INTRODUCTION TO POLITICS

INSTRUCTOR: Peter Rutland; office PAC 203; tel. 2483; email: prutland@wesleyan.edu
office hours PAC 203 Tuesday, 10.00-12.00, Friday 11.00-12.00.

T.A.s: Aneesa Sayall [asayall], Susanna Morrison [slmorrison]

This course is an introduction to the main concepts and approaches in the four sub-fields of political science:

1) Political theory (weeks 2-3, 5-7)
2) Comparative politics (weeks 1-3, 5-9, 11-12)
3) American politics (weeks 5, 8, 13)
4) International relations (weeks 4, 10, 11)

ASSESSMENT: Out of 100 points, as follows:

1) Three short papers, 2-3 pages in length, to be submitted in class on class on February 23, April 2 and April 23. (2 points per day penalty for late submission.) [15 points each]

2) Mid term on March 9, [20 points]

3) Final on Wednesday May 16, 9.00 am [20 points]

3) Occasional quizzes and class participation. Students must complete each week’s required reading. Attendance at an out-of-class lecture and submission of a 1-2 page report may earn 2-3 extra points. [15 points]

Failure to attend three classes without prior notification to the instructor will be considered a withdrawal from the class and will result in a failing grade.

All the readings, apart from those in books to be purchased, are available in electronic form on the Pols 101 Blackboard site, under Course Materials.

You are expected to read or at least look through all the assigned readings each week. They are listed in roughly descending order of importance. The top three readings are usually essential.

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy is available online at: http://plato.stanford.edu/contents.html

BOOKS

Recommended for purchase:

Robert Dahl Polyarchy (Yale University Press, 1972)
Alexis de Tocqueville Democracy in America (trans. Richard Heffner, Signet, 2001)
Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels The Communist Manifesto (Signet Reprint, 1998)
George Orwell 1984 (Signet Reissue 1990)
Sam Huntington et al The Clash of Civilizations? The Debate (Foreign Affairs, 1996)
Steven Hill 10 Steps to Repair American Democracy (Polipoint Press, 2006)
Allister Sparks Tomorrow is Another Country The Inside Story of South Africa’s Road to Change (University of Chicago Press, 1996)
WEB RESOURCES

Wikipedia.org   Uneven in depth and quality of coverage, but often interesting.

Encyclopedia Britannica (free access through Olin Reference, under the ‘Other’ section on the Olin site)


Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy (free access through Olin Reference)

Sites with multiple links to political science sources:
www.rvc.cc.il.us/faclink/pruckman/PSLinks.htm
http://www.lib.umich.edu/govdocs/polisci.html
http://www.psr.keele.ac.uk/
http://www.constitution.org/liberlib.htm
A library of historical texts relating to constitutions, rule of law, liberty, etc.

Hard copy reference works (Olin library first floor):

Blackwell dictionary of political science JA61 .B43 1999
The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Political Thought JA61 .B57 1987

WEEK 1

INTRODUCTION

Jan 24-26

What is politics? What can we learn about it from other primates?

Frans B.M. de Waal   Chimpanzee Politics (1998) pp. 82-87, 205-09
Frans B.M. De Waal   ‘We’re all Machiavellians,’ Chronicle of Higher Education, 23 Sep. 05
Temple Grandin   ‘Hey hey, we’re the monkeys,’ New York Times, 9 Oct. 2005

WEEK 2

THE ORIGINS OF DEMOCRACY AND LIBERTY

Jan 29-Feb 2

What is meant by the democracy and freedom, in both their ancient and modern versions?
Under what conditions do political systems based on democracy and freedom come into being?
What is the place for women in Aristotle, or Constant? What are human rights?

Fred Miller   ‘Aristotle’s political theory,’ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy
Benjamin Constant   The Liberty of the Ancients Compared to That of the Moderns (1816)
Wikipedia.org   ‘Human Rights’
WEEK 3
THE STATE
Feb 5-9

What is the state? What does it do that other institutions do not do? What is law?
Why should one obey the law? When is it legitimate to rebel? Why are some states and rulers
‘legitimate’ and others not so?

Max Weber | Politics as a Vocation (1919) extracts
Wikipedia.org | ‘State,’ ‘Nation state’
Sharon Lloyd | ‘Hobbes’ moral and political theory,’ Stanford Encyclo. of Philosophy
Cary Nederman | ‘Niccolo Machiavelli,’ esp. section 2, Stanford Encyclo. of Philosophy
Michael Mann | ‘The autonomous power of the state,’ in John B. Hall (ed),
‘Hobbesian world’ | Newspaper clippings on Sierra Leone, Brazil, Haiti, and Darfur.
Video clip | Men with Guns

WEEK 4
THE STATE IN THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM
Feb 12-16

An introduction to the key concepts of international relations theory: the nation-state; the
Westphalian system; the security dilemma; the balance of power; Realist vs. Liberal theories of
the international system; the concept of ‘just war.’

Robert Jackson & | ‘Why study IR?’ Introduction to International Relations (2003) ch. 1
Georg Sorensen
Dan Philpott | ‘Sovereignty,’ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy
Brian Orend | ‘War,’ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy
Hans Morgenthau | ‘Six principles of political realism,’ in Politics Among Nations:
The Struggle for Power and Peace (1978), pp. 4-15

FIRST ASSIGNMENT to be submitted in class on February 23

Write a 2-3 page report in which you select one political problem in the contemporary world and
try to explain what is happening within the framework of one of the concepts discussed in the
course so far: (democracy, the state, the balance of power, etc.). Give some thought to what kinds
of evidence you would need to gather to apply the concept to the case.

WEEK 5
DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA
Feb 19-23

What is special about the American political system? Why did it first arise in America, and not
somewhere else? Can it serve as a model for the rest of the world?
According to Thoreau, under what circumstances is it right to disobey the law, to rebel?

Alexis de Tocqueville | Democracy in America (1835)
The U.S. Constitution, The Gettysburg Address
James Madison | The Federalist Papers no. 8, 10 (1787)
http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdocs/fedpapers.html
Daniel Elazar | ‘To secure the blessings of liberty: Liberty and American federalism’
Seymour M. Lipset | ‘Still the exceptional nation?,” Hoover Digest, 2000, no. 2.
http://www.hooverdigest.org/002/lipset.html
Henry David Thoreau | ‘Civil disobedience’ (1849)
WEEK 6
Feb 26-Mar 2

PLURALISM

How has the theory and practice of democracy evolved since de Tocqueville’s time? How and why did the concept of the ‘people’ expand to include all males, women and African-Americans? What is the relationship between democracy and capitalism?

Robert Dahl  
Polyarchy (1971)

John E. Mueller  
Capitalism, Democracy and Ralph’s Pretty Good Grocery pp. 243-53

Robert Putnam  

Robert A. Dahl  
‘On removing certain impediments to democracy in the U.S.,’ Political Science Quarterly, vol. 92, no.1, spring, 1977 pp. 1-20

Amartya Sen  

WEEK 7
Mar 5-9

THE MARXIST CHALLENGE

Marx’s radical critique of capitalism was embedded in a sweeping and ambitious theory of history. Marxism was fatally weakened by the collapse of the Soviet Union but it continues to provide a framework for the critique of capitalism into the 21st century.

Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels  
The Communist Manifesto (1848)

Phil Gasper  
‘The meaning of the manifesto,’ Socialist Worker, 18 November 2005

Karl Marx  
‘The future results of the British rule in India’ (1853)

Vladimir Lenin  
Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism (1916) chapter 7 only.

Andre Gunder Frank  
The Development of Underdevelopment (1966)

Video clip  
Island of Flowers

March 9  
MID-TERM EXAM in class

March 12-23  
SPRING BREAK

WEEK 8
Mar 26-30

RATIONAL ACTOR MODELS

Economic thinking has been imported into models of political behavior, especially in trying to understand the ‘collective action’ problem. It brings some important insights into electoral behavior (Downs); the dynamics of organized groups (Olson); and the lack of international cooperation in the face of global ecological problems (Hardin).

Russell Hardin  
‘The free rider problem,’ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

Garrett Hardin  
‘The Tragedy of the Commons’ (1968)

Wikipedia  
Public good, Tragedy of the Commons, Prisoner’s dilemma

Anthony Downs  

Mancur Olson  
The Logic of Collective Action (1971) Introduction

Gordon Tullock  

Joe Oppenheimer  
The Laws of Politics (2005)
SECOND ASSIGNMENT to be submitted in class on April 2

Write a 2-3 page report in which you select ONE of the rational choice concepts discussed in Week 8 and apply it to a political puzzle or conflict of your choosing.

WEEK 9 TOTALITARIAN AND AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES
Apr 2-6
How do totalitarian regimes work? What do they tell us about the human condition?
What is the difference between totalitarian regimes and authoritarian regimes? (Holmes)
Both regimes can be seen as responses to the challenge of modernization (Huntington).
Did the ‘age of ideology’ end with the end of the Cold War? (Fukuyama).

George Orwell 1984 (1948)
Wikipedia Totalitarianism, Authoritarianism
Leslie Holmes ‘Totalitarianism,’ International Encyc. of Social & Behavioral Sciences
Samuel P. Huntington Political Order in Changing Societies (1971) pp. 1-58
Francis Fukuyama ‘The end of history,’ National Interest, summer 1989
Karl Popper The Open Society and Its Enemies Volume 1: The Spell of Plato, ch. 4.

WEEK 10 INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AFTER THE COLD WAR
Apr 9-13
What happened to Realism and balance of power theory in the wake of the Cold War?
What is ‘democratic peace’ theory? In the 1990s, US foreign policy focused on humanitarian interventions and foreign aid. Are these always a good idea? What is “soft power” (Nye)?

John Mearsheimer ‘Why we will soon miss the Cold War,’ Atlantic Monthly, Aug. 1990
Steven G. Brooks & William Wohlforth ‘American primacy,’ Foreign Affairs, July 2002
Joseph Nye The Paradox of American Power (2002), pp. 4-17
[Newspaper articles] US foreign policy in the 1990s
Thomas Schwartz ‘The myth of democratic pacifism,’ Hoover Digest, no. 2, 1999

WEEK 11 POLITICAL CULTURE AND THE ‘CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS’
Apr 16-20
In 1993 Huntington predicted a wave of wars between rival ‘civilizations.’ Is his theory valid?
How does Islam relate to 9/11 and the war on terror? What role does Islam play in Europe?

World Islamic Front Statement Urging Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders (Feb. 1998)
Ladan & Roya Boroumand ‘Terror, Islam and democracy,’ Jour. of Democracy, Apr 02, v. 13 n. 2
Pippa Norris & Ronald Inglehart Islam and the West:Testing the Clash of Civilizations Hypothesis 2002

Video clip Osama
THIRD ASSIGNMENT to be submitted in class on April 23

A 2-3 page report in which you critically evaluate one of the key arguments in one of the following books:
Allister Sparks Tomorrow is Another Country; Fareed Zakaria, Illiberal Democracy; Steven Hill, 10 Steps.

WEEK 12
TRANSITIONS TO DEMOCRACY:
THE SOUTH AFRICAN CASE
Apr 23-27

a) About 50 countries have made the transition to democracy in the past 15 years. South Africa is the most fascinating case. What does it tell us about the role of elites in politics, about the advisability of revolution, about the social and cultural prerequisites for democracy?

Allister Sparks Tomorrow is Another Country (1995)
Michael Bratton ‘South Africa,’ in Jeff Kopstein & Marc Lichbach (eds.) Comparative Politics, (2005) ch. 10
Antoinette Handley ‘The new South Africa,’ Current History, May 2004

b) Is Zakaria correct in seeing a contradiction between individual rights and electoral democracy? What are the prospects for democracy? Is the war on terror good, or bad, for the cause of liberty?

Fareed Zakaria ‘The rise of illiberal democracy,’ Foreign Affairs, Nov 1997, v. 76, n. 6
Fareed Zakaria The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home & Abroad 2004
Adrian Karatnycky ‘Gains for freedom amidst terror and uncertainty,’

WEEK 13
CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN POLITICS
Apr 30-May 4

Just how democratic is the contemporary US political system? What are the most important flaws in the system, as you see it? Can you imagine any reforms that would improve its operation?

Steven Hill 10 Steps to Repair American Democracy (2006)
Jacob Hacker & Pierson ‘The center no longer holds,’ New York Times Magazine, 10 Nov. 2005
Alan Wolfe ‘The power elite now,’ American Prospect, vol. 10, no. 44, 1999
Jon Stewart America (The Book) (2004)

Web sources:
William Domhoff ‘Wealth, income and power’ & ‘Power at the local level” (2005)
http://sociology.ucsc.edu/whorulesamerica/power/wealth.html
www.prospect.org/web/page.ww?section=root&name=Democracy+at+Risk

WEEK 14
CONCLUSION
May 7

FINAL EXAMINATION Wednesday May 16, 9.00 am