



FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

SCHOOL OF HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY, POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS PROGRAMME POLS 207: MODERN AMERICAN POLITICS 20 POINTS

TRIMESTER 2 2013

Important dates

Trimester dates: 15 July to 17 November 2013

Teaching dates: 15 July to 18 October 2013

Mid-trimester break: 26 August to 8 September 2013

Final item of assessment due: 18 October

Withdrawal dates: Refer to

www.victoria.ac.nz/home/admisenrol/payments/withdrawalsrefunds

If you cannot complete an assignment or sit a test or examination (aegrotats), refer to

www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/exams-and-assessments/aegrotat

Class times and locations

Lectures: Monday, 2.10-3.00; and Wednesday, 2.10-3.00

Lecture Venue: Hugh Mackenzie LT002 (Monday); Maclaurin, LT102 (Wednesday)

Tutorials: Monday, 3.10-4.00; and Wednesday, 3.10-4.00

Tutorial Venue: Hugh Mackenzie LT002 (Monday); Maclaurin, LT102 (Wednesday)

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.

Names and contact details

Course Coordinator: **Professor Stephen Levine**

Room No: Murphy Building, Room 534 (in the Murphy Annex)

Phone: 463-6099

Email: stephen.levine@vuw.ac.nz

Office hours: Monday and Wednesdays, 4.00-5.00 [other times by appointment]

Communication of additional information

This course uses Blackboard and presumes that all enrolled students have valid myvuw.ac.nz addresses. Please check that this account is active and you have organised email forwarding. Additional information and any changes to the timetable or lecture and seminar programme will be advised by email, announced in lectures, and posted on the course's Blackboard site.

Prescription

An introduction to modern American politics, with a particular focus on the continued development of America's system of government. The course examines major political themes in US politics against the background of the relationships between different branches of government under the US Constitution. 100% internal assessment.

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 relating to an aspect of U.S. politics (see below for more information).

Course learning objectives (CLOs)

Students who pass this course will be able to 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*, 3rd edition (2013)).

Teaching format

POLS 207 is taught in two 50 minute lectures per week and one 50 minute tutorial per week in the teaching period between Monday, 15 July and Friday, 18 October 2013. Students are expected to attend the twice weekly lectures and the weekly tutorial. The course is delivered over 12 weeks of lectures and 11 weeks of tutorials. Both tutorials and lectures are essential aspects of the course and, with the textbook, constitute the primary means in which the course content is delivered. Students are expected to attend classes regularly, take part in tutorial discussion, and keep up with the required reading.

Mandatory course requirements

In addition to achieving an overall pass mark of 50%, students must:

- (a) submit the written work specified for the course – *i.e.*, the research paper (see below) – 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).

Workload

In accordance with Faculty Guidelines, this course has been constructed on the assumption that students will devote 200 hours to the course throughout the trimester. This includes weekly attendance at lectures and tutorials, completion of all set weekly readings and research and writing for set assessment tasks.

Assessment

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

Assessment items and workload per item		%	CLO(s)	Due date
1	11 weekly in-class tests	50%	1, 2, 3	Weekly
2	Research Paper (at least 3,500 words)	50%	1, 2, 3	18 October

In-class test answers and results will be posted on Blackboard. The research paper will be returned at a time to be advised. Students may collect their research paper from the School Office, Murphy 518 between the hours of 2.00 and 3.00 pm from Monday to Friday.

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 below. Further information about the in-class tests is given below.

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 (with POLS 207 in the subject line of the email).

IN-CLASS TESTS

You are required to sit a *minimum* of **eight** of the eleven **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 previous week. Some questions will also be drawn from the preceding lectures. Questions may also be drawn from the tutorial meetings.** For example, in week 3 there will be a test on either Monday, 29 July, or Wednesday, 31 July, covering the material in chapters 2 and 3 of Bianco and Canon's *American Politics Today, 3rd edition (2013)*; and, if appropriate, from the preceding lectures (and tutorials).

Although you are required to sit a minimum of eight of the weekly tests, for the purpose of calculating your final grade only **your five best in-class test results will count towards your final POLS 207 grade.** (In other words, your five best test scores will each contribute a total of 10% towards your final POLS 207 grade, and together they will account for 50% 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, 22 July 2013 – and will continue for the remainder of the trimester.**

RESEARCH PAPER

You are required to write a research paper **of at least 3,500 words**, and it will count for **50%** 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, 18 October 2013.**

Before beginning to write your research paper, however, you will need to submit and have approved by Professor Levine 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). **Research papers submitted on topics that have not been approved will not be assessed.**

Your research paper proposal must be emailed to Professor Levine no later than 5:00 pm on Friday, 23 August 2013.

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 (i.e., 1945 to the present) – **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

Each student is required to make a brief presentation to their tutorial. There will be several options. In each case, the task can be a potentially interesting yet straightforward one: either 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; or to make a brief presentation commenting on the significance of **a photograph/image relating to U.S. politics**; or to do a brief presentation (accompanied by a website or photograph/image) on **a politically significant individual in the U.S.** with an influence on U.S. politics (not necessarily an elected politician, although office-holders are, of course, permitted). It is envisaged that each student will go on-line using the computer in the tutorial classroom, connect to the website that they have ‘discovered’ or the photographic image that they will be discussing, and tell the class about the importance of the

site, photograph or individual selected. This tutorial assignment is also a means for students to further develop their research skills in relation to the course topic.

POLS 207 2013 COURSE OUTLINE AND REQUIRED READINGS:

The general plan for the readings for POLS 207 is given below:

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

Submission and return of work

All written work – i.e., the required essay assignment – must be submitted in hard copy in the course essay box outside the School office on the fifth floor of the Murphy building. All assignments must have a Programme cover sheet attached.

The Programme’s policy requires that students also submit an **electronic copy** along with the hardcopy. For this course, please email to me an electronic copy of your work on the same due date as for your hardcopy submission. The subject line of your email submission should be “POLS 207

essay assignment". The email copy however does not constitute a formal submission and an email submission only will not be marked.

In-class test answers and results will be posted on Blackboard. The essay will be returned at a time to be advised. When advised, students may collect their essay from the School Office, Murphy 518 between the hours of 2.00 and 3.00 pm from Monday to Friday and must show their Student ID card before collection.

Penalties

Students will be penalised for late submission of assignments – **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 10 weekdays late can be accepted for mandatory course requirements but may not be marked. 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.

Materials and equipment and/or additional expenses

Students are not permitted to use their computers (or smartphones) during in-class tests. Mobile phones should be turned off at the start of each lecture and tutorial.

Set text

The text for POLS 207 is: William T. Bianco and David T. Canon, *American Politics Today*, 3rd edition (2013).

The textbook should be available from VicBooks (www.vicbooks.co.nz).

Class representative

The class representative provides a useful way to communicate feedback to the teaching staff during the course. A class representative will be selected at the first lecture of the course

Student feedback

Student feedback on University courses may be found at www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/feedback/feedback_display.php.

Other important information

The information above is specific to this course. There is other important information that students must familiarise themselves with, including:

- Academic Integrity and Plagiarism: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism
- Aegrotats: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/exams-and-assessments/aegrotat
- Academic Progress: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/academic-progress (including restrictions and non-engagement)
- Dates and deadlines: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/dates
- FHSS Student and Academic Services Office: www.victoria.ac.nz/fhss/student-admin
- Grades: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/exams-and-assessments/grades
- Graduate attributes: <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/hppi/about/overview-of-the-school/psir-overview#grad-attributes>
- Resolving academic issues: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/avcacademic/publications2#grievances
- Special passes: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/avcacademic/publications2#specialpass
- Statutes and policies including the Student Conduct Statute: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy
- Student support: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/vicliffe/student-service

- Students with disabilities: www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/disability
- Student Charter: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/viclife/student-charter
- Student Contract: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/admisenrol/enrol/studentcontract
- Turnitin: www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/wiki/index.php/Turnitin
- University structure: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about
- VUWSA: www.vuwsa.org.nz