

POLI 110
Investigating Politics: An Introduction to Scientific Political Analysis

Summer 2021, Term 1 (May 10 – June 17)

Monday and Wednesday, 9:00am-12:00pm (Pacific Daylight Time)

Course Description and Learning Outcomes

This course prepares students to engage with the field of political science by introducing them to the basic logic and tools used by political scientists to understand and explain the political world. The course will teach students how political scientists ask questions; how we define key political concepts; how we formulate hypotheses and theories about political dynamics; how we measure the phenomena we want to study; how we think about and assess relationships of cause-and-effect; and how to communicate about these issues clearly and precisely. We will consider these issues by examining how political scientists have investigated major questions in domestic and international affairs, including the nature of political power, the causes and consequences of socioeconomic inequality, the dynamics of redistributive conflict, and what brings about popular mobilizations and social revolutions.

Acknowledgement

The University of British Columbia's point Grey Campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Musqueam people. The land it is situated on has always been a place of learning for the Musqueam people, who for millennia have passed on their culture, history, and traditions from one generation to the next on this site.

Course Format and Class Meetings

Lectures will be held via Zoom. You will be able to find the link on the Canvas home page. While lectures will be recorded and will be available on Canvas after each class along with the slides, **this course puts a strong emphasis on in-class activities and live interaction during lectures. Hence, attendance is crucial to maximize learning (and grade). It is thus strongly encouraged and it is worth 10% of your final grade** (see “Grading and Assessed Course Work” below).

Attendance will be taken, usually right at the outset, via Top Hat. While much of teaching in these sessions will be lecture-based, you also will be regularly asked questions in class that require a response via Top Hat and will participate in short group discussions and in-class assignments. Your participation in these activities will also be marked (see “Grading and Assessed Course Work” below).

To avoid disruption during class, please keep your mic muted unless I have invited you to speak. Whether or not you want to show yourself in video is completely optional. I will monitor the chat window open during class. Feel free to comment or ask questions as you see fit, with the proviso that you keep it at least vaguely germane and avoid offensive or otherwise inappropriate remarks.

Required Readings, Top Hat, and Course Webpage

Readings

There is no textbook for this course. All required readings are available via the course’s Canvas page under “Files”. I will also occasionally provide direct links to publicly available online materials. All readings must be completed *prior to* the lecture with which they are assigned (see “Dates, Topics, and Readings” below).

Top Hat

Part of your mark for the course will be based on your attendance and participation in lecture using Top Hat. **We will begin using Top Hat starting Lecture 2 (Wednesday May 12).** To use Top Hat, you need a login and a course “join code” (in this case 832522). Joining the class should be free as the software is provided by UBC.

Here are the steps for signing on to this course on Top Hat:

1. Go to <https://tophat.com/>
2. Click on Login if you have an existing account or **Sign-up > Student sign-up**
3. Click on the **Search by School** link at the bottom
4. Enter the University of British Columbia
5. When you are met with the join code field, enter **832522**

Course Webpage

There is a course webpage for POLI 110 on Canvas. You can log in with your CWL username and password. I will use this page to post important course documents (readings, syllabus, assignments, lecture slides etc.) throughout the term. You will also be instructed to use this system to upload your written assignments.

Emails with course announcements, details on required readings and other important information will often be sent to registered students via Canvas. It is your responsibility to make sure that the email address you have registered with UBC is valid and to check your email at this address regularly so that you do not miss these announcements.

Grading and Assessed Course Work

Assignment	Date/Due Date	Percentage of Overall Grade
Lecture attendance and participation via Top Hat	Each lecture (starting May 12)	10%
In-class assignments	Within 24 hours from the end of each lecture (starting May 12)	10%
Homework (4 assignments)	At 9am on May 17, May 24, June 9, June 16	25% (6.25% each)
Midterm exam	May 26	25%
Final Examination	Date and Time to be Set by Registrar	30%

Lecture Attendance and Participation via Top Hat (10%)

Lecture attendance will be taken via Top Hat starting Lecture 2 on May 12. Also, in most lectures, you will be asked to answer a number of questions using Top Hat. Your mark does **not** depend on whether you get the answers right. The questions are exercises to provoke discussion and learning. However, **to get credit for participation at a given lecture, you must be present at the lecture and input responses to all questions** using your own device (phone, tablet, or computer).

In-Class Assignments (10%)

Every lecture, starting on Lecture 2 on May 12, we will have in-class assignments to do in groups during the last section of our classes. They will work as a substitute for the weekly tutorials. **These assignments must be submitted on Canvas by the end of the class** or within 24 hours after the class for those taking the course in a different time zone. They will be marked as complete or incomplete and they will account for 10% of your overall grade.

Midterm (25%) and Final Examination (30%)

There are two exams. The exams will test you on material in the lectures and readings for the weeks that they cover (as indicated here):

- 1. Midterm Exam (May 26).** This midterm will assess material covered in Weeks 1 and 2 (from May 10 to May 19) and will be worth **25% of your overall grade.**
- 2. Final Exam (Date and Time to be Set by Registrar).** The Final Exam will assess all the course content and it will be worth **30% of your overall grade.**

Homework (4 x 6.25% = 25%)

There will be 4 homework assignments during this semester. **Homework assignments are due at 9am on May 17, May 24, June 9, June 16** and are to be submitted on Canvas. Assignments submitted after the deadline will be penalized (see “Late Assignments” below).

The Homework assignments are intended to help you work through the material presented in lecture and in course readings by applying key concepts, arguments, and methods to real-world political issues. Further instructions will be provided in class and will be included in homework guidelines.

For each assignment, you will choose one topic discussed in one of the following 5 collections of articles on The Guardian’s website. The articles tagged under each topic provide a wealth of information about a major political or policy issue in the world today. You are welcome to choose different topics for different homework assignments, or to use the same topic repeatedly: it is entirely up to you. You must choose from one of the following 5 topics:

Climate Change

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/climate-change>

Coronavirus

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/coronavirus-outbreak>

US Labor

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/us-unions>

US Immigration

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/usimmigration>

US Police

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/us-police>

Late Assignments, Missed Examinations, and Regrading

Late Assignments

Late assignments will incur penalties, except in the event of a documented serious illness or serious personal emergency (see “Accommodations for Emergency Situations” below).

- Homework:
 - The loss of half credit for assignments turned in within the first 24 hours after the time they are due
 - No credit for assignments turned in more than 24 hours late

- In-Class Assignments:

- Assignments turned in more than 24 hours after the end of class will be counted as incomplete

Missed Examinations

Missed examinations will result in a grade of zero except in the event of a documented illness or emergency (see “Accommodation for Emergency Situations” below).

Regrading Appeals

Requests for regrading must be submitted **after a cooling off period of 24 hours and no later than 72 hours after the assignment or exam has been returned.** The request must be supported by a detailed written explanation of why you think the grading was unfair and should be sent to the TA. If, after receiving the feedback from the TA, you want a second review, you are welcome to email your request to the instructor. However, once you submit your work for regrading to the instructor, your grade can go either up or down.

Accommodations

Accommodations for Emergency Situations

Students who need additional time for an assignment or will miss an exam for a medical or serious personal reason **must contact me before the due date or exam date and as soon as the problem arises.** Requests for accommodation made after an assignment’s due date or after the missed exam, tutorial, or lecture will not generally be considered.

Please note that accommodations will not be made for foreseeable circumstances, such as having multiple papers due in the same week, or multiple exams on a given day. **Accommodations are reserved for unforeseeable events that are outside a student’s control** (e.g., illness, a death in the family). When there is a difficult situation that is foreseeable, it is your responsibility to organize your work for this course so that you can nonetheless turn in the assignment on time.

Due date extensions will usually not be granted for work lost due to computer crashes or the loss of a computer file. The reason for this is that there are simple and free ways of regularly and automatically backing up your work. It is recommended that all students subscribe to an automatic online backup service (many of which are free). These services will ensure that your files are backed up to a remote server at least once a day. Some services even backup the current version of your work every time you hit “Save.” Thus, even if your computer dies, there is no reason you should not be able to retrieve a quite current copy of your work.

The University also accommodates students whose religious obligations conflict with attendance, submitting assignments, or completing scheduled tests and examinations. Please let me know in advance, preferably in the first week of class, if you will require any accommodation on these grounds. Students who know in advance that they will have difficulty completing assignments

because of varsity athletics, family obligations, or other similar commitments, cannot assume that they will be accommodated, and should discuss their commitments with me before the course drop date.

Read the university calendar so that you are aware of no-penalty drop dates, requirements for medical authorization (to defer an exam, for example) and other procedures that may affect you: <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?page=deadlines>

Accommodations for Students with Medical Conditions or Disabilities

Students with medical conditions or disabilities, please contact the [Centre for Accessibility](#) at UBC in order to arrange appropriate accommodations. Please, inform me of any arrangements a minimum of two weeks before due dates or examinations.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism, cheating and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Plagiarism is defined by the presentation or submission of the work of another person, without proper citation or credits, as the student's own work. Punishment for cheating or plagiarism will result in a grade of zero and other disciplinary measures, following the University's Academic Calendar (<http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,960>).

For further information on how to acknowledge all source of information and avoid plagiarism, please, visit the following site: <http://www.library.ubc.ca/home/plagiarism/>

Dates, Topics, and Readings

Mon, May 10 **Course Structure and Introduction: What is Social Science?**

Wed, May 12 **Types of Questions and Claims (Prescriptive/Descriptive/Causal)**

- *Readings:*
 - “Distinguishing between Normative and Empirical Statements”. On Canvas (under “Files”)

Mon, May 17 **Causality and Types of Causal Claims**

- *Readings:*
 - “Causality: Counterfactuals, Deterministic Claims, and Probabilistic Claims.” On Canvas (under “Files”)

- “General and Specific Knowledge in the Social Sciences.” On Canvas (under “Files”)
- Wikipedia entry: [Causes of the French Revolution](#)
- Wikipedia entry: [Russian Revolution](#) (“Background” section only)

- **Homework 1 “Types of Claims” DUE at 9am**

Wed, May 19 **Causality and Causal Logics**

- *Readings:*
 - “Causal Logics.” On Canvas (under “Files”)

Mon, May 24 **VICTORIA DAY: NO CLASS**

- **Homework 2 “Causal Claims” DUE at 9am**

Wed, May 26 **MIDTERM**

Mon, May 31 **From Concepts to Variables to Measures**

- *Readings:*
 - Serhan, Yasmeeen. “Does Anyone Know What Populism Means?” *The Atlantic*. March 13, 2020. On Canvas (under “Files”)

Wed, June 2 **Challenges of Measurement and Sampling**

- *Readings:*
 - “Measurement Error.” On Canvas (under “Files”)

Mon, June 7 **Covariation as a Means of Assessing Causation**

- *Readings:*
 - Norris, Floyd. “The Super Bowl Predicts the Market, and Vice Versa.” *The New York Times*. January 24, 1997. On Canvas (under “Files”)

Wed, June 9 **Why Covariation Doesn’t Always Mean Causation**

- *Readings:*
 - Levitt, Steven D. and Stephen J. Dubner. 2006. *Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything*. New York: William Morrow. ONLY pp. 161-176. On Canvas (under “Files”)

- **Homework 3 “Measurement Bias” DUE at 9am**

Mon, June 14 **Process Tracing and Reasoning with Evidence**

- *Readings:*
 - Doyle, A.C. “The Silver Blaze.” <https://classic-literature.co.uk/a-c-doyle-the-adventure-of-the-silver-blaze-sherlock-holmes/>

Wed, June 16 **Research Ethics and Conclusion**

- **Homework 4 “The Trouble With Correlation” DUE at 9am**

FINAL EXAM DATE TBA