POLS_OX 111Q-1 – PRINCIPLES OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

COURSE SYLLABUS

Fall 2020
MW 1-2:15 pm (Online)

Dr. Salmon A. Shomade, Candler 219
Office Hours (via Zoom): MW 11:15-12:45 & by apt. - salmon.shomade@emory.edu

Course Description
From its inception, Political Science has drawn on ideas and techniques from multiple social scientific and humanistic traditions. It is a fundamentally interdisciplinary project of considerable intellectual and topical breadth. Yet, political science also shares a set of common concerns, which together define the field. This course provides an introduction to Political Science. It is intended to orient students in the Political Science/Math and Political Science, International Studies, Public Policy Analysis, and the QSS (Political Science and International Studies track) majors.

The course is organized around the following questions: What is politics, and what is political science? How do political groups form? How do groups make decisions? How are group decisions implemented? We approach these questions using ideas that are found across the subfields of political science. As we show in the course, these ideas can help us make sense of pressing political issues, such as Brexit, climate change, and immigration in the United States.

Learning Goals
In this course you will learn to recognize general problems of politics in particular situations. You will learn how to define core concepts in political science and to explain the logic of classic models of politics. You will be able to illustrate political concepts and problems through real
world examples in the United States, other countries, and the international system. You will learn to evaluate and analyze explanations of political outcomes.

The **TEXTBOOK** for the class is:


Additional Reading Materials will be placed on Emory Canvas or sent via Emory Opus.

**Grading Criteria/Standards**: The professor grades each individual student independently of other students. Grades are earned on a letter grade basis. Cumulative 90-100 earns a student an A in the class; 80-89.9 = B; 70-79.9 = C; 60-69.9 = D; Below 60 = F. Plus/Minus grade attachment is largely based on whether the cumulative score is on the higher (7-9) or lower (1-3) end of the range. Pass/fail students must earn at least 65% or better to pass the course. We would have four reflection essay papers written during class sessions. We would be allowed to drop the lowest grade of the four essays and thus, each essay is worth 13.3% toward the final grade. The reflection essays will be short essays testing our general comprehension of assigned readings. Thus, if we do the assigned readings, we should easily earn 13.3% for each essay! 😊😊😊

There will be only one examination in the course and it will count for 25% of our final grade. Details of the midterm exam contents will be discussed prior to its schedule date. Our final 25% of the final grade will be earned on the Research Paper that will be due at the very end of the semester. We would have opportunities to discuss at length the expectations for that paper. There are no extra credit opportunities in the course.

**FINAL GRADE DISTRIBUTION %**

- **REFLECTIONS (4 TOTAL)** 40%
- **MIDTERM EXAM** 25%
- **FINAL PAPER** 25%
- **CLASS PARTICIPATION** 10%

- REFLECTIONS (4 TOTAL)
- MIDTERM EXAM
- FINAL PAPER
- CLASS PARTICIPATION
We are expected to attend class so that we can share and gain knowledge from each other. Thus, attendance will be taken at each class meeting. There are no minimum or maximum excused or unexcused absences, but 3 or more absences will yield a very low participation grade. **5 or more absences in the course, regardless if the class is being taken pass/fail or for a letter grade, result in an automatic F in the class!** However, given the ongoing global pandemic and its potential implications for each individual, these attendance requirements could/would be waived under certain circumstances. Details are provided at a later page in this syllabus.

**Course Format**

We are EXPECTED to attend ALL synchronous class sessions via zoom during the scheduled class time. Some online assessments will be timed; others will be flexibly scheduled. We are also required to have our video turned on during class sessions. Of course, we would and PROMISE TO engage every class session in a respectful tone and with the attitude of scholars wanting to MAXIMALLY learn.

The course will be interactive (but not necessarily physically😊😊😊) and we are expected and required to contribute our comments during class discussions. At times, some of us will be assigned to lead class discussions each class meeting, but if one is not assigned, one could still be randomly called upon. While the course focuses on politics and studies of political science, at times our opinions on current events even if not directly about politics could still be reflected upon. Of course, we welcome any or all opinions but we must be respectful. We care more for the **thoughtfulness** of our opinions than we do for one’s **ideological positions**.

**Exams**

Again, there will be only one examination in the course: a midterm examination. The midterm exam will test comprehension on all of the course discussions and readings through the mid-section of the semester. There is no final examination in the course; the research paper will serve as the final examination. **No make-up exam will be scheduled or given** (except in certain circumstances related to the pandemic) as we would have had several weeks to prepare our schedules prior to this exam date (*see date below*). **Missing the exam will net one a zero grade. Exam and paper submission dates/times are non-negotiable (except in special circumstances related to the pandemic). The dates are written in stone.**

**Participation**

Our participation grade will depend largely on the quality of one’s participation and to a degree, class attendance. One is expected to contribute regularly to the discussion. While the frequency of one’s participation will be considered for one’s grade, the frequency must be accompanied with **quality comments** that reflect one’s familiarity with the assignments and one’s thoughtfulness. A reminder that while there are no minimum or maximum excused or unexcused absences, **3 or more absences** (except for the special circumstances related to the pandemic), will yield a very low participation grade.

**Other Important Notes**

Please **NEVER HESITATE** to contact the professor and set up an appointment to meet (outside in the open space or via zoom) and talk, especially for those of you that might be interested in
attending law school later in life (as some of us know, the professor also has a legal background). 

If one is struggling in the class, please do not do so in silence. The professor strongly believes that a significant reason why he teaches is to assist students to the best of his ability. He is a firm believer that every student is capable of earning an excellent grade in the course.

Cell phones must be kept out of sight during class sessions. THEY CONSTITUTE A DISTRACTION FOR ALL OF US. THUS, THEY ARE TO BE KEPT OUT OF SIGHT DURING CLASS PERIODS.

Accommodations
Emory University is committed under the Americans with Disabilities Act and its Amendments and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act to providing appropriate accommodations to individuals with documented disabilities. If one has a disability-related need for reasonable academic adjustments in this course, provide the instructor with an accommodation notification letter from Access, Disabilities Services and Resources office. We are expected to give two weeks-notice of the need for accommodations. If one needs immediate accommodations or physical access, please arrange to talk with the instructor as soon as one’s accommodations have been finalized.

Academic Integrity
The honor code is in effect throughout the semester. By taking this course, we each affirm that it is a violation of the code to cheat on exams, to plagiarize, to deviate from the teacher’s instructions about collaboration on work that is submitted for grades, to give false information to a faculty member, and to undertake any other form of academic misconduct. We each agree that the teacher is entitled to move one to another seat during examinations, without explanation. We each also affirm that if one witnesses others violating the code we have a duty to report them to the honor council.

http://catalog.college.emory.edu/academic/policies-regulations/honor-code.html

SPECIAL MESSAGE CONCERNING THIS SEMESTER
[SOME MIGHT NOT APPLY FOR THIS COURSE SINCE WE ARE ONLINE]

Teaching and Learning during the Pandemic

I want our classroom community to thrive no matter the classroom delivery method or your individual methods of participating in class. I cannot guarantee an identical experience for students who cannot be physically in the classroom or an experience that is identical to prepandemic semesters, but my goal is to treat all students equitably and to ensure grading is clear, consistent, and fair for all of you.

This semester is unusual in that there is a global pandemic. My goal is for all students to receive a high-quality experience to the extent possible. To that end, during the summer I participated in Oxford College/Emory University’s workshops on online teaching methods, and I am prepared to teach this class remotely as needed.
Due to the unusual nature of the semester, communication is important. I commit to responding to emails within 48 hours of receipt, and my intention to respond faster than that most of the time. I will likely be slower on weekends. Likewise, if your situation changes regarding health, housing, or in any other regard with respect to your ability to participate in the class, please contact the appropriate Oxford/Emory student support organization first and then me as soon as feasible. It is easier for me to address your needs if I know about them as soon as they arise. This does not mean I can successfully respond to every request for consideration, but I emphasize that my goal is to treat you all equitably and do what I can to help you succeed in this course.

Attendance Policies

This semester due to the pandemic, some students might be sick or will need to go into isolation or quarantine without the required technological support. If you are sick, understand that I will be flexible about attendance. Please make sure to email me so that we can discuss your individual circumstances. For students in quarantine who are well, we have provided ways that you can keep up with your schoolwork, whether our class is delivered online or in person. Please also contact me via email if you are in quarantine.

Accessibility and Accommodations

As the instructor of this course, I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. I want every student to succeed. The Department of Accessibility Services (DAS) works with students who have disabilities to provide reasonable accommodations. It is your responsibility to request accommodations. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, you must register with the DAS at http://accessibility.emory.edu/students/. Accommodations cannot be retroactively applied so you need to contact DAS as early as possible and contact me as early as possible in the semester to discuss the plan for implementation of your accommodations. For additional information about accessibility and accommodations, please contact the Department of Accessibility Services at (404) 727-9877 or accessibility@emory.edu.

Class session recording

Our in-person class sessions at times will be audio/visually recorded for enrolled students who are unable to attend live. Lectures and other classroom presentations presented through video conferencing and other materials posted on Canvas are for the sole purpose of educating the students enrolled in the course. The release of such information (including but not limited to directly sharing, screen capturing, or recording content) is strictly prohibited, unless the instructor states otherwise. Doing so without the permission of the instructor will be considered an Honor Code violation and may also be a violation of other state and federal laws, such as the Copyright Act.

Weekly Tasks and Readings before Class (Subject to Change!!!)

Week 1: August 19, 2020

Introduction and Get-to-Know-You Session
Prior to Class Session, please read *Course Syllabus* and ask questions in class.

**Week 2: August 24-26, 2020 - What is Politics?**

We aim to study politics, but what is it? Do all things contain an element of politics? Or are political scientists concerned about only certain things?


Shepsle, pp. 10-12 only.


**Week 3: August 31-September 2, 2020**

**Part II: How do Political Groups Form?**

Politics is fundamentally a group activity. We identify priorities in groups. We make choices in groups. Our choices apply primarily to group members. When things go wrong, we complain as a group and we appeal to group norms. Ultimately, we create order through group membership. How do our most important groups form? How do we define group membership? To what extent is coercion involved?

**Political Animals**

What is the relationship between the individual and the community? Why is participation in political communities “natural” for us? What does citizenship mean, and what types of regimes promote it?

*Aristotle, Politics.*

Book 1, Chapter 2
Book 3, Chapter 1, 6-7, 9-11
Book 4, Chapter 9, 11
Book 6, Chapter 3

[https://socialsciences.mcmaster.ca/econ/ugcm/3ll3/aristotle/Politics.pdf](https://socialsciences.mcmaster.ca/econ/ugcm/3ll3/aristotle/Politics.pdf)

**Week 4: September 7-9, 2020**

**Conflict and Cooperation**

Are individuals in conflict with one another? Why? If they conflict, then why do they cooperate to form political communities?
Collective Action and Coordination

Shepsle: Chapter 8: Cooperation (pp.231-252 only) and Chapter 9: Collective Action (pp.262-292 only).

The Formation of the American State
What motivated the states to form a union? Why were the states unable to sustain cooperation under the Articles of Confederation? How did the U.S. constitution emerge as a kind of coordination and collective action solution?


Reflection Essay #1

Week 5: September 14-16, 2020

Coercion in Group Formation
Group formation often entails coercion. To what extent has coercion played a role in the experience of particular groups in the U.S.? If citizenship constitutes both rights and obligations, is coercion a fact of life for everyone?


Documentary (In Class) & Discussion

Week 6: September 21-23, 2020

Part III: How do Groups Make Decisions?
How do we make decisions within the group? We can try to come to a collective decision by aggregating what each of us want. Or we can select people to make decisions for us. Or we can try to form coalitions and bargain our way towards a choice. What are the trade-offs involved in each of these methods of decision-making?

Group Irrationality
What happens when individuals try to come to a collective decision? Even if individuals are rational, they still might arrive at an irrational group decision. Why? How can individuals escape this problem?
Visit by Librarian

Britons Voting on Brexit


The Labor Party and Brexit

Areas of the UK projected to be the biggest economic losers from Brexit also registered the most support for it in the referendum. Some Labor MPs in these areas tried to convince their constituents that “Remain” was in their best interest. Were these representatives doing their jobs? Did the quality of representation depend on whether they and their constituents belonged to the same class?


Reflection Essay #2

Week 7: September 28-30, 2020

Representative Democracy

What happens when we give someone else the authority to make decisions? What does it mean to be a “good” representative? Should representatives always listen to their constituents? Are elections a good solution to the moral hazard problem?


Descriptive Representation

Should that “someone else” look like us? Will representatives who resemble us be more likely to act in our interests? If so, what is the purpose of elections and accountability?

Week 8: October 5-7, 2020

Review Session for Midterm Exam

Take Midterm Exam on October 7th!

Week 9: October 12-14, 2020

Coalition Formation
What if groups of like-minded members try to negotiate their way to a decision? What kinds of coalitions might form? What do the parties consider when they are negotiating?


The UK’s majoritarian electoral system has produced mostly “catch-all” political parties, or big-tent alliances. So why are new coalitions popping up? How did Teresa May deal with the coalition dynamics? Has Boris Johnson been any more successful?


Misrepresentation and Manipulation
What types of advantages do people try to gain when they are bargaining to reach an agreement? Are the outcomes reflective of group choice?

Shepsle: Chapter 6: Strategic Behavior: Sophistication, Misrepresentation, and Manipulation (pp.156-188).

Week 10: October 19-21, 2020

Part IV: How are Group Decisions Implemented?
We may arrive at a group choice, but very often rely on others to implement that decision. What are the advantages and disadvantages of relying on others? What happens if we change our mind?

Committing to our Decisions
What happens if we make a decision, but our preferences change over time? Is there anything that incentivizes us to follow through on our original decision?
Shifting Positions on Climate
Why did countries, including the U.S., agree to join the Paris Accords? Why did the U.S. decide to leave the agreement? How are parties to the agreement responding to the U.S.’s departure?


Week 11: October 26-28, 2020

Delegation
Why do we often need other people to implement our decisions? What are the advantages and disadvantages of relying on others?


Information Asymmetries
What kinds of informational advantages do agents have? What types of problems do these informational advantages create? Is there anything that their principals can do?


Reflection Essay Writing #3

Week 12: November 2-4, 2020

The EPA and Shifting Enforcement
What does the Environmental Protection Agency do? How has its work changed between the Obama and Trump administrations? Given that the EPA is also responsible for providing information, how has the shift impacted citizens’ knowledge about the environment and efforts to protect it?


Delegation and the Impact on Policy
Polls indicate broad support for efforts to deal with climate change, yet successful legislative efforts are few. Why is this the case? What is the trade-off that activist policymakers face in trying to take action?

https://themonkeycage.org/2018/12/how-to-enact-policies-that-are-effective-in-slowing-climate-change/

Town Hall Meeting Re U.S. Elections

Week 13: November 9-11, 2020

Part V: What is Political Science?

What is political science? How does it compare to other disciplines? How do political scientists come up with the things they study? What does it mean to study politics scientifically?

Finding the Questions to Ask

Why do we study the topics that we study? How do we come up with research questions? What makes for a good question?


Answering our Questions

How do we build explanations for the things that we observe in politics? What is the importance of drawing out implications from our explanations?


INDIVIDUAL MEETING WITH PROFESSOR RE FINAL PAPER

Week 14: November 16-18, 2020

Origins of the Discipline

How did political science emerge as distinct from other disciplines? What are major trends in how political scientists approach the study of politics? How is the discipline organized?

Pre-History and Origins (pp.11-21) and Chapter 3: The Formative Years, 1880-1903: The Discipline is Structure (pp.22-41). [IN CANVAS]


Reflection Essay Writing #4

So What?
What is the purpose of studying politics like a political scientist? Is this purpose what makes political science distinct from other disciplines?

Mansbridge, Jane. 2014. “What is Political Science For?” Perspectives on Politics 12(1): 8-17. [IN CANVAS]

Week 15: November 23, 2020
1. Last Day of Class-November 23, 2020!!

FINAL PAPER DUE PRIOR TO DECEMBER 11, 2020 @ 5PM