



## SCHOOL OF HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY, POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### *POLITICAL SCIENCE and INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS PROGRAMME*

#### **POLS 414: Special Topic in Comparative Politics: 'Conscience' Issues in Liberal Democracies**

**2009 TRIMESTER 1 and II**  
2 March to 15 November 2009

**Course Coordinator:** Elizabeth McLeay  
**Room:** MY 517  
**Phone:** 463 9450  
**Email:** Elizabeth.McLeay@vuw.ac.nz  
**Office Hours:** Monday 10-12; and by arrangement. You are also welcome to telephone or email me.

**Lecture Times:** Thursday 11-1.00  
**Venue:** EA 012

#### **Course Delivery**

This is a seminar-based course. Class attendance is essential, and students are expected to participate in class discussion.

#### **Communication of additional information**

Additional information or information on changes will be conveyed to students Blackboard and email to all class members..

#### **Course content**

Some issues divide party elites, party members, and voting supporters. They invoke and challenge individuals' moral and ethical beliefs, and usually involve the regulation of private relationships. They often concern sexual relationships and reproductive issues, for example the legalization of prostitution and same sex marriage and the availability of contraception and abortion; and they also concern issues such as capital punishment. This course is about the politics and policies of these 'conscience' issues. Examples are drawn from a range of liberal democratic states, and students are encouraged to develop their own case-studies. The outline of the seminar topics to be covered in the first trimester can be found below.

#### **Learning objectives**

Students passing the paper should be able to:

- discuss the nature of controversial moral issues in contemporary liberal-democratic states, and identify their issue characteristics;
- analyse how controversial moral issues are debated publicly, move on to the governmental agenda, and are dealt with by political actors;
- identify and critique the various methodologies used to analyse policy-making in this aspect of politics; and

- acquire deep understanding and knowledge of one example of the politics of controversial moral issues.

### Graduate attributes

As with all POLS and INTP courses, learning objectives of this course contribute to the attainment of specific attributes in the areas of critical thinking, creative thinking, communication and leadership. Please consult the Programme Prospectus 2009, p. 10, for more details or on our website

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/pols/>

### Expected workload

In accordance with Faculty Guidelines, this course has been constructed on the assumption that students will devote twelve hours per week to POLS 414. This includes two hours of lectures per week.

### Essential texts:

Coursebook: *POLS 414: Selected Topic Comparative Politics: Conscience Issues in Liberal Democracies*.

Books of Reading are distributed from the Student Notes Shop on the ground floor of the Student Union Building.

### Recommended Reading:

The choice of books and articles beyond those extracts included in the Coursebook will depend on students' own interests, especially their choice of research paper. The following books, however, are very useful because they employ frameworks that help analyse the politics of controversial issues, or discuss some of the problems of contemporary democracy that are relevant to understanding these sorts of policies:

Dalton, Russell J., *Democratic Challenges: Democratic Choices: The Erosion of Political Support in Advanced Industrial Democracies* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007).

Dalton, Russell J. and Martin P. Wattenberg (eds.), *Parties without Partisans: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000).

Kingdon, John W., *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (New York, Longman, 1995). (On 3-day loan)

Sabatier, Paul A. (ed.), *Theories of the Policy Process*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Westview Press, Boulder, California, 2007).

Stetson, Dorothy McBride (ed.), *Abortion Politics, Women's Movements, and the democratic State: A Comparative Study of State Feminism* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001). (On 3-day loan)

The following is essential reading for understanding New Zealand:

Kirkman, Allison and Pat Moloney (eds.), *Sexuality Down Under: Social and Historical Perspectives* (Dunedin, University of Otago Press, 2005).

### Assessment Requirements

The assessment is in four parts:

- First trimester seminar presentation (10%)
- Essay I (15%)
- Essay II (35%)
- Final, closed book, three-hour examination (40%)

*The aim of the pattern of assessment is to test knowledge and analytical ability in different ways:*

- writing essays (a brief discussion paper, and a research essay), involving essay design, gathering material on specialised topics, analysing the material, and presenting arguments in a literate and structured form;
- giving oral presentations, testing the ability to present material in an accessible, interesting and lively manner, to lead class discussion, and to answer questions; and
- writing examination answers, testing students' overall grasp of the content of the course and the ability to structure ideas quickly and to answer questions in brief, relevant essays.

*The First Trimester Seminar Presentation (10%)*

The dates will be arranged during the first two weeks.

During the first trimester students are required to present a seminar of about 20 minutes that evaluates one (or two, depending on length) selected readings and to discuss its relevance to the politics of 'conscience' issues. Either a written summary of the presentation (no more than two-sides) must be prepared for distribution to seminar colleagues; or, alternatively, students may use PowerPoint (no more than six slides), and the presentation will subsequently be placed on Blackboard. The seminar presentation will be assessed on the following criteria:

- understanding and explanation of the authors' major points;
- analysis and critique of the main arguments; and
- discussion of the applicability (or otherwise) of the articles/chapters to understanding the politics of controversial moral issues (with brief examples).

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#### *Essay I (15%).*

This essay is due on **Thursday 4 June**. Please submit the essay in hard copy and include the Political Science and International Relations cover sheet. Please also submit your essay to the Course Organiser via email. This relatively brief discussion paper should be about 1200 words in length. The aim is to present a lively argument. The following are some suggestions of essay topics. (If you wish to write about a different topic, please check first with the Course Organiser.)

1. How can the judiciary affect the policy agenda of morally contentious issues? Illustrate with examples.
2. Which issues are morally contentious in contemporary liberal democratic states? Why are some issues more contentious than others?
3. How has the women's movement affected debate about the politics of the body?
4. How free are 'free votes' in Westminster legislatures?
5. Why are political parties frequently reluctant to bind their representatives to party policy on certain contentious issues?
6. 'The arguments around morally controversial issues are largely about different views of the relative rights of the state on the one hand and, on the other, the rights of individuals and/or groups.
7. 'Citizens, not legislators, should decide on morally contentious issues.' Discuss and illustrate.
8. Are the principles of deliberative democracy applicable to the politics of morally controversial issues?
9. What issues do fundamentalist religious groups pursue politically, and why?

#### *Essay II (35%)*

There are three stages to this assignment.

1. The *essay proposal* is due on **Thursday 28 May**. (The proposal is not assessed: the essay will be assessed solely on the basis of the final submitted version.) The proposal should include a provisional title, a statement of the main question being asked, an essay plan, and an outline of the main primary and secondary sources.
2. A *seminar paper* of 20-30 minutes will be presented during the second trimester that outlines the topic, identifies the research question (and/or hypotheses), explains the overall theoretical approach, outlines and justifies the selection of primary and secondary sources (presenting a bibliography of about a page), presents any preliminary findings. One of the aims of this exercise is to gain feedback from colleagues. This presentation is not assessed. (The dates of the presentations will be arranged on 28 May.)
3. The *final version* of the essay must be submitted by or before **5 pm Friday Thursday 24 September**. This essay should be between 3500 and 4000 words in length. Please submit the essay in hard copy and include the Political Science and International Relations cover sheet. Please also submit your essay to the Course Organiser via email.

Please note that you are not permitted to interview politicians or any other persons without first obtaining permission from the Victoria University Ethics Committee. See:

<http://policy.vuw.ac.nz/Amphora!~policy.vuw.ac.nz~POLICY~00000000744.DOC>

If you plan to conduct interviews, you must discuss your essay plans with Elizabeth McLeay within the first month of the course.

### *The Examination (40%)*

There will be a three-hour, closed-book examination. Students will be required to answer three questions. The examination period will be between **27 October** and **14 November 2009**.

### **Return of assignments**

The first trimester seminar presentation and the first essay will be returned to students in class. (Alternatively these assignments may be collected from the Course Organiser at a time to be arranged with her.) The second essay may be collected from the Political Science and International Relations Office between the hours of 2pm and 3pm on weekdays.

### **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.

### **Mandatory course requirements**

To gain a pass in this course each student must:

- a) Submit the written work specified for this course, on or by the specified dates (subject to such provisions as are stated for late submission of work).
- b) Present the two oral presentations as specified above on the dates agreed with the Course Supervisor.

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

### **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 compares submitted work with a very large database of existing material. At the discretion of the Head of School, handwritten work may be copy-typed by the School and subject to checking by Turnitin. Turnitin will retain a copy of submitted material on behalf of the University for detection of future plagiarism, but access to the full text of submissions is not made available to any other party.

### **Academic integrity and plagiarism**

Academic integrity means that university staff and students, in their teaching and learning are expected to treat others honestly, fairly and with respect at all times. It is not acceptable to mistreat academic, intellectual or creative work that has been done by other people by representing it as your own original work.

Academic integrity is important because it is the core value on which the University's learning, teaching and research activities are based. Victoria University's reputation for academic integrity adds value to your qualification.

The University defines plagiarism as presenting someone else's work as if it were your own, whether you mean to or not. 'Someone else's work' means anything that is not your own idea. Even if it is presented in your own style, you must acknowledge your sources fully and appropriately. This includes:

- Material from books, journals or any other printed source
- The work of other students or staff
- Information from the internet
- Software programs and other electronic material
- Designs and ideas
- The organisation or structuring of any such material

Find out more about plagiarism, how to avoid it and penalties, on the University's website: <http://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* or go to the Academic Policy and Student Policy sections on:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy>

This website also provides information for students in a number of areas including Academic Grievances, Student and Staff conduct, Meeting the needs of students with impairments, and student support/VUWSA student advocates.

## TRIMESTER 1: SEMINAR OUTLINE

The works referred to here are included in the *Coursebook* unless they are indicated as [E-R] or a website address is provided. The E-Reserve items can be located through the VUW Library. The full reference to the E-Reserve item is below.

Date	Topic	Readings
<b>WEEK ONE</b> <i>4 March</i>	(No POLS 414 meeting this week) Introduction to Honours, 21-1 4 March	
<b>WEEK TWO</b> <i>12 March</i>	What are 'conscience issues'? How do we define them? What are their characteristics? What can we learn through cross-country comparisons and longitudinal case-studies?	Colebatch Peters and Hogwood Smith
<b>WEEK THREE</b> <i>19 March</i>	Political parties, party systems, and 'conscience issues'. Gag rules?	Cobb and Elder Miller; McGee Walgrave and Varone

<b>WEEK FOUR</b>  <i>26 March</i>	Social and political movements, pressure group politics, and the role played by the politics of morality in liberal-democratic countries.	Jordan et al.  Phillips  ten Tusscher
<b>WEEK FIVE</b>  <i>2 April</i>	Changing values in the contemporary world	Dalton  Inglehart; and see: <a href="http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/">http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/</a>  Spaht
<b>WEEK SIX</b>  <i>9 April</i>	Policy issues and agenda-building: approaches and controversies.	Kingdon  Schlager and Blomquist  Sabatier  Sabatier and Weible [E-R]*
<i>MID – TRIMESTER BREAK</i>		
<b>WEEK SEVEN</b>  <i>30 April</i>	Debating and making decisions: the roles of political elites (legislators, bureaucrats, and judges)	Overby, Tatalovich and Studlar  Cowley and Stuart  Gunther and Mughan

<b>WEEK EIGHT</b> <i>7 May</i>	Debating and making decisions: the people decide: referendums, citizen assemblies, and citizen juries.	Donovan and Karp  Budge  Papadopoulos and Warin
<b>WEEK NINE</b> <i>14 May</i>	Different decisions and different dynamics? The uses of language, symbols and metaphors.	Connolly  Polletta and Ho
<b>WEEK TEN</b> <i>21 May</i>	Normative concerns: individual and minority rights; and democratic deliberation.	King  Dryzek
<b>WEEK ELEVEN</b> <i>28 May</i>	Visiting speakers (to be arranged)  <i>The proposals for Essay II topics are due today</i>	
<b>WEEK TWELVE</b> <i>4 June</i>	Recapitulation of themes and issues; organization of individual meetings with the Course Organiser during June; discussion of the next trimester's seminar programme; and shared lunch.  <i>The first essay is due today</i>	
<i>M I D – Y E A R B R E A K</i>		
Trimester II presentations (to be arranged)		
Please note that the seminars will resume on 23 July (not 17 July). There will be no class on 30 July. After that, we meet on the following dates: 6, 13, 20 August; and 10, 17, 24 September.		

\*Paul A. Sabatier and Christopher M. Weible, 'The Advocacy Coalition Framework: Innovations and Clarifications', in Paul. A. Sabatier (ed.), *Theories of the Policy Process*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Westview Press, Boulder, California, 2007.