

SOSC1300 - The World of Politics

Fall 2020

Wednesdays and Fridays 15:00-16:20 (online)

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Office Hours (online or in person): Wednesdays, 16:30-18:00 / by appointment

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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 and how this may influence outcomes such as economic growth, wellbeing, etc.
- 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 any test:

Robert Garner, Peter Ferdinand and Stephanie Lawson (2016): Introduction to Politics (3rd edition), Oxford: Oxford University Press. [JA71 .G376 2016]

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 tests. You may also be assigned to read short newspaper articles or editorials about current events – these will be announced in class and are not yet on the syllabus.

Assessments:

Weekly in-class tests (30%): Because of online teaching, we will have neither a midterm nor a final exam. Instead, starting with week 3, we will have small in-class tests on CANVAS that check your understanding of the material covered in the week before. These roughly 10 weekly tests will each make up about 3% of your grade.

Suggesting exam questions (10%): you will twice be asked to come up with one multiple choice or fill-in-the-blank question for the material covered in a given week.

In-class participation (10%): You can ask questions by raising your hand or posting them in the zoom chat or in a private chat with me (if you feel that a question is sensitive or you feel uncomfortable asking in public). I may also ask questions and you can volunteer to answer. At the end of class, we will assign a participation score according to the quantity and quality of these in-class contributions. Note that questions about the logistics of the course (“when do we have to turn in this assignment?”) do not count.

Relating concepts to events in a country/region of your choice (10%): Starting with week 3, you will be expected to select a government for which you will become specialist (this can be a national or a subnational government, such as Hong Kong). You should follow political events in this country or region 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 (20%) and memo (20%) on the government of your choice (group project): You will form a group with some of the other people who have selected the same country/region as experts. The group will give a presentation of 10 minutes and submit a one-page summary of the presentation (the memo). Topic: What the biggest problem facing the country/region that you have selected? Using what you’ve learned in class, how would you analyze and solve the problem?

Bonus points (+5%): 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 discuss with one or more fellow students in a breakout room during class. Answering most of these questions correctly can earn you bonus points.

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 9th: Introduction, course logistics

Assignments: none

Part 1: Political Theory

2. September 11th: Definitions: What is politics? How is it different from political science? What is the state?

Readings:

1. Max Weber: "Politics as vocation", Chapter 7 from Weber's Rationalism and Modern Society, ed. By Tony Waters and Dagmar Waters. Palgrave Macmillan (2015), pages 8-11, pages 79-85, 94-99

Additional resources:

2. Garner et al (2016): "Introduction"

3. September 16th: The basic concept of politics – power

Readings:

1. Max Weber: "Politics as vocation", Chapter 7 from Weber's Rationalism and Modern Society, ed. By Tony Waters and Dagmar Waters. Palgrave Macmillan. (2015), pages 12-13

Additional resources:

2. Garner et al (2016): Chapter 2, pages 48-62 (top few lines)

4. September 18th: What should the state do with its power? (Normative political theory)

Readings:

1. Daniel McDermott: "Analytical Political Philosophy", in David Leopold & Marc Stears (eds.), Political Theory: Methods and Approaches. Oxford University Press (2008), pages 11-15 (third paragraph), pages 18-21, pages 24-27.

Additional resources:

2. Garner et al (2016): Chapter 1, pages 27– 42

September 19th: end of add/drop period.

5. September 23rd: Democracy and political obligation

Assignments: decide which country/region you would like to become an expert on (submit three choices on CANVAS)

Readings:

1. Adam Przeworski: 'Minimalist conception of democracy: a defense', in Ian Shapiro and Casiano Hacker-Cordon (eds), *Democracy's Value*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1999), pages 23-27 and 43-50 (In defense of minimalism)

Additional resources:

2. Garner et al (2016): Chapter 3, pages 68-83.

6. September 25th: (Liberal) democracy and its discontent

Assignments: You should now know the country/region that you will be an expert on for this class. From now on, you will be expected to post two news links on the country you've selected every week.

- 1st in-class test (covering lesson 2 + 3)

Additional resources:

1. Franziska Keller (2020): "Appropriating" Democracy: a Comparison between Argumentative Strategies for Confucian and Islamic Democracy' in *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 41 (2), 180-196.

7. September 30th: (Liberal) democracy and its discontent, continued

Assignments:

- 2nd in-class test (covering lesson 4 + 5)

Additional resources:

1. Garner et al (2016): Chapter 4

October 2nd: No class, day following the Chinese mid-autumn festival

Assignments: submit two news links about "your" country/region related to your country and concepts discussed in class

8. October 7th: Freedom and Justice

Readings:

1. Mill, J. S. [1859] (2001). On liberty. Batoche Books, Kitchener, pages 18-23 (first paragraph), 34-36, 49-53.

Part 2: Comparative Politics

9. October 9th: Institutions and State

Assignments: submit two news links about “your” country/region related to your country and concepts discussed in class

- 3rd in-class test (covering lesson 6 + 7)

Readings:

1. Benedict Anderson (1991). Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism. Verso Books, pages 5-7, 9-15, 19-21, 32-36

Additional resources:

2. Garner et al (2016): Chapter 7

10. October 14th: The Judiciary: Laws, constitutions and federalism

Readings:

1. Charles De Montesquieu: The Spirit of the Laws. Cambridge University Press, 1989, pages 156-161

Additional resources

2. Garner et al (2016): Chapter 8, pages 185-191 (top two lines), 194-199.

11. October 16th: The Legislature: legislatures and legislators

Assignments: submit two news links about “your” country/region related to your country and concepts discussed in class

- 4th in-class test (covering lesson 8 + 9)

Additional resources:

1. Garner et al (2016): Chapter 9

12. October 21st: The Legislature: Votes and elections

Additional resources:

1. Garner et al (2016): Chapter 9

13. October 23rd: The Executive: The head of state

Assignments: find your group members and discuss what you consider to be “your” government’s biggest problem. Submit it to me for feedback.

- 5th in-class test (covering lesson 10 + 11)

Readings:

1. Stan Hok-Wui Wong: Gerrymandering in Electoral Autocracies: Evidence from Hong Kong, forthcoming in the British Journal of Political Science, page 1-20

Additional resources:

2. Garner et al (2016): Chapter 11, pages 249-256.

14. October 28th: The Executive: The bureaucracy, policy studies and governance

Readings:

1. Jose Cheibub: Systems of Government: Parliamentarism and Presidentialism
https://www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/pnorris/Acrobat/stm103%20articles/Cheibub_Pres_Parlt.pdf
2. Michael Lipsky (1983). Street-Level Bureaucracy: The Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Service. Russell Sage Foundation, pages xi-xvi, 4-12.

15. October 30th: Political parties

Assignments: submit two news links about “your” country/region related to your country and concepts discussed in class

- 6th in-class test (covering lesson 12 +13):

Additional resources:

1. Garner et al (2016): Chapter 10, pages 228-241.

16. November 4th: Political parties (and other “democratic” institutions) in authoritarian regimes

Readings:

1. Seymour M. Lipset and Stein Rokkan: “Cleavage structures, party systems, and voter alignments: and introduction” in Seymour M. Lipset and Stein Rokkan (eds): Party Systems and Voter Alignments: cross-national perspectives. New York: Free Press, 1967, pages 1-5, 14, 50.
2. Beatriz Magaloni and Ruth Kricheli. 2010. ‘Political Order and One-

17. November 6th: Civil society: social movements and revolutions

Assignments: discuss my feedback on "your" government's problem with your group members. Find one solution to the problem and submit this to me for feedback.

- 7th in-class test (covering lesson 14 +15)

Readings:

1. Joshua Tucker (2007). Enough! Electoral fraud, collective action problems, and post-communist colored revolutions. *Perspectives on Politics*, 5(03), 535-543.

Additional resources:

2. Garner et al (2016): Chapter 12, pages 273-283.

18. November 11th: Civil society, interest groups and the media

Additional resources:

1. Garner et al (2016): Chapter 12, pages 273-283.

19. November 13th: Authoritarian backsliding 1

Assignments: submit two news links about "your" country/region related to your country and concepts discussed in class

- 8th in class test (covering lesson 16 + 17)

Readings:

1. TBA

Additional resources:

2. Anne Applebaum (2012). *Iron curtain: the crushing of Eastern Europe 1944-56*. Penguin UK.

20. November 18th: Authoritarian backsliding 2

Readings:

1. TBA

Part 3: International Relations

21. November 20th: Security and insecurity

- 9th in class test (covering lesson 18 + 19)

Additional resources:

1. Garner et al (2016): Chapter 17, pages 380-388, 392-396

22. November 25th: International organizations in global politics

Additional resources:

1. Garner et al (2016): Chapter 19

23. November 27th: wrap-up / reserve

Assignments: submit the 10-minute group presentation about “your” government’s biggest problem and how you propose to solve it.

- 10th in-class test (covering lesson 20 + 21)

25. December 2nd: individual meetings to discuss group project

26. December 4th: individual meetings to discuss group project

- possible 11th in-class test (covering lesson 22 + 23)

December 11th: submit group memo incorporating feedback on presentation received in previous week.