

POLS 2301-01 Introduction to Political Science
University of Arkansas at Little Rock

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Course Meeting Times
TR 9:25-10:40 AM
RH 211

Office Hrs: SH 603N
M: 11:00 - 1:00 *and by appointment*
Office phone: 569-8841

Course Overview and Objectives

This course is an introduction to the forces that drive politics, the people, groups, and states that confront these forces, and often are compelled to conform to them, and a practicum in studying the patterns and associations that arise from these complex interactions. The topics we will cover are wide-ranging: What constitutes the political? How do political beliefs form and how do people act upon them? How do forces in the political world impact us and transform the way we view politics? How do states and governments function, and what are their proper ends? What constitutes the political community in this truly global age? In our quest for answers we will discuss different theoretical and empirical approaches to political analysis. Students will be exposed to both qualitative and quantitative methods and the assignments will provide them with opportunities to gather and employ real data. By the end of the course, students should be better equipped to think and write critically about politics, and for those whose interests are piqued by the questions we address here, it is my hope that the class will provide a number of paradoxes and questions that will spur them on to further study in the discipline.

Learning Objectives

In keeping with the UALR Political Science department's mission "to provide students with both a substantive knowledge of politics and the skills necessary to make use of that knowledge effectively", this course will focus on developing and enhancing the following knowledge and skills goals:

1. The history, characteristics, and impact of political institutions and systems, including international, national, state, and local governments
2. The behavior of individual actors at both the mass and elite levels
3. The debates over the normative foundations of the state, the scope of its activities, and the nature of justice
4. Analysis/Research – the ability to pose and answer questions effectively
5. Written and Verbal Communication – the ability to communicate ideas clearly on paper or through oral presentations

Required Readings

1. J. N. Danziger. *Understanding the Political World: A Comparative Introduction to Political Science* 10th Ed. Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.
2. L. D. Simon, J. Corrales, and D. R. Wolfensberger. *Democracy and the Internet: Allies or Adversaries?* Woodrow Wilson Center Press.
3. Online Readings (a number of .pdf files loaded on Blackboard plus a few url links to online content)

Assignments and Grading Breakdown

- 10% Belief System Interview and Write-Up
- 5% Pop Quizzes
- 25% Midterm Examination 1
- 25% Midterm Examination 2
- 35% Final Examination

Description of Assignments and Grading Policy

-- There are three examinations that will test your knowledge of the course concepts and your ability to think critically about them. Test dates are firm. Only in cases of extreme emergency should students expect that a make-up will be warranted. In any event, students should contact me before the due date to let me know if they are unable to fulfill a class requirement.

-- The small project will be discussed in class at further length. It consists of a short interview and write-up, worth 10% of your final grade. The due date for the project is listed in the syllabus. I expect the assignments to be handed in on time. Late assignments will be penalized a third of a letter grade (-3% of project grade) per day late.

-- I expect you to arrive on time, prepared to discuss the reading material assigned for the day. Because we are engaged in an ongoing discussion, it is important that we maintain a fruitful learning environment with minimal distraction. Periodically (7 times throughout the course), I will administer a pop quiz. These quizzes will be taken directly from the previous day's lecture. It will be very difficult to pass these quizzes if you were not present for the previous lecture. The lowest two quizzes will be dropped from your grade at the end of the semester. The 5 quizzes that remain will account for 5% of your final grade.

-- Course readings are all required. Online readings are accessible either through Blackboard or a *url* that can be found on this syllabus, and should be read prior to the day they are assigned. All the reading material, as well as lecture and discussion matter, will be fair game for examination.

-- Blackboard will be updated regularly with new course information and those notes from lecture I wish to make readily available for downloading. Please be sure to check it often.

Plagiarism/Cheating

Those found to have cheated in the class will receive an automatic failing grade for the assignment or test in question, which may result in a failing grade for the course.

Grade Breakdown

Letter Grades (% Range)	
A (90-100%)	Student demonstrates an excellent understanding of the course concepts and communicates clearly their larger significance. Student has engaged fully with the readings and the result is a cogent and thoughtful response / paper.
B (80-90%)	Student has engaged with the readings and demonstrates an ability to apply them to his/her answers or writing, but demonstration of the larger significance of the response is lacking; less thoughtful.
C (70-80%)	Student demonstrates a working knowledge of the course material, but response does not provide evidence of critical engagement with the readings; not demonstrably thoughtful.
D (60-70%)	Student does not demonstrate an adequate mastery of the course material and readings.
F (Below 60%)	Student demonstrates little understanding of course concepts and readings.

Students with Disabilities

It is the policy of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock to create inclusive learning environments. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion or to accurate assessment of achievement—such as time-limited exams, inaccessible web content, or the use of non-captioned videos—please notify the instructor as soon as possible. Students are also welcome to contact the Disability Resource Center, telephone 501-569-3143 (v/tty). For more information, visit the DRC website at <http://ualr.edu/disability/>.

Reading Schedule

***The order of readings in the syllabus is subject to change. Please check the course website regularly for announcements.

Week 0 8/19 Introductions

Week 1 8/24 Knowledge and Authority

A. Danziger (Ch.1)

B. “We Are Iran: The Persian Blogs”¹ Nasirin Alavi

8/26 Doing Political Science

A. Danziger (Ch.1 continued)

B. Online Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave”

http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~wldciv/world_civ_reader/world_civ_reader_1/plato.html

<u>Week 2</u>	8/31	Political Beliefs A. Danziger (Ch.2) B. Assessing Belief Systems – Project 1
	9/2	Socialization A. Danziger (Ch.4)
<u>Week 3</u>	9/7	Individual Political Behavior Danziger (Ch.3)
	9/9	Group Political Action A. Collective Action Problem: A Game and Some Solutions
<u>Week 4</u>	9/14	States and Nations in Conflict A. Danziger (Ch.5) B. <u>Blackboard</u> “Nation and Nationalism: The Misuse of Key Concepts in Political Science”² L. W. Barrington.
	9/16	Midterm Review A. Belief System Project Due
<u>Week 5</u>	9/21	Midterm Examination #1
	9/23	The Political System A. Danziger (Ch.5 continued) B. <u>Blackboard</u> “An Approach to the Analysis of Political Systems”³ David Easton
<u>Week 6</u>	9/28	Political Structures and Representation A. Danziger (Ch.6, second half of Ch.7 starting on pg. 186) <u>Blackboard</u> “Women in Power: From Tokenism to Critical Mass”⁴ Jane S. Jacquette
	9/30	Distribution of Power A. Danziger (Ch.7, pp. 170-85) B. Iran: A Discussion

- Week 7 10/5 Who Gets What, When, How
 A. Danziger (Ch.9)
- 10/7 Political Violence
 A. Danziger (Ch. 12)
- Week 8 10/12 Political Economy
 A. Danziger (Ch.8)
- 10/14 Midterm Review
- Week 9 10/19 **Midterm Examination #2**
- 10/21 Economic and Political Development
 A. Danziger (Ch.10)
- B. Online “The True Clash of the Civilizations”⁵ Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris
<http://ksghome.harvard.edu/~pnorris/ Acrobat/Inglehart%20Foreign%20Policy.pdf>
- Week 10 10/26 Politics Between States
 A. Danziger (Ch.11)
- 10/28 Globalization and Atomization
 B. Online “Jihad vs. McWorld”⁶ Benjamin Barber
<http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/199203/barber>
- Week 11 11/2 The Developed Countries
 A. Danziger (Ch.13)
- 11/4 The Developing Countries
 Danziger (Ch.14)
- Week 12 11/9 Democracy in the Post-Communist Countries
 A. Danziger (Ch.15)
- 11/11 Technology and Democratic Development
 A. Exploring “The Digital Divide”
- Week 13 11/16 Political, Economic, and Technological Development

A. Simon et al. (Chs. 1, 2)

11/18 Toward Technocracy?

A. Simon et al. (Chs. 3, 4)

Week 14

11/23 TBA

11/25 **NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING BREAK**

Week 15

11/30 Designing Democratic Websites

A. A Look at New Citizen Politics

12/2 Final Review

***Consult Online Schedule for Final Examination Date and Time**

References for Online Readings

¹ The Sun, April 2006, Issue 364 (pp. 13-21)

² *PS: Political Science and Politics* 30(4):712-716.

³ *World Politics* 9(3):383-400.

⁴ *Foreign Policy* 1997.

⁵ *Foreign Policy* May/June 2003

⁶ *The Atlantic Monthly* March, 1992.