



SCHOOL OF HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY, POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

**POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS PROGRAMME
POLS 207: MODERN AMERICAN POLITICS
CRN1288**

TRIMESTER 2, 2009
(Monday, 13 July to Sunday, 15 November 2009)

Trimester dates

Teaching dates: 13 July to 16 October

Study week: 19 to 23 October

Examination/Assessment period: 27 October to 14 November

COURSE OUTLINE

LECTURER: Professor Stephen Levine
ROOM: Murphy Building, Room 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: Monday and Wednesday – 3.10-4.00
VENUE: HM LT 105
TUTORIALS: Monday or Wednesday – 4.10-5.00; HM 001

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. Each student is expected to attend his/her tutorial group on a regular basis.

OFFICE HOURS: Tuesday, 11.00-12.00; Friday, 2.00-3.00; and by appointment (email).

COMMUNICATION OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Information about any changes to the timetable or programme will be announced in lectures or at tutorials and posted on Blackboard.

COURSE DELIVERY

POLS 207 is taught in two 50 minute lectures per week and one 50 minute tutorial per week in the teaching period between Monday, 13 July and Friday, 16 October 2009. Students are expected to attend the twice weekly lectures and the weekly tutorial.

COURSE CONTENT

This course will examine constitutional issues and broader political developments in the United States. Students have the opportunity to gain a better understanding of U.S. political institutions and political leadership. The lectures (using powerpoint) will provide an overview of various aspects of U.S. politics, including historical background, the U.S. constitution, federalism, elections, the presidency, Congress, the Supreme Court, and policy issues (including issues pertaining to civil rights and liberties). The tutorial workshops will review matters pertaining to the essay assignment; will allow students to ask questions about matters raised in the textbook or the lectures; and – in addition – will give each student an opportunity to make a brief presentation commenting on the usefulness of an internet website (selected by the student) relating to an aspect of U.S. politics.

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 U.S. politics by examining the relationships between the different branches of government under the U.S. Constitution.

LEARNING 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, William T. Bianco and David T. Canon, *American Politics Today* (2009)).

RELATIONSHIP TO ASSESSMENT

The readings and lectures are designed to give students the opportunity to gain a basic understanding of the U.S. constitution and system of government. The tutorials and essay assignment allow students to develop their understanding in their own way, based on discussion, critical analysis and independent research. The in-class tests will assess students' understanding of basic elements of U.S. politics presented in the lectures and the textbook.

READINGS

Essential text:

The text for POLS 207 is: William T. Bianco and David T. Canon, *American Politics Today* (2009). An 'e-book folder' version of this book – an on-line version of the text (or most of it) – is also available from VicBooks. More information about the e-book option will be available from VicBooks and can also be accessed from Pearson (the supplier) at: <http://www.coursesmart.com/>

Three copies of the textbook are on 3-day loan in the VUW Library (JK275 B578 A 2009).

For the first two weeks of trimester, all undergraduate textbooks and student notes will be sold from the Memorial Theatre foyer, while postgraduate textbooks and student notes will be available from the top floor of VicBooks in the Student Union Building, Kelburn Campus. After week two, all undergraduate textbooks will be sold from VicBooks and student notes from the Student Notes Distribution Centre 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. Customers will be contacted when they are available. Opening hours are 8.00 am – 6.00 pm, Monday – Friday during term time (closing at 5.00 pm in the holidays). Phone: 463 5515.

ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS

There is 100% internal assessment for this course, comprising:

- a series of **weekly in-class tests**, which – as noted in the booklet entitled *PROSPECTUS 2009: 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 U.S. 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 page 6. Further information about the in-class tests is given on page 5.

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 located 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:

- (a) 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);
- (b) sit a *minimum* of **eight** of the eleven POLS 207 **weekly in-class tests** (see below); **and**
- (c) complete the required tutorial assignment (see below).

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

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 eight** days. Work that is more than eight days late can be accepted for mandatory course requirements but will not be marked. However, penalties may be waived if there are valid grounds, e.g., illness (presentation of a medical certificate will be necessary) or similar other contingencies. In 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 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 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* or go to the Academic Policy and Student Policy sections on: <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy>

The AVC (Academic) 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. This website can be accessed at:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/avcacademic/Publications.aspx>

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.

POLS 207 2009 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	Monday, 13 July	Introduction	Preface; Chapters 1
2	Monday, 20 July	The Constitution; federalism	Chapters 2 and 3; Appendix
3	Monday, 27 July	The legislative branch of government	Chapter 10
4	Monday, 3 August	The executive branch of government	Chapter 11
5	Monday, 10 August	The executive branch of government – <i>cont.</i>	Chapter 12
6	Monday, 17 August	The judicial branch of government	Chapter 13
	Monday, 24 August	<i>Mid-trimester break</i>	
	Monday, 31 August	<i>Mid-trimester break</i>	
7	Monday, 7 September	Public opinion and the media	Chapters 5 and 6
8	Monday, 14 September	Political parties and elections	Chapters 7 and 8
9	Monday, 21 September	Pressure groups	Chapter 9
10	Monday, 28 September	Civil rights and civil liberties	Chapters 4 and 14
11	Monday, 5 October	Domestic policies	Chapters 15 and 16
12	Monday, 12 October	International policies	Chapter 17

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. Some questions will usually also be drawn from the preceding lectures. For example, in Week 2 there will be a test on either Monday, 20 July, or Wednesday, 22 July, covering the material in chapters 2 and 3 of Bianco and Canon's *American Politics Today*; and, if appropriate, from the preceding lectures. Some questions in subsequent tests may also be drawn from the tutorial sessions.

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, 20 July 2009 – 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, 16 October 2009.**

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. Sources referred to or relied upon for the research paper should be cited, either in the text (in brackets, with a list of sources at the end), or in footnotes (at the bottom of each page), or in endnotes (at the end of the paper).

Your research paper proposal must be emailed to me no later than 5:00 pm on Friday, 21 August 2009.

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. These events generally involved an individual or political institution – or individuals and institutions – displaying ‘political leadership’, for good or for ill, and thus acquiring a measure of responsibility for what occurred.

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 alternative courses of action existed and, if taken, what might the consequences have been.

TUTORIAL ASSIGNMENT

As indicated on pages 2 and 3 of this course outline, each student is required to make a brief presentation to their tutorial. The task is a potentially interesting yet straightforward one: to find an internet site relating to an aspect of modern U.S. politics; and to tell the class why this site is useful in illuminating some aspect of U.S. politics. It is envisaged that each student will go on-line using the computer in the tutorial classroom, connect to the site that they have ‘discovered’, and tell the class why the site is useful and interesting (while showing any particular ‘features’ that it may have). This tutorial assignment is also a means for students to further develop their research skills in relation to the course topic.