



**FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

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

**POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS PROGRAMME  
POLS 586: THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO POLITICAL SCIENCE  
30 POINTS**

**TRIMESTER 1 2015**

**Important dates**

**Trimester dates:** 2 March to 1 July 2015

**Teaching dates:** 2 March to 5 June 2015

**Easter/Mid-trimester break:** 3–19 April 2015

**Study period:** 8–12 June 2015

**Examination/Assessment Period:** 12 June to 1 July 2015

Note: students who enrol in courses with examinations must be able to attend an examination at the University at any time during the scheduled examination period.

**Withdrawal dates:** Refer to [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/withdrawals-refunds](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/withdrawals-refunds). If you cannot complete an assignment or sit a test or examination, refer to [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats).

**Class times and locations**

Lectures: Tuesday, 16:10 – 19:00

Venue: Murphy 103

**Names and contact details**

**Course Coordinator:** Dr Fiona Barker

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Office hours: Contact by email.

**Contributing teaching staff:**

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## 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 Blackboard site.

## Prescription

This course provides a survey of the different methods and perspectives used in the Political Science discipline. Students will gain greater awareness of the philosophical and political implications of different approaches to Political Science. They will explore a variety of theoretical perspectives and research methodologies used in the Political Science discipline and the application of those perspectives and methodologies to empirical questions.

## Course learning objectives (CLOs)

Students who pass this course should be able to:

1. demonstrate an advanced understanding of the major philosophical and analytical approaches to the study of Political Science
2. select appropriate methodologies and theoretical approaches for answering particular kinds of questions and pursuing particular kinds of research in Political Science
3. critically evaluate the appropriateness, strengths and weaknesses of the theoretical and methodological approaches used in Political Science scholarship
4. produce written work that is analytically rigorous and logically expressed.

## Teaching format

**POLS 586** is taught through one 3-hour seminar per week. Seminars will involve a mixture of lecturing, class discussion and group work. Group activities will be designed to encourage students to critically debate the strengths and weaknesses of particular Political Science perspectives and to apply those perspectives to concrete empirical questions. From time to time, students may be asked to give brief presentations on weekly readings and themes, but these will not form part of the formal assessment.

## Mandatory course requirements

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

1. complete and submit each assignment.

## Workload

In accordance with University Guidelines, this course has been constructed on the assumption that students will devote 300 hours to the course throughout the trimester. This total includes the following approximate distribution of workload across tasks:

- attendance at the weekly seminar; (36 hours – 3 per week)
- completion of readings for seminars and preparation for class discussion; (72 hours – approximately 6 hours per week)
- reading, research and writing for all assessment tasks, and preparation for final examination. (192 hours – distribution of hours will vary according to assessment deadlines, but averages to approximately 12.8 hours per week, including during trimester break and study week prior to examinations)

## Assessment

Assessment items		%	CLO(s)	Due Date
1	Essay (2000 words)	20%	1, 3, 4	27 March, noon
2	Analysis and critique of methodology exercise (1500 words)	15%	3,4	8 May, noon
3	Research design exercise (3000 words)	30%	1,2,4	2 June, noon
4	Examination (3 hours)	35%	1,2,3,4	TBA

Each assessment task is designed to assess different aspects of your understanding of theories, methodologies and empirical knowledge of political science. In particular, the assessment aims to test your ability to critique existing research, understand appropriate approaches to political science questions, and apply these to your own research in political science. Guidelines and marking criteria for each piece of assessment will be given in class and placed on Blackboard by Week 3 of the course.

The **essay** will comprise an extended analysis on the themes of Week 3 – State and Society. You will need to critique readings on the topic and contribute your own thoughts and analysis. This is an opportunity to demonstrate skills in critical analysis of literature and in clear written expression.

The **analysis and critique of methodology exercise** will require you to critique an existing example of political science research, to be selected from the political science literature. In particular, you will be expected to consider and discuss the question, research design and methodology used by an author in their research. The readings and class discussion from Weeks 4, 5 and 6 will provide the foundations for you to complete this task.

The **research design exercise** asks you to construct a full research design for a future research project – this could relate to research you are undertaking for another course or for your MPols extended research paper, or it could be a hypothetical research project. You will be expected to choose a research question, discuss existing literature on the topic, choose a theoretical perspective and methodology for answering the research question, select and justify cases for research.

The **examination** will test you on the theoretical, methodological and substantive knowledge you have acquired throughout the course. It will require you to offer a critical discussion of aspects of

theoretical and methodological perspectives in political science, as well as to demonstrate understanding of key empirical debates and research covered throughout the course.

## Submission and return of work

**All assignments are due by noon on the due date.**

**Submission:** All work submitted for assessment must be uploaded ELECTRONICALLY to the appropriate folder on the POLS 586 Blackboard website. Instructions will be given in class on how to upload your assignments. A HARD COPY should also be dropped off at the School Office (MY518) in the slots provided. We reserve the right to check the electronic copy of any of your assignments via Turnitin.com (see [www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/wiki/index.php/Turnitin](http://www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/wiki/index.php/Turnitin))

You will be advised by Blackboard announcement or by email when graded assignments are available. Graded assignments with comments will be returned by email and subsequently be available upon request at the School Office, MY 518 between the hours of 2.00-3.00 pm, Monday to Friday.

## Extensions and penalties

### Extensions

Late submission of **assignments will not be accepted** unless you contact the course coordinator by email as soon as practically possible to explain the lateness (preferably before the assignment is due to be submitted). The circumstances under which an extension will be considered are outlined in section 3.2.1 of the Assessment Handbook.

(See: [www.victoria.ac.nz/documents/policy/staff-policy/assessment-handbook.pdf](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/documents/policy/staff-policy/assessment-handbook.pdf)).

### 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. Extensions on deadlines for written work will only be granted under exceptional circumstances.

## Set texts

Required readings for POLS 586 will be made available on the course Blackboard site.

## Recommended reading

A list of recommended reading will be made available via Blackboard and updated throughout the trimester. Recommended reading will help to deepen your knowledge on particular topics and will be useful in completing the assessment and preparing for the final examination.

## 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 weekly seminar. You may like to write the Class Rep's name and details in this box:

Class Rep name and contact details:
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## Student feedback

POLS 586 is a new course in 2015. Feedback will be sought from you periodically throughout the trimester so as to enhance the course in future years.

## 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/students/study/exams/integrity-plagiarism](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/integrity-plagiarism)
- Aegrotats: [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats)
- Academic Progress: [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/academic-progress](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/academic-progress) (including restrictions and non-engagement)
- Dates and deadlines: [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/dates](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/dates)
- FHSS Student and Academic Services Office: [www.victoria.ac.nz/fhss/student-admin](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/fhss/student-admin)
- Grades: [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/grades](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/grades)
- Resolving academic issues: [www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications)
- Special passes: [www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications)
- Statutes and policies including the Student Conduct Statute: [www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/strategy](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/strategy)
- Student support: [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/support](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/support)
- Students with disabilities: [www.victoria.ac.nz/st\\_services/disability](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/disability)
- Student Charter: [www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/student-charter](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/student-charter)
- Student Contract: [www.victoria.ac.nz/study/apply-enrol/terms-conditions/student-contract](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/study/apply-enrol/terms-conditions/student-contract)
- Subject Librarians: <http://library.victoria.ac.nz/library-v2/find-your-subject-librarian>
- Turnitin: [www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/wiki/index.php/Turnitin](http://www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/wiki/index.php/Turnitin)
- University structure: [www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/structure](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/structure)
- Victoria graduate profile: [www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/graduate-profile](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/graduate-profile)
- VUWSA: [www.vuwsa.org.nz](http://www.vuwsa.org.nz)

## POLS 586 COURSE SCHEDULE

<b>Week</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Instructor</b>	<b>Topic</b>
1	3 March	Barker, Vowles	<i>Introduction to the MPOLS and POLS 586</i>
2	10 March	Barker	<i>Political Science as a Discipline</i>
3	17 March	Barker	<i>State and Society</i>
4	24 March	Barker	<i>Causal inference, Concepts and Research Design</i>
<b>27 MARCH, NOON</b>		<b>ESSAY DUE</b>	
5	31 March	Thirkell-White	<i>Methods I – Research design, case studies, comparative analysis</i>
MID-TRIMESTER BREAK			
6	21 April	Coffé	<i>Methods II – Statistical and experimental approaches</i>
7	28 April	Snyder	<i>Philosophical foundations of political science</i>
8	5 May	Marquez	<i>Democracy, democratization and regime transitions</i>
<b>8 MAY, NOON</b>		<b>METHODOLOGY CRITIQUE EXERCISE DUE</b>	
9	12 May	Vowles	<i>Rational Choice Theories</i>
10	19 May	Shen	<i>Ideas and cultural perspectives</i>
11	26 May	Young	<i>Institutionalism</i>
<b>1 JUNE, NOON</b>		<b>RESEARCH DESIGN ASSIGNMENT DUE</b>	
12	2 June	Fraenkel	<i>Political Science, Policy and the Art of Practical Politics</i>