

PSCI 1000.003
Introduction to Political Science
Fall 2017

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COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

PSCI 1000 is a course dealing with the ideas, institutions and issues of political life. It introduces students to the concerns and concepts of political science. As a field, political science seeks to understand and analyze the distribution of power and authority across a diversity of political systems around the world. The field therefore encompasses a diverse array of topics, from competing forms of democracy to the nature of economic development. In this course, we will explore the foundations of political science, paying particular attention to the structural and procedural elements of politics. Along the way, we'll consider authoritarianism and democracy, unitarism and federalism, presidential and parliamentary systems. We'll also examine a number of contemporary issues such as competing economic systems, and the problem of declining voter turnout.

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

- Define key concepts in the study of political systems, including power, authority, legitimacy, state, and nation.
- Compare and contrast the basic features of political systems from around the world.
- Use the key theoretical tools and approaches in political science to analyze contemporary global political developments.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Required Readings:

Michael G. Roskin, Robert L. Cord, James A. Medeiros, and Walter S. Jones, *Political Science: An Introduction*, 14th ed., (Pearson/Longman, 2016).

There will be additional short readings including newspaper articles and news videos throughout the semester. Additional readings aim to make you link the course concepts with current issues. All the readings will be available online.

Exams will cover the material in the textbook, additional reading assignments, and in-class materials including lectures.

Make-Up Exams and Incompletes

I will not allow make-ups without **an official documented excuse** regarding medical or family emergencies. Please keep in mind that late assignments will be downgraded. An incomplete will only be given in exceptional circumstances (a documented circumstance beyond the student's control). Students will only be given an incomplete if they have been doing passing work during the semester.

Code of Conduct

All students need to acquaint themselves with what constitutes academic dishonesty and the consequences thereof. See the general university policies for further information:

<http://www.unomaha.edu/aandsaffairs/leftcolumn/inside/students/policiesandprocedures/aiundergrad.php>. ***Laptops and other devices with internet connection are not allowed during the classes.***

Although I acknowledge that laptops provide several benefits for learning, I am convinced, based on my experience, that they distract students from the lecture and discussions.

Fairness and Disability Statement

The instructor of this course is committed to support the learning of all students, irrespective of gender, race, age, religion, handicapping condition, or sexual preference. Students should be able to expect that their learning environments are free from any form of prejudice. Disparaging comments aimed stereotypically at any group and any questioning of the seriousness of purpose or academic commitment of students based upon group characteristics may undermine our educational mission. If such behavior occurs in class, students should first talk with the instructor. Identify specific examples of behavior by the instructor or by other students that the student finds offensive or disparaging. If the student is not satisfied with the resolution of the complaint, the student is encouraged to consult with the Department Chair and to seek the Chair's assistance in improving the classroom environment.

Students requiring special consideration must contact and work through the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities in EAB 117 (554-2872). This office then notifies the instructor in writing of the accommodations the student needs in compliance with 504/ADA.

Course Website

I will make use of the features of the Canvas system, which you can access through UNO webpage. The course syllabus, some of the course readings, lecture notes, and assignments will be available on this website. You will also submit your assignments electronically through Blackboard. I may intermittently send course-related e-mails to you via this site. Therefore, you need to make sure that your university email is up and running and that you understand how to use your Canvas account.

Grading

Your final grade will be based on the following criteria

1. Introductory Power Point (4 %)

As this is a TLC course, it requires engaged class discussions. To make the discussions more engaging, it is important to know more about the discussants. For this reason, I require all of the students to prepare a short Power Point presentation that introduces themselves and post that presentation on Blackboard. This 5-6 slide presentation should include a picture of yourself, your aim in taking this course and other important information that you want to share about yourself with your classmates. The kind of information that you share is up to you but it may include your major, nationality, hobbies, etc. Introductory Power Point is due on **August 31** and it will worth 4 percent of your final grade.

2. Attendance (5 %) and Participation (5 %)

You are expected to attend all the course sessions. More than three unexcused absence will negatively influence your grade. After three absences, each absence will decrease your attendance grade by 0.5 %. You are also expected to productively contribute to classroom discussions. This contribution can be in the form of participating informal and formal debates, posing and responding questions, sharing other resources that can facilitate classroom learning. To facilitate your class participation, I encourage you to think critically, and as part of that, to think the positive aspects of the lectures and readings, and to develop your own analysis of the subject. I will distribute handouts in the beginning of each class and the students

will be required to fill it out as we move in class. In addition to your verbal participation, these handouts will be used as the basis for your participation grade. Class attendance and participation will worth 10 percent of your final grade.

3. Exams (20 % each, 60 % total)

There will be 3 in-class exams based on the assigned readings and material covered in the class lectures. Exams will include both multiple choice and short answer questions and each exam is worth 20 percent of your final grade. Suggestions for exam preparation will be given prior to the tests. The exam dates are **September 26, October 31, and December 14**. Each exam is worth of the 20 percent of your final grade.

4. News Reports (2 % each, 6 % total)

The relevancy of this course will become most apparent if you keep up with current events and relate those events to the political science concepts and theories that we cover in our classes. Therefore, starting from the second week of the semester, you will be required to follow current events regularly. You are required to read at least a newspaper article that is related to the topic we cover in class each week. The newspapers that you choose should be the following: *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, *The Financial Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, and *Le Monde Diplomatique* (there is an English version). Most of these newspapers are available online.

To make sure that you read the news throughout the semester regularly, three news reports will be required. Each news report should include the source, date, title, and 2-3 sentence summary of the news that you will read. The students will also add a one-page analysis in which they will summarize the skills and knowledge that they gained from the news report assignments. They are expected to bridge course readings with the news stories in this report. A template for the news reports will be posted on the course website in advance. The news reports are due at the beginning of class on **September 21, October 26 and November 28**. You are required to upload your news reports to Blackboard. Unless you have a legitimate excuse, you will lose 10 percent of your grade for this assignment for each day your assignment is late. In the event of a problem, please contact me as soon as you know. Each news report weighs 2 percent of your final grade.

5. Small Group Discussions (1 % each, 3 % total)

There will be three small group discussions on the days that your progress reports are due (**September 21, October 26 and November 28**). Each student will be assigned a small group of 5-6 students. The discussion sessions aim to review the course readings and to blend the course readings with the current events. This is the place that you will have the opportunity to synthesize the theoretical knowledge that you get from class and the factual information from the newspaper articles. As a group, you are required to write a short report documenting the discussion in your group at the end of the class. This one-page report will summarize the agreements and disagreements among the group members. A template for discussion reports will be handed out in the beginning of each discussion session. You will be graded by your participation to the group discussions and the quality of your group reports. Each small group discussions will be worth 1 percent of your final grade.

6. Final Group Report (12 %)

Throughout the semester, each group will form a fictive political party. The group members will discuss the political party's ideology, position on social values, economy, basic political and social rights, electoral systems, executive and legislative systems, and its relations with interest groups. The small group discussions can help you coordinate your work but you may need to work outside the class hours to complete this assignment. In the end of the semester, you're required to submit a final report that summarizes your work throughout the semester. I will post a detailed sheet on Blackboard about the

assignment and how it will be graded. Final group report is due on **November 30** and will be worth of 10 percent of your final grade.

7. Inter-Generational Conversations on Politics (5 %)

Starting from September 14, each student will be asked to lead and conduct an hour of discussion with the residents of Aksarben Senior Living on Thursday nights at 6 p.m. The schedule of student discussion leaders will be prepared in the first few weeks of the semester. The discussions at Aksarben Senior Living will carry our class discussions to the community. The students are encouraged to come up with a newspaper article related to the discussion (you may use your news report article for that particular week) so that the residents can read it in advance. The students will write a double-space one-page reflection paper summarizing the discussion and their experience. This assignment weighs 4 percent of your final grade.

A Summary of Grading Requirements

<u>Course Requirement</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Due Date</u>
Attendance	5 %	
Participation	5 %	
Inter-Generational Conversations	5 %	
Introductory PowerPoint	4 %	August 31
News Report I	2 %	September 21
Small Group Discussion I	1 %	September 21
Exam I	20 %	September 26
News Report II	2 %	October 26
Small Group Discussion II	1 %	October 26
Exam II	20 %	October 31
News Report III	2 %	November 28
Small Group Discussion III	1 %	November 28
Final Group Report	12 %	November 30
Exam III	20 %	December 14
TOTAL	100 %	

The entire course is worth 100 points:

A	94-100 points	C	72-76 points
A-	90-93 points	C-	69-71 points
B+	87-89 points	D+	66-68 points
B	83-86 points	D	63-65 points
B-	80-82 points	D-	60-62 points
C+	77-79 points	F	0-59 points

COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS

INTRODUCTION

August 22: Overview of the Course

No Reading

August 24: What Is Political Science?

Roskin et al., Chapter 1, "Politics and Political Science," pp. 2-15

PART I: THE FOUNDATIONS OF POLITICS

August 29: Theories I: What is a Theory?

Roskin et al., Chapter 1, "Politics and Political Science," pp. 15-27"

August 31: NO CLASS *Watch the Following Video at Home*

Video: "Big Sky, Big Money" (broadcasted at PBS on 10/30/2012) available at <http://www.pbs.org/video/2298009584>

Introductory Power Point Due

September 5: Theories II: Classic Theories

John Harwood, "Loss for Democrats in Midterm Elections Could be Boon for Clinton," August 20, 2014

September 7: Theories III: Contemporary Theories

Stephen Kinzer, "Chuck Hagel's Big Problem: Being a Realist about American Power and Iran," *Guardian*, December 31, 2012

September 12: Political Ideologies I: Ideology vs. Pragmatism

Roskin et al., Chapter 2, "Political Ideologies"

September 14: Political Ideologies II: Right-Wing Ideologies

Jennifer Steinhauer and Jonathan Weisman, "GOP Anger over Tax Deal Endangers Final Passage," *New York Times*, January 1, 2012

September 19: Political Ideologies III: Left-Wing Ideologies

Bruce Crumley, "France's 75 % Income Tax on the Rich Overturned as Unconstitutional," *Time*, December 30, 2012

September 21: Small Group Discussion I

News Report I due

September 26: EXAM I

PART II: KEY CONCEPTS IN POLITICS

September 28: States

Roskin et al., Chapter 3, "States"

October 3: Constitutions

Roskin et al., Chapter 4, "Constitutions and Rights"

October 5: Regimes I: Democratic Systems

Roskin et al., Chapter 5, "Regimes"

October 10: Regimes II: Totalitarian and Authoritarian Systems

Yasheng Huang, "The Key to Bringing Democracy to China," *Foreign Policy*, November 19, 2012

October 12: Discussion on Authoritarianism and Democratic Transitions

Video: "Frontline: The Revolution in Cairo" (broadcasted at PBS on 2/22/2011) available at <http://video.pbs.org/video/1810338755>

October 17: FALL BREAK (NO CLASS)

October 19: Political Culture

Roskin et al., Chapter 6, "Political Culture"

October 24: Public Opinion

Roskin et al., Chapter 7, "Public Opinion"

October 26: Small Group Discussion II

News Report II due

October 31: EXAM II

PART III: POLITICAL ACTORS AND INSTITUTIONS

November 2: Interest Groups

Roskin et al., Chapter 9, "Interest Groups"

November 7: Political Parties

Roskin et al., Chapter 10, "Parties"

November 9: Elections

Roskin et al., Chapter 11, "Elections"

November 14: Legislatures

Roskin et al., Chapter 12, "Legislatures"

November 16: Executives and Bureaucracies

Roskin et al., Chapter 13, "Executives and Bureaucracies"

November 21: Judiciaries

Roskin et al., Chapter 14, "Judiciaries"

November 28: Small Group Discussion III

News Report III due

PART IV: POLITICS IN ACTION

November 30: Violence and Revolution

Roskin et al., Chapter 16, "Violence and Revolution"

Final Group Report Due

December 5: International Relations

Roskin et al., Chapter 17, "International Relations"

CONCLUSIONS

December 7: Conclusions

December 14: Final exam (12:30-1:30 p.m.)