Introduction to Political Science

Course Code: POL 101
Recommended Study Year: First Year
No. of Credits/Term: 3
Mode of Tuition: Lecture-Tutorial
Class Contact Hours: 3
Category in Major Program: Required Course
Discipline: Political Science
Prerequisite: None

Aims:

This course is a general survey of the field of political science. Students are not required to have any background in the discipline and, in fact, the course is designed to introduce some basic concepts and approaches in political science. POL 101 is important in the sense that it provides the foundation for future studies in the field.

The course aims to introduce students to the basic concepts in the study of politics. It intends to promote students’ appreciation of the role of politics in daily life and why it is important to get involved in exercising their responsibilities and duties as a global citizen.

Learning Outcomes:

On completing this course, students should be able to critically analyze political processes and evaluate events in local, national and international politics. They are also expected to be able to compare and contrast various political ideologies and forms of government and governance.

Teaching Method:

This course consists of lectures and tutorials. One or several specific topic(s) will be discussed in each lecture. Students should follow the order of the topics as listed in the course outline and prepare the readings. You are advised to have the relevant readings done before attending the lectures. Keeping up with the readings, especially from the main course textbook, is essential for achieving the learning objectives of this course. Tutorials will be used to reinforce the learning from the lectures and your readings.

You will also find it helpful to regularly read a quality newspaper or watch television news broadcasts, as we hope to connect real-world events to the themes and ideas raised in the textbook and the lectures.
Measurement of Learning Outcomes:

Student performance during discussions, presentations and tutorials; performance on the midterm and final examinations.

Assessment:

You are required to make presentations (or other forms of contributions) as well as to participate actively in the group discussions in the tutorials. Details will be provided later. The performance in the tutorials will determine part of a student's final grade in the course (30%): attendance (10%) + presentation and class performance (20%).

There is a mid-term examination as part of the continuous assessment (20%). The mid-term will be held on October 23 (Tuesday) in class. The last part of the grade is a final examination (50%), which will test your understanding of the whole course's material.

Required/Essential Readings: (* put on reserve in the library)


Recommended/Supplementary Readings:


Indicative Content:

1. Introduction: what is politics and what can we do through learning politics? (Roskin, ch. 1; Shively, ch. 1)

2. Political concepts: power, authority, legitimacy, sovereignty, political system, regime, law and constitution (Roskin, ch. 1, ch. 17, pp. 319-23, ch. 4, pp. 56-63; Lawson, ch. 2) 

3. Nation-state and government: origins, purposes, functions and forms (Roskin, chs. 3, 13; Shively, chs. 3, 4, 5; Zeigler, chs 1, 2; Lipson, chs 2, 3)

4. Major political ideologies: conservatism, liberalism, socialism and fascism (Roskin, ch. 6; Lawson, ch. 3; Levine, chs. 4, 5)

5. Political socialization and political culture (Roskin, ch. 7; Lawson, ch. 5; Ranney, ch. 3)

6. Machinery and process of government: (Roskin, ch. 5; Ranney, ch. 5; Lipson, ch. 9)

   a. Democratic government - presidential and parliamentary government; separation of powers and check and balance in practice (Roskin, ch. 14, pp. 256-270, ch. 15; Lawson, ch. 9, 10; Zeigler, ch. 4; Lipson, ch. 10; Ranney, chs. 11, 12; Levine, ch. 11)

   b. Authoritarian government - traditional monarchy, personal dictatorship, military regime and others (Zeigler, ch. 7; Lipson, ch. 8)
7. Major political actors and actions: political parties and party systems, interest groups, voting and other forms of political participation, electoral systems (Roskin, chs. 10, 11, 12, 13; Lawson, chs. 7, 8; Zeigler, chs. 5, 6; Ranney, chs. 8, 10; Levine, chs. 8, 9)

8. International Relations and Globalization -- the actors, environment, and activities
   (I.R.- Roskin, chs. 20, 21; Kegley and Wittkopf, ch. 2; Holsti, chs. 1, 2; Goldstein, chs. 8, 9; Globalization - Clark, 1999, chs. 1,2; Spero and Hart, 2003, chs. 1, 11; Steger, 2002, chs. 1, 3)

Tutorial Questions

The following questions are some guidelines for discussions, presentations and/or debates in the tutorials. The format of conducting the tutorials will be different from week to week. I will lead the discussions in the first 5 weeks. In the latter 5 weeks, I will assign you responsibilities to conduct the tutorials, making presentations, carrying out debates and/or leading discussions. Each presentation is limited to no more than 8 minutes. Details will be given in class.

You should be aware that discussions in the tutorials are not just limited to the following questions. In fact, any issues regarding politics and interest you could be raised and discussed in the tutorial sessions.

All the discussions and presentations will be graded and counted as part of your class performance (20%).

Sept. 12 – Sept. 13
1. Explaining and assignment of presentation/debate topics. Free discussion on any topics so far covered in the lectures.

Sept. 19 – Sept. 20
2. What is the difference between change of authority and change of sovereignty? Also, what are the consequences of changing a constitution and change of legitimacy. Illustrate with the Hong Kong case and the Iraqi case as examples. (discussion)

Oct. 3 – Oct. 4
3. “Federalism is better than unitary system.” Argue whether this statement is true or not? (discussion)

Oct. 10 – Oct. 11
4. Discuss the differences between liberalism and conservatism from the perspective of the proper role of government. (discussion)
Oct. 24 – Oct. 25
5. What is the Marxist interpretation on the relationship between politics and economics? (discussion)

Oct. 31 – Nov. 1
6. Analyze your own political orientation and then analyze the sources (agents) of political socialization. (presentation)

Nov. 7 – Nov. 8
7. Who is more powerful: a president in the United States or a prime minister in Britain? Why? (debate)

Nov. 14 – Nov. 15
8. “Authoritarian rule is necessary for economic development in the developing countries.” Do you agree with the above statement? Why or why not? (presentation)

Nov. 21 – Nov. 22
9. “Party competition is a prerequisite for the working out of democracy.” Do you agree with the statement? Why or why not? (debate)

Nov. 28 – Nov. 29
10. In the district direct election part of the 1995 Legislative Council election, we used a “single-member district system”. Since the 1998 election, we have changed to a “proportional representation”. "The changes of the electoral system has affected the development of party politics in Hong Kong." Do you agree with the statement? (debate)

** September 26th is a public holiday. There is no tutorial on 26th and 27th. October 16th is the Congregation Day. There is no lecture and no tutorials from 16th to 18th in that week.