

Bergen Community College
Division of Business, Social Sciences & Public Services
Department of Social Sciences

Departmental Policy Syllabus

POL-107 INTRODUCTION TO POLITICS

Basic Information about Course and Instructor

Semester and year:
Section Number:
Meeting Times and Locations:

Instructor:
Office Location:
Phone:
Departmental Secretary: [optional]
Office Hours:
Email Address:

Course Description

Introduction to Politics is a survey of the basic concepts and methodology of political science. Topics considered include power, the state, government, forms of representation, and methods of social science analysis.
3 lectures, 3 credits
General Education Course – Social Science Elective

Student Learning Objectives

Key objectives of the course include enabling the student orally and in writing to:

1. identify and define key concepts of the discipline, e.g., power, the state, government, authority, etc.;
2. distinguish between different approaches to the understanding of politics;
3. identify and compare the tenets of different political ideologies;
4. describe and contrast the main forms of governments in the world today, e.g., democratic and autocratic systems, and presidential and parliamentary forms of democracy;
5. identify the major issues facing governments today, e.g., security, economic growth and justice;
6. identify and analyze major institutions such as political parties and interest groups;
7. identify and analyze major political procedures such as electoral systems, e.g., proportional representation v. single member districts;
8. discuss the relationships between economic and political power.

In pursuit of the foregoing goals, the course is based on the reading and analysis of required texts, contemporary newspapers and other media sources. Students are given the opportunity and are encouraged to participate actively in class discussions; and students are required to do a substantial amount of expository and critical writing in response to the material presented in the course.

The Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) in this course are intended to be aligned with as many of the college's Core Competencies and General Education Goals as possible. In addition, student progress in reaching the course's SLOs is to be assessed through a variety of assessment types (tools) and on the basis of a variety of assessment criteria. Assessment types may include any combination of classroom discussion, objective tests and examinations, essay tests, papers, short essays, book reports, student classroom presentations, etc., utilizing current (technological and traditional) techniques of social science research and writing.

Course Content

The course is intended to introduce students to the basic concepts, issues and concerns of the field of Political Science. Sample course syllabi can be viewed on the website of the American Political Science Association (APSA) at http://www.apsanet.org/content_3807.cfm. The topics included on the sample course syllabus (below) should be covered.

Special Features of the Course (if any) [to be designated by the instructor]

Along with traditional sources students are expected to **use the Internet** to access sources for their research on current issues.

Course Texts and/or Other Study Materials

A variety of suitable texts exist from major publishers. Choice of a textbook is a department-wide decision.

W. Phillips Shively, *Power and Choice: An Introduction to Political Science*, 9th ed., McGraw-Hill Co., 2005.

Other study materials are available such as *The New York Times*-Online: www.nytimes.com

Writing and Critical Thinking Requirement(s)

Because POL-107 is a General Education course, it requires students to complete a variety of critical thinking and writing assignments. These assignments may include class discussions and debates requiring the application of critical thinking skills, short in-class essays, out-of-class writing projects (journals, research papers, argument-analysis papers, book reviews, etc.), tests and examinations containing essay components, and so forth. Instructors will respond to and comment on students' writing in detail.

Sample Assignment: PORTFOLIO-ESSAY:

This written essay is designed to focus on one, relevant, current topic based on articles from current newspapers, especially the *New York Times* www.nytimes.com, and other computer accessible sources, such as Web sites. Besides getting students to become expert in one specific area of international politics, the newspaper research will introduce the student to the wide range of issues, controversies and problems that affect us all. Basically, this assignment requires the student to **read the newspaper**, select and follow an approved **topic** as it develops during the first two months of the semester. Collect and **save the articles**, either by downloading them to your word processor or clipping them from the newspaper, and then organize them with a commentary (**essay**) explaining the development over the period and offering your own observations and conclusions. **Two articles and one paragraph will be handed in each week identifying and justifying your topic. Without the early research and topic approval the final essay will not be accepted. Due date: 11th week.**

Grading Policy

A student's final grade for the course is based primarily on his or her performance on the required work for the course (writing assignments, examinations, class presentations, etc.) and on his or her overall mastery of the material covered in the course. A student's class participation may also be evaluated, and the grade thereon may be used as a factor in determining the student's final grade for the course.

Sample: Consistent with the Attendance Policy grades will be earned through a series of **three tests** (70%), a written **portfolio-essay** described above (20%), and **class participation** which includes participation, lateness and attendance among other things (10%).

Attendance Policy

BCC Attendance Policy:

All students are expected to attend punctually every scheduled meeting of each course in which they are registered. Attendance and lateness policies and sanctions are to be determined by the instructor for each section of each course. These will be established in writing on the individual course outline. Attendance will be kept by the instructor for administrative and counseling purposes.

Sample Attendance Policy in this Course:

It is expected that students will attend all class meetings. If a student misses more than three weeks worth of classes throughout the semester he/she will not pass the course. **For example, if the course meets twice a week, no more than six absences are tolerated, for any reason. The student will not pass the course for reasons of absence alone.** For a course that meets once a week, the maximum number of absences tolerated is three. Three latenesses equal one absence; classes when tests are held are included as classes. Illness, accidents and business emergencies sometimes occur; therefore it behooves everyone to **anticipate these emergencies by being in class routinely.** Look upon absences as your sick days and personal days on a job: use them when necessary; take too many and you lose the job! (If you are late be sure to see the Professor that class lest it be counted as an absence.)

Other College, Divisional, and/or Departmental Policy Statements [optional but recommended]

Examples:
Statement on plagiarism and/or academic dishonesty.
ADA statement.
Sexual Harassment statement.
Statement on acceptable use of BCC technology.
Statement on the purpose and value of faculty office hours.

Student and Faculty Support Services [optional but recommended]

List support services, e.g., the Writing Center, the Math Lab, the Tutorial Center, Online Writing Lab (OWL), Office of Specialized Services, etc. Include information on the BCC Library.

Example:

Student and Faculty Support Services

The Distance Learning Office – for any problems you may have accessing your online courses	Room C-334	201-612-5581 psimms@bergen.edu
Smarthinking Tutorial Service	On Line at:	www.bergen.edu/library/learning/tutor/smart/index.asp

The Tutoring Center	Room S-118	201-447-7908
The Technology Assisted Learning Lab (Math and English)	Room C-110	201-447-7988
The Writing Center	Room C-110	201-447-7136
The Online Writing Lab (OWL)		www.bergen.edu/owl
The Office of Specialized Services (for Students with Disabilities)	Room S-153	201-612-5270
The Sidney Silverman Library – Reference Desk	Room L-226	201-447-7436

Sample Format for Course Outline and Calendar

Note to Students: The following Course Outline and Calendar is tentative and subject to change, depending upon the progress of the class.

Week(s)	Date(s)	Topic/Activity	Learning Objectives	Assignments/Events
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				

See the (1) Sample Course Outline and (2) Sample Course Outline and Calendar below.

(1) Sample Course Outline

Introduction

The basic focus and issues of politics
Politics: the exercise of **POWER**
Politics determines *who gets what, when and how!* Harold Lasswell
Methods of Political Science: Empiricism, Science and Social science
Systems Analysis
Academic specialties of the discipline

Text: Chap. 1 and pp. 419ff.

Political Philosophy and Modern Ideologies

What are the **questions**?
Normative analysis
Values, ideas, models and institutions
The State, Government, Law
Classical, Medieval and Modern questions
Ideologies: Democracy, Communism, Fascism
Islamism

Chap. 2
Handouts
Films: The Death of Socrates
Emperor and Slave: Stoicism
The Puritan Revolution

The Modern State

Origin, Nature and Purpose of the State
The State and Government
The Territorial State
The Nation-State
The State and the Citizen
World State?
Globalization, Balkanization, McWorld v. Jihad
State Building: Iraq and Afghanistan

Chap. 3

Public Policy

What should governments **do**?
Policies and choices: defense, education, welfare, roads...

Chap. 4

TEST ON CHAPS. 1-4 and appendix.

Democracy v. Autocracy

Conditions for Democracy: broad based elections, political parties, basic political freedoms, tolerance, literacy, relative prosperity
Realities of Autocracy: tiny elite rule, military governments (coups), one-party states (China, USSR), monarchies, dictatorships (court politics), theocracies

Chap. 8

Design or Structure of Government

Constitutions: Desirable or Necessary?
Basic Choices: Federal v. Unitary
Separation or Concentration of Power: liberty or efficiency?
Individual Rights v. Community Goals: Islamic Republics

Chap. 9

Elections

Purposes of Elections
Election Types: SMDP v. PR (Who Wins?)
Participation: who votes, who cares?
Districting: gerrymandering and mal-apportionment

Chap. 10

Political Parties and Interest Groups

Linkages between people and government
Organizing the People for political action
1 party, 2 party, multi-party
Special Interest Groups: Are **you** part of one?

Chaps. 11 and 12

TEST ON CHAPS. 8-12

Decision Making Institutions

Separation or concentration of powers and checks and balances
Parliamentary and **Presidential** systems
Parliament, Prime Minister and Cabinet (concentration of power)
Congress and President (separation of power)

Chaps. 14 and 15

Law and the Courts

Anglo-American Case Law
Roman and European Code Law
Religious Law: Sharia
Courts

Chap. 17

International Politics

The Nation-State System: Balance of Power and Power Politics
International System or Anarchy?
Nation-States to World State?
Terrorism

Chap. 18

TEST ON CHAPS. 14, 15, 17 and 18

(2) SAMPLE COURSE OUTLINE AND CALENDAR

[with designation of Student Learning Objectives – by number – for each topic]

Note to Students: The following Course Outline and Calendar is tentative and subject to change, depending upon the progress of the class.

Week(s)	Date(s)	Topic/Activity/Assignments (See the Instructors' specific course outline for activity and the specific text in use for assignments. Activities may include any combination of classroom discussion, objective tests and examinations, essay tests, papers, short essays, book reports, student classroom presentations, etc., utilizing current (technological and traditional) techniques of social science research and writing.)	Student Learning Objectives
1-2		Introduction: focus, issues methods of Political Science	1-8
3-4		Political Philosophy and Modern Ideologies: types of questions and issues	1-8
5		The Modern State: origin, nature and purpose of the state, nation-state, government Test 1	1-8
6-7		Public Policy: what are governments expected to do with power	1-8
8-9		Democracy v. Autocracy: necessary conditions for democracy, characteristics of each, power distribution	1-8
10		Design or Structure of Governments: constitutions, separation or concentration of power, federalism Test 2	1-8
11		Elections: types, rules, majorities v. pluralities, gerrymandering Papers Due	1-8
12		Political Parties and Interest Groups: one, two and multi-party systems, interest representation	1-8
13		Decision Making Institutions: parliamentary v. presidential systems	1-8
14		Law and the Courts: systems of law, common law, civil code, socialist law, sharia	1-8
15		International Relations: major issues and problems Test 3	1-8