Alexander Betts

“Is Europe Ready for Non-European Migrants” pp.141-142, by Tom Turner & Christine Cross

“Drawbridges UP: The New Divide in Rich Countries Is Not Between Left and Right But Between Open and Closed” pp.35-39, by *The Economist*

***Hand in Reaction Sheet #6**

XII) Nov. 29 CONCEPT QUIZ #2 - FINAL

& LAST CLASS!

Good luck with exams & Happy Holidays!