

INTRODUCTION TO POLITICS

Centre Room 9, Lecture Centre, TR 9:00–10:25 am
rock.edu; x7215

2-V, Hall College
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This course explores the concept, domain and discipline of politics. We will engage with various attempts to define and determine the nature, form, content and extent of “the political.” In doing so, we may be able to get to the tense and conflicting sources of our own current understandings of politics, its subjects and its objects. It is important to remember that the course does not take any of the assigned readings as the final word on the topic. Rather, we will visit each featured thinker as agnostics and critics, assessing his/her approach, definitions and arguments, earnestly working with and through them over the course of the semester to (1) become fluent in basic concepts and terms at work, and (2) to come up with our own speculations about what constitutes the political; when, where and how politics happens; what it means to think, ask, and act politically; and what being a student of politics may entail. It is my hope that this “introductory” course will err more on the side of questions rather than answers—even if only to show that studying and thinking politics requires an ability to submit to the fullness of a situation, to ask good questions, and to be patient and humble in the absence of clear-cut answers. In this way, we may equip ourselves with some of the conceptual, experiential, and analytical tools to be put to use in our subsequent engagements with the study, activity, and experience of politics.

TEXTS

Required

Heywood, Andrew. *Key Concepts in Politics*.

This text will serve as a handbook for the course. It will be used along with every reading, and will be our source for all definitions and conceptual clarifications. Let's say it will be your dictionary for the semester.

Weber, Max. *The Vocation Lectures*.

Schmitt, Carl. *The Concept of the Political*

Norton, Anne. *95 Theses on Politics, Culture and Method*

Strong, Tracy. *The Idea of Political Theory*

Optional

(required parts of these have been placed on electronic reserve)

Crick, Bernard. *In Defence of Politics*

Gamble, Andrew. *Politics and Fate*

Other required and suggested readings beyond the above-mentioned books have been placed on electronic reserve, and are detailed in the reading schedule that follows.

EXPECTATIONS & REQUIREMENTS

Attendance and Preparation

Much of what we will read and write on is *probably* a bit different from stuff you have dealt with before. That should not make this course ominous or any more intimidating than it needs to be—it should free you up in so many ways to have fun, experiment, and develop new relationships and ways of relating. I do realise, however, that some form of guidelines will be helpful, and I will post them on the course website a day in advance of the scheduled reading.

You are required to attend class having done the assigned reading for the day. Please bring the text to class.

Active class participation is not only required, it is expected. The point is not to have understood everything before coming to class—your treasure is the questions, difficulties and issues that arise from what is read, because they eventually determine what course the class will take. So, try to have as many of those as possible when you come to class.

Yes, the class begins at 9:00 am—which may be no fun for many of you. However, I am required to follow the college attendance policy, which should keep you from being tardy and skipping class just for the fun of it. Two unexcused absences will earn you an official warning. Three unexcused absences shall result in suspension. You must not be absent on the days you are the resource person, for that will automatically get you an F on that part of the course requirements. Presence and participation are worth much in the total grade, so even absences within the 3-absence limit may cost you unless you make every effort to keep abreast of the goings on in your absence through classmates and myself, and make up for participation opportunities lost.

Resource-Person Responsibilities

Every student will be the resource person, on her/his own or with a partner, for one section of the readings. Resource-persons (or let's come up with a better title!) will be those to whom we shall turn for clarification of some concepts and the background material for a particular thinker or reading. I will work with each of you in advance to work the details out.

Written Work

There are two components of your written assignments for this course.

First, you will keep a journal throughout the semester to be handed in to me at the beginning of every week. The journal will contain your responses to, and reflections on the readings. This entails, among other things, keeping a glossary of newly-encountered terms, connections you made, and questions that occurred to you as you read. This will also be your way of communicating to me what is working or not for you, so we can work out the rough edges of the course, and do more of what seems to work better! Afterall, your investment in this course will determine your preparedness for future classes in politics, and also contribute to directions in which we may be able to collectively take the course. One highlight of the journal will be a review of a book or film we will discuss in class.

Second, there will be tests. There will be a midterm the day before the end of the first module, and a final (paper or take-home exam) due at the end of the semester.

For course policies on Academic Honesty and Religious Holidays, please refer to the SRC Catalogue, pp. 31-33. For issues of learning skills, and subsequent accommodations, please get in touch with me, and also contact Rebecca Fiske (rebecca@simons-rock.edu).

A sketch of your grade composition

Participation and Resource-Person Role	20%
Written work	80%
Journal + Review	30%
Mid-Term Test	20%
Final Exam	30%

CLASS SCHEDULE

* All readings marked with an asterisk are on electronic reserve. The rest are available at the Hart Bookstore.

The instructor reserves the right to modify the syllabus—you will be consulted for, and informed of, changes made.

Tuesday, 23 August	Breaking Ice
Thursday, 25 August	Weber, Max. "Introduction," pp. ix-xix; "Politics as a Vocation," pp. 32-53
Tuesday, 30 August	Weber. "Politics as a Vocation," pp. 53-94
Thursday, 1 September	NO CLASS (Work out arrangement for make-up class)
Tuesday, 6 September	Weber. "Introduction," pp. xxxiv-lxii
Thursday, 8 September	Schmitt, Carl. "Foreword" and "Introduction"
Tuesday, 13 September	Schmitt. Sections 1, 2, 3
Thursday, 15 September	Schmitt. Sections 4, 5, 6
Tuesday, 20 September	Schmitt. Sections 7,8
Thursday, 22 September	*Crick, Bernard. "Preface" and Chapter One, "The Nature of Political Rule"
Tuesday, 27 September	*Crick. Chapter Seven, "In Praise of Politics"
Thursday, 29 September	*Gamble, Andrew. "Preface," and Chapter One, "Fate"
Tuesday, 4 October	*Gamble. Chapter Six, "Politics"
Thursday, 6 October	Last Day of First Module
	Mid-term Test
Tuesday, 11 October	NO CLASS—Fall Break
Thursday, 13 October	NO CLASS—Fall Break
Tuesday, 18 October	*Frohock, Fred. "The Structure of Politics"
Thursday, 20 October	*Laver, Michael. <i>Playing Politics</i> . Chapters One and Thirteen

Tuesday, 25 October	*Friedman, Jeffrey. "Introduction: Economic Approaches to Politics" in <i>The Rational Choice Controversy</i> . pp. 1-24
Thursday, 27 October	*Gamson, William & Andre Modigliani. "Thinking About Politics"
Tuesday, 1 November	*Wallerstein, Immanuel. "Historical Origins of World-Systems Analysis: From Social Science Disciplines to Historical Social Sciences" in <i>World Systems Analysis</i>
Thursday, 3 November	* "APSA Presidents Reflect on the Discipline"
Tuesday, 8 November	* "APSA Presidents Reflect on the Discipline" (contd.)
Thursday, 10 November	*Gibbons. Michael (ed.) <i>Interpreting Politics</i> . "Introduction: The Politics of Interpretation," pp. 1-14
Tuesday, 15 November	*Gibbons. pp. 15-28
Thursday, 17 November	Norton, Anne. <i>95 Theses on Politics, Culture and Method</i> (Selections TBA)
Tuesday, 22 November	NO CLASS—Thanksgiving Break
Thursday, 24 November	NO CLASS—Thanksgiving Break
Tuesday, 29 November	Norton. (contd.) <i>Book Review Due</i>
Thursday, 1 December	Strong, Tracy. "Political Theory and Crisis" in <i>The Idea of Political Theory</i> . (selections TBA)
Tuesday, 3 December	Strong. "Political Theory and the Parochial"
Tuesday, 6 December	Review
Thursday, 8 December	Review
Thursday, 15 December	Final Exam or Final Paper due.