SOSC1300 - The World of Politics

Fall 2019

Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:00-11:20, Room 2620

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Office Hours: Thursday, 10:30-12:00
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Course Description:
The course introduces you to the discipline of Political Science. You will get to know its main subfields (political theory, comparative politics and international relations) and basic concepts and theories that will help you better understand political phenomena. There are no pre-requisites for this course.

Intended Learning Outcomes / Course Objectives:
After taking this course, you should be better equipped to do the following:
- Separate normative and empirical claims with regards to politics
- Explain key ideas and issues in Political Science
- Analyze political events and political ideologies using appropriate terminology
- Explain how countries differ in their political structure
- Exercise independent and critical judgements in politics, as well as communicate claims and arguments more effectively

Teaching and Learning Activities:
Lectures, in-class discussions, group presentations, group memo

Textbook:
There will be no textbook used for this class, but some of the material is based on the following textbook. We will post relevant chapters on CANVAS, but they are not required reading and will not be covered in the exam.

There will be short texts written by famous Political (or Social) Scientists posted on CANVAS. You only need to read the pages indicated in this syllabus. These texts may not always be easy to understand, but do read them before coming to class. We will discuss them in class as well, and they will be covered in the exam.

Assessment:
Mid-term exam: 25%: The midterm will take place on October 15th. Questions will be multiple choice or short answers and can be on any material covered until October 10th.
**Final exam: 40%:** Date to be announced. Questions will be multiple choice or short answers and can be on any material covered in the course, but with a focus on the material discussed after October 10th.

**In-class questions with clicker / attendance - 10%:** You can miss up to three classes without having to provide documentation. If you have to miss more classes for a legitimate reason (e.g. extended illness), please provide the necessary documentation (e.g. doctor’s notice). For many sessions, you will be expected to have read a short text posted on CANVAS. For those readings, I will pose several (multiple choice / fill the blank) questions during class, which you will answer using a clicker or Personal Response System (PRS). In order to get your own “clicker” you can either use your cellphone and download the HKUST iLearn App, or check out your own ID-encoded PRS handset at the ITSC Service Desk at Rm 2021 (Lift 2). I will also post occasional opinion quizzes on CANVAS – answering those also counts towards this 10% of the grade.

**Bonus points (+5%):** The main purpose of the PRS quizzes is to check attendance. Incorrect answers therefore do not incur any penalty, but correct answers grant bonus points of up to 5% of the final grade. We will not post the PRS questions and answers on CANVAS – they are supposed to help you understand the readings and determine what is important, not as something to learn by heart for the exam. So make sure you take notes! There are no make-up quizzes. Another way of earn bonus points is to ask questions during class. Make sure you state your name before you ask the question, so that the TAs can keep record.

**Relating concepts to events in one country of your choice – 5%:** Starting with week 3, you will be expected to select a country for which you will become specialist (for the purpose of our course, both Hong Kong and Taiwan can be chosen as separate countries). You should follow political events in this country by reading the news. Every week, you should post on CANVAS links to two news stories that you find interesting and indicate at least one concept discussed in class that is relevant to each story. Possible sources could be the online versions of newspapers such as The New York Times, South China Morning Post, The Financial Times, The Washington Post, or The Economist, or local newspapers (preferably in English or Chinese).

**Presentation on one country of your choice (group project) - 20%:** You will form a group with 5-6 people who have selected the same country as experts. The group will give a presentation of 10 minutes and submit a one-page summary of the presentation. Topic: What the biggest problem facing the country that you have selected? Using what you’ve learned in class, how would you analyze/solve the problem?

**Course Schedule**

*Note that this is preliminary and may change depending on the final enrolment in class and on how interested students are in participating in in-class debates*

1. **September 3rd:** Introduction, course logistics
   Assignments: none

**Part 1: Political Theory**

2. **September 5th:** Definitions: What is politics? What is the state?
Assignments: (1) make sure you have your clicker ready (either as separate device or as app on your cellphone); (2) sign up on CANVAS; (3) answer opinion questions on CANVAS until tonight!

Readings:
3. September 10th: Power, Legitimacy, Authority
Assignments: fill out opinion questions (quiz) about democracy on CANVAS until Friday evening (September 12th). Please do so before starting the readings for next week.

Readings:
4. September 12th: Normative political theory: What should the state do?

Readings:

5. September 17th: Democracy and political obligation
Assignments: decide which country you would like to become an expert on (submit three choices on CANVAS)

Readings:

6. September 19th: (Liberal) democracy and its discontent
Assignments: from now on until end of April, you will be expected to post two news links on the country you’ve selected every week.

Readings:

7. September 24th: (Liberal) democracy and its discontent, continued
Assignments: answer opinion questions on state on CANVAS

Readings:
9. **September 26th: Freedom and Justice**
   Readings:

   **October 1st: no class, National Day**

**Part 2: Comparative Politics**

9. **October 3rd: Institutions and State**
   Readings:

10. **October 8th: The Judiciary: Laws, constitutions and federalism**
    Readings:

11. **October 10th: The Legislature: legislatures and legislators**
    Readings:

12. **October 15th: The Legislature: Votes and elections**
    Readings:

**October 17th: mid-term exam**

13. **October 22nd: The Executive: The head of state**
    Readings:

14. **October 24th: The Executive: The bureaucracy, policy studies and governance**
    Readings:
       https://www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/pnorris/Acrobat/stm103%20articles/Cheibub_Pres_Parlt.pdf
15. **October 29th**: Discussing midterm exam

16. **October 31st**: Political parties
   Readings:

17. **November 5th**: Political parties (and other “democratic” institutions) in authoritarian regimes
   Readings:

18. **November 7th**: Civil society: social movements and revolutions
   Readings:

19. **November 12th**: Civil society, interest groups and the media
   Readings:

**Part 3: International Relations**

20. **November 14th**: Security and insecurity
   Readings:

21. **November 19th**: International organizations in global politics
   Readings:

22. **November 21st**: Student presentations

23. **November 26th**: Student presentations

24. **November 28th**: Student presentations / questions regarding the final exam and repetition of important concepts