

Contemporary Issues (FYS Pilot)

Course Description

POLI 1201.1A

3.0 credit hours

Academic Calendar Course Description (Brief): This course explores the multi-faceted nature of contemporary politics, and, in so doing, introduces students to various aspects of the Political Science discipline.

This course, taught as a first-year seminar (FYS), is part of a 2018-19 pilot project of the First-Year Experience (FYE) at Saint Mary's. It explores the multi-faceted nature of contemporary politics by taking on challenges posed at both the micro (i.e., why do some succeed and not others, as evident in the university) and the macro (i.e., why is there a crisis of liberal democracy, as evident in today's society). Politics is about power, and power is central to how this course approaches both student success matters and contemporary issues. Ultimately, the course is a thematic as opposed to a disciplinary exploration of contemporary politics.

This course operates in a blended learning environment which means that the course site in Brightspace* is an integral part of the course. It serves as both: (1) the home for course resources and material, including your grades; and (2) the method by which I communicate with you on an ongoing basis, not only in posting detailed requirements covered in class, but also in following up discussions and questions with news articles or additional material. This keeps our course dynamic. You will also be doing online writing and research modules through Brightspace.

*Brightspace is the university's learning management system and every student should know how to access and use it. For specific help, go to <https://studio.smu.ca/brightspace/> or visit the Software and Application Support Centre in Atrium 107.

REQUIRED BOOKS:

Welsh, Jennifer. 2016. *The Return of History*. Toronto: House of Anansi Press.

On reserve in the library or purchase hard or e- copy at <https://houseofanansi.com/products/the-return-of-history>

Feldman, Robert S. and Danica Lavoie. 2018. *P.O.W.E.R. Learning and Your Life*. 3rd Canadian Ed. Toronto: McGraw-Hill. [Handbook]
Free of charge to students in the course as part of pilot project

Course Times and Location:
M,W 4:00-5:15 pm; LA 274

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Brightspace Pulse App

PEER MENTORS

Jazmin Ageeb
Honours Student, Political Science
jazmin.ageeb@hotmail.com

Gabrielle Walthers
Honours Student, Political Science
gabriellerosez15@gmail.com

Course Evaluation

DESCRIPTION	COMPONENTS	DUE DATES	VALUE
Exposition (Objective) 25%	Group Presentation	Oct 29; Nov 5; Nov 19; or Nov 26 (to be assigned)	10%
	4 PowerPoint Slides	Oct 22; Oct 29; Nov 5; Nov 19; <u>and</u> Nov 26 (except when making a group presentation)	5%
	Take-home Expository Essay Exam	Nov 30, 5:00 pm, handed in to MN 407	10%
Description (Factual) 25%	ResearchBase [RB]	Oct 10, 11:59 pm	5%
	Writing Help Online [WHO]	Oct 10, 11:59 pm	10%
	Descriptive Essay on (SMU) University-organized or University-sanctioned event	Oct 10, due in class	10%
Narration (Personal; Reflective) 25%	Student Success Activities with Peer Mentor	Throughout the term	5%
	Narrative Essay on Essentials of Student Success	Nov 7, due in class	15%
	First-Year Student Success Surveys, including online university surveys at beginning and end of term	Course survey, due Nov 26, handed in to Peer Mentors	5%
Argumentation (Persuasive; Reasoned) 25%	In-Class Work and Activities (Discussions, Think-Pair-Share, Quickwrites, Attendance)	Throughout the term	25%
	100%		

Teaching and Learning

POLI 1201.1A is composed of a small number of students, like you, who are in their first year of university. I teach the course as a *seminar*, not only to create the foundation for you to be an active learner as you progress in your university studies, but also to facilitate the kind of faculty-student interaction in the classroom that ensures your academic success.

What does it mean for you to be an active learner? It means that you are constantly engaged in the learning process: faithfully attending classes, regularly doing your readings prior to coming to class, actively participating in the classroom by making contributions and asking questions, and ultimately developing the kind of growth mindset to succeed academically.

What does it mean for me to teach in a way that ensures your academic success? It means that I am committed to using the classroom, not only to discuss and sharpen key academic competencies (critical thinking, reading, writing, presenting, and working in groups), but also to introduce you to, and evaluate your work based on, different modes of academic discourse – namely, **exposition**, **description**, **narration**, and **argumentation** (“EDNA”) – an acronym which, coincidentally, is also my first name, helping you to remember it (or me)! I will cover all the components required for the course as part of our work in class.

Ensuring your success also means that I am committed to using academic supports outside of the classroom (e.g., Writing Help Online, ResearchBase, peer mentorship) to foster important university and life skills (e.g., learning how to write well; understanding how to use a library and discern sources; knowing how to manage time, take notes, and take tests). It means, too, that I routinely demonstrate that you are part of a learning community. The university is a special place, one that rests not only on intellectual humility and rigour, but also on personal connections and a sense of belonging.

*“EDNA” is from: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/685/01/>. However, I do prefer to be addressed as “Dr. Keeble.”



Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is defined in the *Academic Calendar 2018-2019* (p. 19) as resting on five fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. As we will see in this course, not only are these values key to being a success in both university and life, but their absence is also central to understanding the current crisis of liberal democracy.

Fairness and responsibility are important aspects of how I teach the course. I expect you to attend classes and to meet deadlines. The reason why I do not have a late policy for work is because, in fairness to all members of the class, I only give extensions and/or excuse class absences in cases of serious illness or extenuating circumstances.

In taking responsibility for your own success, you should also know that you have a great deal of support. I want you to come see me if you find yourself falling behind or unsure of what to do. You can also see Jazmin or Gabrielle, your Peer Mentors, for help. A university, at its core, is a community of learners, and you are not only part of the Saint Mary's community, but also an important member of this class.

Course Grading and Advising

The grading for this course is based on Academic Regulation 5a (*Academic Calendar 2018-2019*, p. 32) which is more fully explained in 'Grading Guidelines' on the Department of Political Science website: <http://www.smu.ca/academics/departments/political-science-undergraduate-courses.html>.

As part of my commitment to your success, each of you will be scheduled for a one-on-one meeting with me during the weeks of October 22 and 29. Keep in mind that you are always encouraged to come see outside of the classroom regarding course matters, university adjustment and, generally, life at SMU.



Plagiarism

Plagiarism, cheating, falsification, and tampering are not only serious academic offences punishable by the university but also unethical acts: they are simply wrong and they have no place in the university. The *Academic Calendar 2018-2019* is clear about each student's academic responsibility and specific examples of academic offences (p. 19-20) are posted in Brightspace.

If you have any questions on what constitutes an academic offence, please come see me. Professors care about how hard students work so, in fairness to all, any offence results in an "F."

The *Academic Calendar 2018-2019* can be found at: <http://www.smu.ca/webfiles/Academic%20Calendar%202018-2019v4.pdf>

Political Science

Dr. E. Keeble

edna.keeble@smu.ca
902.420.5443
McNally North (MN) 407

OFFICE HOURS

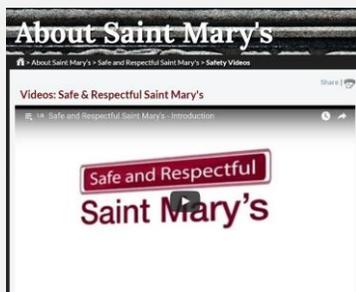
Mon, Wed 12:30-3:30 pm
or by appointment

No Classes:

Oct 8 – Thanksgiving Day
Nov 12-14 – Fall Break

Required online readings along with recommended and supplementary readings, videos and other material are posted in Brightspace.

Safe and Respectful Saint Mary's
<http://www.smu.ca/about/safety-videos.html>



Course Outline (Fall 2018)

DATE	TOPIC	REQUIRED READINGS
Sept 5	Introductions and Syllabus	
Sept 10-12	"Finding Your Passion" (Bad Advice?) and P.O.W.E.R. Learners	Handbook, chap 1
Sept 17-19	P.O.W.E.R. Reading and Reading Politics as Power	Handbook, chap 3 and Steven Lukes, "Power" (online)
Sept 24	Managing Time and Working with your Peer Mentors	Handbook, chap 2 with your Peer Mentors, Jazmin Ageeb and Gabrielle Walthers
Sept 26	Political Power, Authority and the State	<i>Introduction to Politics</i> , chap 2 (online)
Handbook, chap 4, "Taking Notes" with Peer Mentors, week of Oct 1		
Oct 1	Democracy and Our Relationship to the State	<i>Introduction to Politics</i> , chap 3 (online)
Oct 3	Populism, Pluralism, and Liberal Democracy	Marc Plattner, <i>Journal of Democracy</i> (online)
Descriptive Essay due Oct 10 in class; WHO and RB due 11:59 pm		
Oct 10	Writing, Presenting, and Collaborating with Others	Handbook, chaps 7 and 9
Handbook, chap 5, "Taking Tests" with Peer Mentors, week of Oct 15		
Oct 15-17	Author, Authority and Appropriation	Handout and CBC Documentary, "Searching for Winnetou" (in class)
One-on-one advising meetings with Dr. Keeble, MN 407, week of Oct 22		
Handbook, chaps 6, 8 or 10 with Peer Mentors, week of Oct 22		
Oct 22-24	The Return of History: Why is there a crisis of liberal democracy?	Welsh, chap 1
One-on-one advising meetings with Dr. Keeble, MN 407, week of Oct 29		
Handbook, chaps 6, 8 or 10 with Peer Mentors, week of Oct 29		
Oct 29-31	The Return of Barbarism: What is progress?	Welsh, chap 2
Nov 5-7	The Return of Mass Flight: What do we others?	Welsh, chap 3
Narrative Essay due Nov 7 in class		
Nov 19-21	The Return of the Cold War: What is the alternative?	Welsh, chap 4
Course Survey due Nov 26, handed in to Peer Mentors		
Nov 26-28	The Return of Inequality: What is the problem with capitalism?	Welsh, chap 5
Take-Home Expository Essay Exam due Nov 30, 5:00 pm, MN 407		
Dec 3	Final Reflections	