

PSC 101-001:

Introduction to Political Science

Spring 2020 | MW 11:15-12:45 pm
F online

Classroom: Brewer Hall 228

Professor: Dr. Benjamin Gross

Office: Brewer Hall 220B

Office Hours: M 1-5 pm; T 4-5 pm; W 3-4 pm; R 9 am-noon & 4-5 pm; and by appointment

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“Politics is who gets what, when, how.”

- Harold Lasswell, *World Politics and Personal Insecurity* (1935)

“Uh, Lisa, the whole reason we have elected officials is so we don’t have to think all the time. Just like that rainforest scare a few years back: our officials saw there was a problem and they fixed it, didn’t they?”

- Homer Simpson, [Bart’s Comet](#) (1995)

“A review of history’s ambitious projects...demonstrates that only three drivers have been sufficient to create them; *defense...the promise of economic return...and the praise of power*”

- Neil deGrasse Tyson, *The Sky is Not the Limit: Adventures of an Urban Astrophysicist* (2004)

Course Description & Rationale:

What is politics? This seems to be a simple question. It, however, has numerous and contested answers. The three quotes above show how varied responses are.

Some, like [Lasswell](#), understand politics as the relationship between humans and things. America’s favorite dad, Homer Simpson, suggests it includes something about representation and resolving problems. Finally, [Neil deGrasse Tyson](#) proposes politics – through the motives of defense, economics, and/or power – allows humans to collectively work together to achieve ambitious projects.

But what about schools and education; are these parts of politics? Are subjects like the economy, [environment](#), and health care political? To what level are conflicts an element of politics? If law is part of politics, is justice also a political question and, if so, does this make ethics and religion components of politics? If [art](#), music, and film express ideas concerning these topics, are even these parts of our political lives?

As the previous paragraph suggests, we need to examine numerous topics to know what politics are. In this course, we will begin to answer this question by exploring subjects both near and far from our daily lives. We will examine topics that you might have experience with, such as [elections](#) or political ideology, and ones that may be more remote to your personal experiences, such as [civil war](#) and genocide.

To help us answer this question, we will examine politics in multiple ways. Through discussions (based on materials we read and experienced), in-class simulations, interpreting music, and reflecting on documentaries, cartoons, and movies, we will investigate the breadth of politics through a set of diverse lenses.

We also need to ask what is [political science](#)? Are politics and political science the same, overlapping, or different things? Through our class, we will come to see that political science is a systematic and comprehensive study of politics. While the study as a whole examines politics, we introduce ourselves to various [topics](#) and approaches used by those within political science to study the subject. This introduction will help us not only to be successful in future courses, but in understanding the place political science has as a whole within our daily lives.

Course Goals:

By the end of the course, you will be able to...

- ...describe what is politics and what the study of politics includes;
- ...clarify the difference between politics and political science;
- ...understand what are the main sub-fields and topics political scientists study;
- ...comprehend how politics extends into multiple aspects of our daily lives;
- ...recognize how ideological preferences and opinions influence our understanding of politics;
- ...improve your reading and communication skills;
- ...explain what actions you take are political.

Required Texts:

* Riemer, Neal, Douglas W. Simon, and Joseph Romance. 2015. *The Challenge of Politics: An Introduction to Political Science*. 5th Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press. ISBN: [978-1506323473](https://www.amazon.com/dp/9781506323473)

Assignments & Grading:

In-Class Simulations	20%
In-Class/Online Participation	10%
Short Paper	10%
Three Exams	20% per exam

Grading Scale:

A = 90-100%
B = 80-89%
C = 70-79%
D = 60-69%
F = <60%

Assignment Details:

Readings:

While not graded, students should read their textbooks. It is impossible to cover all the fine points of an introduction to political science in one semester. By reading your textbook, you come to class prepared to ask questions about topics, ideas, and concepts that you need help understanding.

In-Class Simulations:

There are five in-class simulations during the semester. Students must attend and participate in four of these five in-class simulations to receive full points for this portion of their grade. Since students can miss one in-class simulation without any penalty, the professor does not offer make-up simulations. Furthermore, the professor does not inform students in advance of when an in-class simulation will take place.

These in-class simulations provide students with a hands-on experience of a topic we are discussing within our readings and in-class discussions.

In-Class/Online Participation:

Each week, students engage in discussions with their peers and the professor concerning the topics they are studying. These discussions begin in-class and can extend online during our Friday hybrid class session. Students earn full participation points by engaging with in-class **AND** online opportunities. Participation refers not only to the frequency to which students engage, but also to the quality of their participation too. While attendance is not sufficient for participation, it is necessary.

Short Paper:

Students will compose a 500-750 word paper answering the question: “What do *you* think is the most important question that political science should study?” More details about this assignment are provided on Wednesday, February 19th. The paper is due, both via Canvas and in-class submission, on Wednesday, March 18th.

Exams:

There are three section exams during the semester. Each section exam consists of 50 multiple-choice questions covering material from class work and the textbook.

Students will take their test via Canvas on Friday, February 7th, March 6th, and April 17th. Each student has one hour to complete the exam once she/he opens it. The test is available from 12:01 am to 11:59 pm on these Fridays. Thus, students can use their textbooks, notes, and the internet during the exam. With only 60 minutes to complete 50 questions, however, students still need to prepare for this exam as if it was closed book, no notes, and technology free to be successful. The exams show one question at a time and do not allow backtracking. The questions are also in a random order. **YOU SHOULD PREPARE AS IF THIS IS AN IN-CLASS, CLOSED NOTE, AND TECHNOLOGY FREE EXAM.**

A final exam is administered on Friday, April 24th at 10:30 am. This exam consists of 50 multiple-choice questions. This exam differs from section exams only in that the 50 questions cover material from the entire semester, is closed note, and a technology free exam. Student, however, can backtrack on the exam.

I know test taking is not the forte of all. Furthermore, it is possible that we have a bad day, get sick, or have something that prevents us from fully preparing for an exam. Thus, of these four exams, only three apply to a student’s final grade. Students automatically drop their lowest exam score from their final grade. If a student is satisfied with their grades from their three section exams, they can elect to not take the final exam (as the final exam is then the automatically dropped from the student’s final grade). **Since students automatically drop their lowest exam score, there are no make-up exams.**

Classroom Behavior:

Courtesy for one another will guide classroom behavior. Since this course concerns politics, discussion can be passionate at times. During class, we will treat everyone with respect; especially during dialogues. This means listening and letting a classmate finish their thought before responding, debating ideas (not people), speaking to each other in a civil tone, and refusing to engage in personal attacks. During our dialogues, I ask you all to respect viewpoints. Viewpoints, however, should be challenged.

Students must be attentive during all aspects of class. Students who sleep, read the newspaper, persistently talk with other students, text, use their cell phones, surf the internet, use computers for non-note taking activities (although due to [findings](#), I strongly suggest against this) or are inattentive/disruptive will be asked to leave class and are subject to being dismissed from the course at the professor’s request.

Other Policies:

Late Work:

Only the Short Paper assignment can be submitted after its due date. Every business day it is late, it loses three points (e.g., 89 to 86). One week after its due date, the professor will no longer accept it. Any student, who does not submit this assignment on-time, or within one week after its due date, will receive a zero.

Make-up In-Class Simulations & Exams:

As explained in the Assignment Details section of this syllabus, there are no make-up in-class simulations or exams. Since students are able to miss one in-class simulation without penalty and can drop their lowest exam score, make-up in-class simulations and exams are not available.

Academic Integrity:

This course does not tolerate academic dishonesty. The professor adheres to and enforces JSU's policy on academic honesty (e.g. cheating, plagiarism, forgery, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, and sabotage). Violations of academic integrity in this course are addressed in compliance with the procedures laid out in JSU's [student handbook](#) (see pages 57 & 71-76).

Accommodations:

I am happy to accommodate any student with a documented disability. If you have a disability that affects your work in this class, and for which you may require adjustments or accommodations, please see a staff member in [Disability Support Services](#) (139 Daugette Hall, (256) 782.8380, dss@jsu.edu) so accommodations can be considered. Please speak with DSS and the professor, as early in the semester as possible. Students that receive accommodation letters or Individualized Post-Secondary Plans (IPP's) should meet with me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations as early in the semester as possible. All discussions will remain confidential.

Religious Observances:

If assigned work conflicts with your religious holidays, please tell me in advance so we can make alternative plans. Informing me of religious obligations after the fact, however, will not count as an excuse.

Title IX:

Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 prohibits discrimination based on sex in any educational institution that receives federal funding. Jacksonville State University does not tolerate sex discrimination of any kind including: sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, domestic violence, stalking or other conduct that is addressed in the university's "Title IX Gender-Based and Sexual Misconduct Policy." This type of conduct may interfere with or limit an individual's ability to benefit from or participate in JSU's educational programs or activities. Anyone with knowledge of this type of conduct are asked to immediately report such incidents to the University Police Department at (256) 782-5050 or the Title IX Coordinator at (256) 782-5769. These incidents may also be reported to an instructor, faculty or staff member, who are required to notify the Title IX Coordinator. If a student wishes to keep the information confidential, the student may speak with a counselor at the

Counseling Services office at (256) 782-5475 or a medical provider at Student Health Services (256) 782-5310. For more information about Title IX, please visit the JSU Title IX webpage at www.jsu.edu/titleix.

Military-Connected Student Statement:

The Office of Veteran Services serves all active duty, guard, reserve, veteran, and dependent students at JSU. If you have any questions about Veteran Services please contact them at (256) 782-8838, veterans@jsu.edu, or the physical location in the basement of Daugette Hall. If you are a student currently serving in the military (Active Duty, Guard, or Reserves) with the potential of being called to military service or training during the course of the semester, you are encouraged to contact me no later than the first week of class to discuss the class attendance policy. The professor may make accommodations for this absence or suggest that you take the course at another time.

Questions About Your Grades:

I am happy to take questions about your grade in-person during my office hours/appointments. I do not, however, discuss grades over e-mail or phone due to FERPA regulations, which protects your privacy. See [here](#) for more information. At the end of the semester, your final grade will only change if there is a mathematical error.

Withdraws:

Please be advised, the last date to withdraw from the course without academic penalty is Friday, March 13th. There are other important dates regarding withdrawing from the course with regards to refunding your tuition and if you receive an academic penalty, which can be found [here](#). If you choose to stop attending the course it is your responsibility to withdraw from the course. If you do not withdraw from the course the professor will enter the grade you have earned as your final grade.

Student Notifications:

All notifications for the course will either be posted on the Canvas site and/or e-mailed to your JSU e-mail address. Be sure to check Canvas and your JSU e-mail for all notifications (or set your JSU e-mail to forward to another address).

E-mail Policy:

I will do my best to respond to all e-mails within 24 hours. In your first e-mail to me, please include a picture of “Alf”. This ensures that you have read the syllabus. If your first e-mail lacks “Alf,” you will receive a response saying: “Please refer to your syllabus.” Future questions answered by the syllabus will receive the same response.

In order to help response time, please include an appropriate subject line in your e-mail. Furthermore, please take the time to construct a formal e-mail with proper etiquette and language. I will not respond to e-mails constructed in a manner like, “Yo, Dr B i will b l8 4 clas 2day” or using emojis to represent words/ideas.

How to be Successful in this Class:

The best way to be successful is to be prepared. Being prepared means reading all of the assignment carefully and, most likely, rereading the assignment prior to class. By reading the assignments prior to class, you will be able to fully participate and get the most out of our classroom experience.

Furthermore, good note taking is vital. Take [physical notes](#). Learn to listen carefully. I find students who write down the questions being asked, and then the responses to these questions, are the most successful. If you only write down the answer the note is meaningless, as it lacks the context of the question.

After class, review your notes to see if they make sense. By reviewing them sooner than later you will be able to remember things from class to sort out any points of confusion in your notes.

Finally, get together with other students to form study groups. If you get together periodically and go over notes, you are more likely to have a complete set of notes. You will not only be able to go over your notes together to fill in the gaps, but by discussing with each other the topics of the class you might come to new insights.

Tentative Class Schedule:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Textbook Reading</u>
1/8 & 10	Introduction	No Reading
<i>GUIDING QUESTION: WHAT IS POLITICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE?</i>		
1/13, 15, & 17	Games Politicians Play	Chapter 1
1/22 & 24	Political Science: Components, Tasks, and Controversies	Chapter 3
1/27 & 29	The Physical, Social, and Cultural Environment of Politics	Chapter 4
2/3 & 5	Politics and Choice	Chapter 2
2/7	EXAM 1	NO READING
<i>GUIDING QUESTION: WHAT ARE THE TRADITIONAL FIELDS OF POLITICAL SCIENCE?</i>		
2/10, 12, & 14	Political Theory: The Quest for the Good Political Life	Chapter 5
2/19, 21, & 24	American Politics and Government	Chapter 9
2/24	International Politics and the Global Community	Chapter 11
3/2 & 4	Comparative Politics	Chapter 10
3/6	EXAM 2	NO READING
<i>GUIDING QUESTION: WHAT DOES POLITICAL SCIENCE STUDY?</i>		
3/9, 11, & 13	Elections, Representation, and Governance	Chapter 6 (147-59) Chapter 7 (173-76, 183-86)
3/16, 18, & 20	Political Economy and Development	Chapter 14
3/30, 4/1, & 3	Institutions and Ideology	Chapter 8 (211-19) Chapter 6 (159-61) Chapter 7 (182-83, 191-94)
4/6 & 8	Conflict	Chapter 12 (331-41) Chapter 13 (357-70)
4/13 & 15	Justice and Law	Chapter 8 (219-37)
4/17	EXAM 3	NO READING
4/20	Reflection & Application	NO READING
4/24	FINAL EXAM (10:30 am – 12:30 pm)	NO READING