



SCHOOL OF HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY, POLITICAL SCIENCE AND
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS PROGRAMME

TRIMESTER 2, 2008

[Monday 7 July to Saturday 8 November 2008]

POLS 207: MODERN AMERICAN POLITICS

CRN 1288

- LECTURER:** Professor Stephen Levine
- ROOM:** MY 534 (in the Murphy annexe).
- PHONE:** 463-6099
- EMAIL:** stephen.levine@vuw.ac.nz
Note: Emails to Stephen Levine about POLS 207 should have POLS 207 in the subject line.
- LECTURE TIMES:** Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 1:10-2:00 pm.
- VENUE:** Maclaurin Lecture Theatre 102 (MC LT102).
- TUTORIALS:** In addition to lectures, there are also tutorials that are offered as part of this course. Tutorial allocations will be arranged *in the first week* of the trimester and tutorials will begin *during the second week*. Each student will be allocated to one tutorial group. Tutorials will be held at the following times and locations: Tuesdays 2.10-3.00 (Cotton 333); Tuesdays 3.10-4.00 (16 Kelburn Parade, room 101); and Wednesdays 3.10-4.00 (16 Kelburn Parade, room 101). Each student is expected to attend his/her tutorial group on a regular basis.
- OFFICE HOURS:** Mondays 3:00-4:00; Fridays 2:00-3:00; and by appointment (email).
- OTHER INFORMATION:** Information about any changes to the timetable or programme will be announced in lectures or at tutorials, or via email to students enrolled in the course.

COURSE AIMS:

The course aims to introduce students to modern American politics, with a particular focus on the evolution and development of America's system of government. POLS 207 will study some of the major themes in US politics by examining the relationships between the different branches of government under the US Constitution.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

By the end of the course, students should have a thorough understanding of

- (1) the key elements of the United States Constitution;
- (2) the key elements of the United States political system; and
- (3) the contents of – including the facts and the arguments in – the POLS 207 set text (namely, David McKay, *American Politics & Society*, sixth edition).

COURSE CONTENT:

An outline of the structure and contents of the course can be found on page 3.

COURSE TEXTBOOK:

The textbook for the course is David McKay, *American Politics & Society*, sixth edition (Blackwell Publishing, 2005).

The textbook can be purchased from Vicbooks located in the Student Union Building on Kelburn Campus. Customers can order textbooks online at www.vicbooks.co.nz or can email an order or enquiry to enquiries@vicbooks.co.nz. Books can be couriered to customers or they can be picked up from the shop the day after placing an order online. Opening hours are 8:00 am to 6:00 pm, Monday – Friday during term time (closing at 5.00 pm in the holidays); 10:00 am – 1:00 pm Saturdays. Phone: 463-5515.

ASSESSMENT:

There is 100% internal assessment for this course.

- A series of **weekly in-class tests**, which – as outlined in the booklet entitled *PROSPECTUS 2008: POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS* – are worth **40%** of the overall grade awarded to students.
- A **research paper** of *at least* 3,500 words which will count for **60%** of the overall grade awarded to POLS 207 students.

The purpose of the in-class tests is to ensure that students acquire an accurate and detailed empirical knowledge of the bases of US government and politics; and the purpose of the research paper is to enable students to explore in considerable detail aspects of modern American politics that interest them.

Full details of the topic for the research paper, and the date on which it is due, are given on pages 3 and 4.

Your research paper must be submitted by its due date. Extensions will be granted only to those who meet the University's *aegrotat* rules (*e.g.*, students with a medical certificate, a family bereavement, or critical personal circumstances beyond their control). A **hard copy** of your research paper must be deposited in the POLS 207 essay box that's outside MY 517, **and an electronic copy** must be emailed to stephen.levine@vuw.ac.nz (remember, of course, to put POLS 207 into the subject line of the email).

MANDATORY COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

To gain a pass in POLS 207, each student must:

- submit the written work specified for the course – *i.e.*, the research paper – on or by the specified date (subject only to the provisions stated below in the section entitled PENALTIES for the late submission of work).

and

- must sit at least **eight** of the weekly in-class tests.

A student who has obtained an overall mark of 50% or more, but failed to satisfy any of the three mandatory requirements for the course, will receive a K grade for the course, while a course mark of less than 50% will result in the appropriate fail grade (that is, in a D, E or F grade).

PENALTIES:

In accordance with Political Science and International Relations rules, students will be penalised for late submission of written work. There will be a deduction of **5% for the first day late**, and **2% per day** thereafter, up to a **maximum of 8 days**. Work that is more than 8 days late can be accepted for mandatory course requirements but will not be marked. However, penalties may be waived if there are valid grounds (for example, illness [presentation of a medical certificate will be necessary] or similar other contingencies). In all such cases, prior information will be necessary.

WORKLOAD:

Including class contact hours, the standard University guideline for an appropriate amount of work to maintain satisfactory progress in this course is 15 hours per week.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND PLAGIARISM:

Academic integrity is about honesty – put simply it means *no cheating*. All members of the University community are responsible for upholding academic integrity, which means staff and students are expected to behave honestly, fairly and with respect for others at all times.

Plagiarism is a form of cheating which undermines academic integrity. The University defines plagiarism as follows:

The presentation of the work of another person or other persons as if it were ones own, whether intended or not. This includes published or unpublished work, material on the Internet and the work of other students or staff.

It is still plagiarism even if you re-structure the material or present it in your own style or words.

Note: It is however, perfectly acceptable to include the work of others as long as that is acknowledged by appropriate referencing.

Plagiarism is prohibited at Victoria and is not worth the risk. Any enrolled student found guilty of plagiarism will be subject to disciplinary procedures under the Statute on Student Conduct. All cases will be recorded on a central database and severe penalties may be imposed. Consequences of being found guilty of plagiarism can include:

- an oral or written warning
- cancellation of your mark for an assessment or a fail grade for the course
- suspension from the course or the University.

Find out more about plagiarism, and how to avoid it, on the University's website:

www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism.aspx

GENERAL UNIVERSITY STATUTES AND POLICIES:

Students should familiarise themselves with the University's policies and statutes, particularly the Assessment Statute, the Personal Courses of Study Statute, the Statute on Student Conduct and any statutes relating to the particular qualifications being studied; see the *Victoria University Calendar* available in hardcopy or under "about Victoria" on the Victoria homepage at:

http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/calendar_intro.html

Information on the following topics is available electronically under "Course Outline General Information" at: <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/newspubs/universitypubs.aspx#general>

- Academic Grievances
- Student and Staff Conduct
- Meeting the Needs of Students with Impairments
- Student Support

POLS 207 2008 COURSE OUTLINE AND REQUIRED READINGS:

Allowing for some flexibility, the general plan for the topics and lectures for POLS 207 is given below:

Week number	Beginning	Topic	Required readings from the textbook
1	Tuesday, 8 July	Introduction	Chapters 1 and 2
2	Tuesday, 15 July	The Constitution; federalism	Chapters 3 and 4; Appendix
3	Tuesday, 22 July	The legislative branch of government	Chapters 8 and 9
4	Tuesday, 29 July	The executive branch of government	Chapter 10
5	Tuesday, 5 August	The executive branch of government – <i>cont.</i>	Chapter 11
6	Tuesday, 12 August	The judicial branch of government	Chapter 14
	<i>Tuesday, 19 August</i>	<i>Mid-trimester break</i>	
	<i>Wednesday, 26 August</i>	<i>Mid-trimester break</i>	
7	Tuesday, 2 September	Political parties	Chapter 5
8	Tuesday, 9 September	Elections and political participation	Chapters 6 and 7
9	Tuesday, 16 September	Pressure groups	Chapter 13
10	Tuesday, 23 September	Civil rights and civil liberties	Chapters 12 and 15
11	Tuesday, 30 September	Domestic policies	Chapters 16 and 17
12	Tuesday, 7 October	International policies	Chapter 18 and 19

IN-CLASS TESTS:

You are required to sit a *minimum* of **eight** of the eleven POLS 207 **weekly in-class tests**.

Each of the eleven tests will consist of short answers (including, frequently, answers to multiple choice questions). Each week, the in-class test questions will be drawn from the readings assigned for the week in question. For example, in Week 2 there will be a test on either Tuesday, 15 July, or Wednesday, 16 July, covering the material in chapters 3 and 4 of David McKay's *American Politics & Society*.

Although you are required to sit a minimum of eight of the weekly tests, for the purpose of calculating your final grade, only **your four best in-class test results will count towards your final POLS 207 grade**. (In other words, your four best test scores will each contribute a total of 10% towards your final POLS 207 grade, and together they will account for the **40%** of your overall POLS 207 grade).

The eleven weekly in-class test series will start in week 2 of the course – that is, in the week beginning Monday, 14 July 2008 – and will continue for the remainder of the trimester.

RESEARCH PAPER:

As indicated on page 2 of this course outline, you are also required to write a research paper of *at least 3,500 words*, and it will count for 60% of your overall POLS 207 grade. **The final version of your research paper has to be handed in by no later than 5:00 pm on Friday, 10 October 2008.**

Before beginning to write your research paper, however, you will need to submit and have approved by me a brief (one page or so) **research paper proposal** containing (a) the title of and brief details about the topic you will be researching, and (b) a reading list for the topic that – in addition to any readings you may want to use from the POLS 207 textbook – includes at least eight sources (e.g. books, academic journal articles, and / or chapters in books). Please note that wikipedia is not an acceptable source for your research paper. **Your research paper proposal must be emailed to me at any time prior to 5:00 pm on Friday, 15 August 2008.**

The topic for the research paper is as follows:

One way of gaining an enhanced understanding of significant events and ‘defining moments’ in a country’s politics and political history is to consider what might have happened had these events, decisions and situations worked out differently.

Select an event in US political history during the post-World War II era – any one of the following: a presidential decision; a decision taken by the U.S. Supreme Court (or by a lower court); an action taken either by Congress or by either house of Congress (i.e., by the House of Representatives or by the U.S. Senate; or by any of the 50 states (or by territories associated with the U.S. in one way or another) – and indicate (a) why you have chosen it (*i.e.*, what was its importance; why was it of interest to you); (b) what actually occurred and why; (c) what were the consequences of what occurred; and (d) what plausible alternatives existed and, if taken, what might the consequences have been.