



SCHOOL OF HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY,
POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

POLS 358 — Trimester 2, 2008 — CRN 6737

HOW DEMOCRACIES VOTE

[Stephen Katz] was quiet for a moment. ‘That’s it? That’s your best plan? That’s your very best plan?’

‘Have you got a better one?’ [Bill Bryson responded.]

‘No, but I didn’t go to college for four years.’

‘Stephen, I didn’t study how to save your ass in Waynesboro [the town they’re in where Stephen Katz has got himself into trouble].

‘I majored in political science. If your problem was to do with proportional representation in Switzerland, I might be able to help you.’

— Bill Bryson, *A Walk in the Woods* (London: Black Swan, 1998), p. 180.

Anatole ... says the business of throwing pebbles into bowls with the most pebbles winning an election — that was *Belgium’s* idea of fair play, but to people here [in the Congo] it was peculiar. To the Congolese (including Anatole himself, he confessed) it seems odd that if one man gets fifty votes and the other gets forty-nine, the first one wins altogether and the second one plumb loses. That means almost half the people will be unhappy, and according to Anatole, in a village that’s left halfway unhappy you haven’t heard the end of it. There is sure to be trouble somewhere down the line.

The way it seems to work here is that you need a hundred percent. It takes a good while to get there. They talk and make deals and argue until they are pretty much all in agreement ...

— Barbara Kingsolver, *The Poisonwood Bible* (London: Faber and Faber, 1999), p. 265.

LECTURER:

Professor Nigel S. Roberts. (For further details see <<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/pols/Staff/nroberts.aspx>> and <<http://www.nigel-roberts.info>>.)

OFFICE:

MY 533 (in the Murphy annexe).

PHONE:

463-5288.

EMAIL:

Nigel.Roberts88vuw.ac.nz (remember to replace "88" with the @ symbol). **Note:** Emails to Nigel Roberts about POLS 358 *must* have POLS 358 in the subject line; if they don't, they are liable to be deleted as spam.

LECTURE TIMES:

Fridays, 10:00 to 11:50 am.

VENUE:

HM 001 (which is in the basement of the Hugh McKenzie building).

OFFICE HOURS:

During the second trimester, 2008, my office hours will be Mondays 9:00-9:50 am and Fridays 9:00-9:50 am. You are also welcome to telephone or email me.

COMMUNICATION OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Whenever it's necessary to do so, additional information about POLS 358 will be posted as announcements on the POLS 358 2008 Blackboard website. As soon as they have been finalised, relevant details from the end-of-year exam timetable will also be placed on this site. *It is, of course, essential that all students consult Blackboard regularly, preferably at least once a day.*

COURSE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

The course will analyse different types of electoral systems and various ways in which they can be categorised. This is a branch of politics which has seen major changes in recent years — not only in New Zealand (with the introduction of the Mixed Member Proportional, or MMP, electoral system), but also internationally (for example, a large number of states in eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, and Africa have implemented new voting systems).

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

- of the criteria by which electoral systems can be assessed;
- of various ways in which electoral systems can be classified;
- of the different dimensions which affect the workings of electoral systems;
- of the Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) electoral system; and
- of a range of overseas electoral systems — including both long- and newly-established systems.

COURSE CONTENT:

An outline of the structure and contents of the course can be found on page 6.

COURSE READINGS:

The textbook for the course is:

Arend Lijphart, *Electoral Systems and Party Systems: A Study of Twenty-Seven Democracies, 1945-1990* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

Note: Three copies of this book will be on closed reserve in the University Library, and one copy will be on three-day reserve.

Other useful texts are:

Report of the Royal Commission on the Electoral System: Towards a Better Democracy (Wellington: Government Printer, 1985).

The Guide to the Electoral Referendum (Wellington: Electoral Referendum Panel, 1992).

The Referendum. The Guide. (Wellington: Electoral Referendum Panel, 1993).

Referendum '93: Media Handbook (Wellington: Electoral Referendum Panel, 1993).

Jonathan Boston, Stephen Levine, Elizabeth McLeay, and Nigel S. Roberts, *New Zealand Under MMP: A New Politics?* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1996).

Helena Catt, Paul Harris, and Nigel S. Roberts, *Voter's Choice: Electoral Change in New Zealand?* (Palmerston

North: Dunmore Press, 1992).

David Farrell, *Electoral Systems: A Comparative Introduction* (Basingstoke, Hants.: Palgrave, 2001).

Dieter Nohlen, Michael Krennerich, and Bernhard Thibaut, eds., *Elections in Africa: A Data Handbook* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

Dieter Nohlen, Florian Grotz, and Christof Hartmann, eds., *Elections in Asia and the Pacific: A Data Handbook — Volumes I and II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

Andrew Reynolds and Ben Reilly, eds., *The International IDEA Handbook of Electoral System Design* (Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2nd edition, 1997).

Andrew Reynolds, Ben Reilly, and Andrew Ellis, eds., *Electoral System Design: The New International IDEA Handbook* (Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2005).

Rein Taagepera and Matthew Soberg Shugart, *Seats and Votes: The Effects and Determinants of Electoral Systems* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

Electoral Studies is the pre-eminent journal in its field and is essential reading for the course. Issues are held in the University Library.

Internet sources:

<http://fruitsandvotes.com/> is Matt Shugart's elections and electoral systems blog-site. Professor Shugart co-authored *Seats and Votes*, a classic in electoral system literature, so it should come as no surprise that his blog is both exceptionally good and extremely useful.

<http://ElectionResources.org/> is the URL for Manuel Alvarez-Rivera's *Election Resources on the Internet* website and is extremely useful.

<http://www.psr.keele.ac.uk/election.htm> is the URL for Keele University's handy guide to *Elections and electoral systems around the world*.

<http://www.aceproject.org/> is the URL for International IDEA's ACE project about the *Administration and Costs of Elections* and has a lot of information.

<http://www.unc.edu/~asreynol/ballots.html> has a very useful collection of ballot papers from a large number of countries.

Reference staff in the University Library are also happy to show students how to use the Library's computerised data bases and the Reuters news service.

The text book is out of print, and thus cannot be purchased from bookshops in Wellington (which is why I have put **four copies of the text book on reserve** in the VUW Library).

(Students may like to know that Vicbooks is located on the top floor of the Student Union Building, Kelburn Campus. Books of Reading are distributed from the Student Notes Shop on the ground floor of the Student Union Building. Customers can order textbooks and student notes 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 to Friday during term time [closing at 5.00 pm in the holidays], and 10.00 am to 1.00 pm on Saturday. Phone: 463- 5515.)

EXPECTED WORKLOAD:

In accordance with Faculty Guidelines, this course has been constructed on the assumption that students will devote 18 hours per week to POLS 358. This includes 2 hours of lectures per week.

ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS:

The course will be assessed on the following basis:-

- Two essays, each of about 2,000 words, will count for 60% of the overall grade awarded to students. (The better of the two essays will be worth 35%, while the other will be worth 25%.)

- A 3 hour end-of-year examination, which will contribute 40% to students' overall grades. **Note:** This will *not* be an open-book exam; and **note too** that this year's end-of-year examinations will be held from 17 October to 8 November 2008.

The purpose of the two essays is to ensure that students develop an accurate and detailed understanding both of the ways in which electoral systems can be compared and of the ways in which key electoral systems function. The aim of the examination is to assess the ability of students to integrate and use the knowledge they acquire during the course when tackling specific questions or statements.

Full details of the topics for the essays, and the dates on which they are due, are given on page 7.

Printed copies and electronic copies of your essays must be submitted by their due dates. 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). Late essays must be emailed to Professor Roberts; they must also be handed directly either to Professor Roberts or to a Political Science and International Relations Administration Assistant who will record on the essays the date and time they were received.

MANDATORY COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

The mandatory course requirements for POLS 358 are (i) attending at least nine of the POLS 358 seminars; (ii) completing and submitting both the essays for the course; and (iii) obtaining at least a D-grade in the end-of-year POLS 358 exam.

A student who has obtained an overall mark of 50% or more, but failed to satisfy the 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 (D, E or F).

PENALTIES:

Students will be penalised for late submission of essays – 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.

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.

ASSIGNMENT COVER SHEETS:

All Political Science and International Relations Programme assignments must be handed in together with a

signed Assignment Cover Sheet, a copy of which is appended to this course outline. Students are required to submit **both hard copies and electronic copies** of all their POLS 358 assignments.

THE USE OF TURNITIN:

Student work provided for assessment in this course may be checked for academic integrity by the electronic search engine <<http://www.turnitin.com>>. Turnitin is an online plagiarism prevention tool which identifies material that may have been copied from other sources including the Internet, books, journals, periodicals or the work of other students. Turnitin is used to assist academic staff in detecting misreferencing, misquotation, and the inclusion of unattributed material, which may be forms of cheating or plagiarism. At the discretion of the head of School, handwritten work may be copy typed by the School and subject to checking by Turnitin. You are strongly advised to check with your tutor or the course coordinator if you are uncertain about how to use and cite material from other sources. Turnitin will retain a copy of submitted materials on behalf of the University for detection of future plagiarism, but access to the full text of submissions will not be made available to any other party.

AEGROTATS:

Please note that under the Assessment Statute (Sections 4.5) students may now apply for an aegrotat pass in respect of any item of assessment falling within the last three weeks before the day on which lectures cease. In the case of second trimester courses in 2008, the starting point for this period is Monday, 22 September 2008. The following rules apply:

- Where a student is not able to sit a test falling within these last three weeks because of illness or injury etc., an alternative test will be arranged where possible. If the student has completed in the view of the course supervisor, sufficient marked assessment relevant to the objectives of the course, an average mark may be offered. Where a student has an essay or other piece of assessment due in the last three weeks, and has a medical certificate or other appropriate documentation, the student will be given an extension;
- If none of the above is available to the student, e.g., if she/he has an ongoing illness, than an aegrotat will be considered. See Assessment Statute (Sections 4.5) for a full explanation of the rules governing the provision of aegrotats in these circumstances.

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

COURSE OUTLINE:

1. INTRODUCTION (11 July 2008)

As well as introducing students to the course and its requirements, this seminar will also consider criteria for assessing electoral systems. See especially *Report of the Royal Commission on the Electoral System: Towards a Better Democracy*, chapter 2.

2. THE COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ELECTORAL SYSTEMS (18 July to 15 August 2008)

The remaining seminars during the first half of the course will be devoted to assessing various ways in which electoral systems can be classified, and to examining key structural variables which affect the outcome of elections.

This section of the course will initially refer to Andrew Reynolds and Ben Reilly, eds., *The International IDEA Handbook of Electoral System Design*, and to Andrew Reynolds, Ben Reilly, and Andrew Ellis, eds., *Electoral System Design: The New International IDEA Handbook*; and then draw primarily on the analysis and classifications contained in Arend Lijphart, *Electoral Systems and Party Systems*.

On a week-by-week basis, this part of the course will examine:

- The classification of electoral systems. See Andrew Reynolds and Ben Reilly, eds., *The International IDEA Handbook of Electoral System Design*, pp. 17-94 and pp. 139-142, and Andrew Reynolds, Ben Reilly, and Andrew Ellis, eds., *Electoral System Design: The New International IDEA Handbook*, pp. 27-126 and pp. 166-173. (18 July 2008)
- Factors which affect the way in which electoral systems function, and different types of electoral systems. See Arend Lijphart, *Electoral Systems and Party Systems*, chapters 1 and 2. (See also Rein Taagepera and Matthew Soberg Shugart, *Seats and Votes*, chapters 1 to 6.) (25 July and 1 August 2008)
- Assessing the effects on the way electoral systems function of the variables studied on 25 July and 1 August. See Arend Lijphart, *Electoral Systems and Party Systems*, chapters 3 to 7. (8 and 15 August 2008)

3. THE STRUCTURE AND OPERATION OF INDIVIDUAL ELECTORAL SYSTEMS (5 September to 10 October 2008)

During the second half of the course, we will examine the structure and workings of specific electoral systems. Each student will lead a seminar discussion describing and analysing the functioning of the electoral system(s) in one country. (The allocation of countries to students will be finalised on 25 July.) Seminar presentations will be *no longer than 20 minutes* per student, and we will examine roughly four countries' electoral systems during each two-hour seminar.

It is also important to bear in mind that (i) your second essay will stem directly from your seminar presentation — it will describe, analyse and assess the functioning of the electoral system[s] in the country of your choice; and (ii) in the end-of-year examination, there will be a compulsory multiple-choice section devoted to the electoral systems covered in the second half of the course.

Counties that have reasonably recently had elections that are of considerable interest to students of electoral systems include:

Australia (24 November 2007), Belgium (10 June 2007), Canada (23 January 2006), Costa Rica (5 February 2002), Denmark (13 November 2007), Fiji (6 to 13 May 2006), Finland (18 March 2007), France (10 and 17 June 2007), Germany (18 September 2005), Greece (16 September 2007), Hungary (9 and 23 April 2006), Iceland (12 May 2007), India (April-May 2004), Ireland (24 May 2007), Israel (28 March 2006), Italy (13 and 14 April 2008), Japan (11 September 2005), Lesotho (17 February 2007), Malta (8 March 2008), Nepal (12 April 2008), Netherlands (22 November 2006), Norway (12 September 2005), Russia (2 December 2007), Samoa (31 March 2006), Scotland and Wales (3 May 2007), South Africa (14 April 2004), Spain (9 March 2008), Sweden (17 September 2006), Switzerland (21 October 2007), United Kingdom (5 May 2005), United States (7 November 2006), Vanuatu (6 July 2004).

ESSAYS AND EXAMINATIONS:

As indicated on page 3, you will be required to write two essays for POLS 358, namely:-

- The first essay will be an essay of about 2,000 words on one of the following topics:
 - (1) (a) Critically assess the utility of the diagram illustrating the classification of “Electoral Systems for Legislative Office” contained in Pippa Norris, “Choosing Electoral Systems: Proportional, Majoritarian and Mixed Systems”, *International Political Science Review*, vol. 18, no. 3, 1997.
 - (1) (b) Compare and contrast the effects that the Sainte-Laguë, the d’Hondt, the Hare, the Droop, and the Imperiali formulae for allocating seats to political parties would have had on the results of the 2005 New Zealand general election.
 - (1) (c) In *Electoral Systems: A Comparative Introduction*, David Farrell notes that “there has been increasing interest in the *strategic* effects of electoral systems.” What does he mean by this claim and why does he make it?

The first essay must be handed in (*remember*, you are required to submit **both hard copies and electronic copies** of your POLS 358 assignments) **by no later than 5:00 pm on Friday, 5 September 2008.**

- The second essay will also be about 2,000 words long and will stem directly from your seminar presentation. It will describe, analyse and assess the functioning of the electoral system(s) in a country of your choice.

The second essay must be handed in (*remember*, you are required to submit **both hard copies and electronic copies** of your POLS 358 assignments) **by no 5:00 pm on Friday, 10 October 2008.**

As explained on page 3, the end-of-year examination for POLS 358 counts for 40% of the total marks for the course. It is a three-hour examination. It will *not* be an open-book exam, but will be very fair: it will contain a wide selection of questions covering all aspects of the course. You will be required to answer 4 questions — three essay questions and one compulsory question with a range of multiple-choice and/or very brief answers. (Remember, the end-of-year exams will be held from 17 October to 8 November 2008.)

Nigel S. Roberts
26 June 2008