

Political Science and International Relations Programme

POLS 382 Special Topic: Political Representation

Trimester Two, 2008

Political disillusionment in the western democracies can arguably be attributed to a mismatch between citizens' expectations of their elected representatives and constraints on modern government. This course examines fundamental questions about political representation. Should our political representatives act as delegates, trustees or partisans? Are these roles mutually exclusive? Why is geographical representation considered to be important in the Anglo-American democracies but not as important in continental Europe? Should the demographic composition of the legislature match that of the population as a whole? Is there a democratically legitimate role for 'self-authorized' representatives, such as interest groups or non-governmental organisations, as a complement to elected representatives?

- Seminars:** Fridays 1.10 -3:00 pm in Hunter HULT 119
- Coordinator:** Hilary Pearse
- Contact:** By email at Hilary.Pearse@vuw.ac.nz or telephone 463 9495
- Office hours:** Tues, Wed, Thurs from 1-3 in MY 506 or by appointment.
- Course website:** <http://blackboard.vuw.ac.nz>
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- Required text:** Pitkin, Hanna. *The Concept of Representation*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972. (\$51.99 at Vicbooks)
- Recommended text:** Williams, Melissa. *Voice, Trust and Memory*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000. (\$54.95 at Vicbooks)
- NB:** Both texts are also available on Closed Reserve
- Additional readings:** Any additional readings are available through the university library's electronic journal and database subscriptions, accessible online without charge to all VUW students. Direct links will be provided on the course Blackboard site.
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- Assessment:** One 1,000 word research proposal: 20% of final grade
One 5-10 minute seminar presentation: 10% of final grade
One 3,000 word research essay: 30% of final grade
Final three hour examination worth 40% of final grade
- Workload:** 18 hours per week, including class contact hours
- Mandatory requirements:** Submission of all assessment in required format by due date

Course Objectives

Knowledge

- 1) Students will understand the evolution of the concept of political representation in western democratic theory.
- 2) Students will be familiar with current debates on the role of political representatives and the selection of constituencies to be represented, and recognise the normative assumptions on which such debates rest.
- 3) Students will be able to identify empirical examples of mechanisms for political representation in western democracies.
- 4) Students will be able to assess competing explanations for citizen dissatisfaction with politicians and political institutions in western democracies within the analytical framework provided by representation theory.
- 5) Students will be able to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of proposed reforms to remedy citizens' political disengagement.

Skills

- 1) Students will learn to apply abstract theoretical models to empirical cases.
- 2) Students will develop their capacity for independent research, including the preparation of an initial research proposal and an extended research paper.
- 3) Students will learn to present complex theoretical arguments concisely and clearly in written papers and an oral presentation.
- 4) Students will debate controversial ideas and issues with respect and sensitivity.

Course Format

The first half of this course introduces students to a variety of models of political representation, as well as fundamental debates over the role of political representatives and the selection of constituencies to be represented. Although the reading for this section of the course is abstract and theoretical, seminars will use this theory to analyse political events in western democracies. Examples include the introduction of 'party hopping' legislation in New Zealand, voters' reactions to the adoption of neo-liberal policies by social democratic governments in Europe and Australasia, Prime Ministerial apologies for the treatment of Aboriginal peoples in Australia and Canada, and the recent Irish referendum rejection of the Lisbon Treaty.

The second half of the course analyses citizens' dissatisfaction with politicians and representative institutions as well as competing explanations for decreasing levels of political trust and participation. We will assess a variety of mechanisms adopted by governments or proposed by scholars to invigorate disengaged citizens and examine the extent to which these challenge or supplement traditional representative institutions.

Course Assessment

Students must complete a research project with three components (proposal, seminar presentation, essay) and a three hour **final examination**. The examination will require students to synthesise and analyse the material from seminars and the readings to answer essay questions. The research project requires students to apply two theories of political representation to a case study of their own selection. The case could be a controversial piece of legislation, a political event, a feature of a democratic political system or a proposed institutional reform. Students will first prepare a 1,000 word **research proposal** that briefly outlines the selected case, identifies the relevant representation models and summarises the theoretical debate. Students will also make a five minute **oral presentation** of their research proposal to the class. In this way, students will receive feedback on their research proposal from both the course coordinator and their peers. The research proposal will then be developed into a 3,000 word **research essay** that analyses the case as a representation debate, takes a side in the debate, and justifies this position. More information on course assessment will be discussed in class and available on Blackboard.

Research proposal due **Monday 11 August by 5pm**

Seminar presentation: during the seminar on **Friday 5 September**

Research essay due **Monday 5 October by 5pm**

Final examination period: 17 October to 8 November (date, time and venue TBA)

Submission of written work

Written assessments **MUST** be submitted in **TWO** forms. A hard copy of the essay must be placed in the marked box outside the School office MY 518 by the due date with the Programme Cover Sheet attached. In addition an electronic version of the essay must also be placed in the 'Essays' folder on the course's Blackboard website by the due date.

Extensions can be given only by the Course Coordinator. Late essays will be penalised with a deduction of 5% for the first day late, and 2% per day thereafter, up to a maximum of 8 days. Essays submitted more than eight days late will be accepted as fulfilling the mandatory course requirement, but will not be graded.

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 one's 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. 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 and may be penalized severely. 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:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism.aspx>

Statement on 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.

General University policies and statutes

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>

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

Date	Topic	Reading
11 July	Course overview Defining political representation	
18 July	Representation as responsiveness Representation as mediation	Pitkin chapter 10 Williams chapter 1
25 July	What is the role of the representative: trustee, delegate, partisan?	Pitkin chapters 7 & 8
1 August	Who is being represented: the nation, the individual, the constituency?	Williams chapters 2 & 6
8 August	Authorisation and accountability of representatives	Pitkin chapter 3 Rehfeld (online)
Research proposal due Monday 11 August by 5 pm		
15 August	Symbolic representation	Pitkin chapter 5
16-31 August: Mid-trimester break		
5 September	*Student seminar presentations*	
12 September	Citizen dissatisfaction with representative institutions	Pharr, Putnam and Dalton (online)
19 September	Political trust, social capital and deference to authority	Putnam (online) Nevitte (online)
25 September	Reforming representative institutions	Williams chapter 7
2 October	Supplementing representative institutions: direct democracy	Lupia and Matsusaka (online)
Research essay due Monday 5 October by 5 pm		
9 October	Supplementing representative institutions: citizen deliberation	Delli Carpini, Cook and Jacobs (online)
17 October – 8 November: Exam period		