

# POLI 110 - Investigating Politics: An Introduction to Scientific Political Analysis

*2016-2017 Term I (M-W-F 2PM-3PM)*

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## **1. Overview and Objectives**

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 answerable 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 we report our findings to the world. We will consider these issues by examining how political scientists have investigated major questions in domestic and international affairs, such as why some countries are poor and others rich, whether international intervention can bring about democracy, and how citizens arrive at their vote choice.

## **2. Immediate To-Do List**

Many details of the course are explained below. Before going any further, however, we provide a checklist of the things that you want to be sure you have done before the end of Week 1 to ensure that you are ready to fully participate in the course.

- Read this syllabus carefully and ask any questions you have (in person or via email)
- Purchase POLI 110 course pack from UBC Bookstore
- Subscribe to Learning Catalytics (12\$ for 6 months)
- Register for a discussion (tutorial) section (tutorials begin in Week 2)
- Ensure that Student Services has your current email address on file

## **3. How this works**

Your attendance at Monday, Wednesday, Friday lectures (2pm-3pm) is mandatory. 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 Learning Catalytics. Your participation in these in-class question-and-answer sessions will also be marked and be used to assess attendance.

The course also includes a weekly tutorial, starting in Week 2, led by your teaching assistant in which your attendance and participation is required. See the section below on “Grading and Assessed Coursework” for further details on the grading of tutorial attendance and participation.

## **4. Grading and Assessed Course Work**

### **4.1. Exams (45%)**

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

#### **4.1.1. Midterm (October 17th)**

This midterm will assess material covered in Weeks 1 through 6 and will be worth **20% of your overall mark**.

#### **4.1.2. Final Exam (Date and Time to be Set by Registrar)**

The Final Exam will be worth **25% of your overall grade**.

#### **4.2. Lecture attendance and participation via Learning Catalytics (15%)**

Lecture attendance will be taken via Learning Catalytics (LC). Also, in most lectures, you will be asked to answer one or more questions using LC. **15% of your mark** for POLI 110 will depend on a combination of your attendance and your participation in lectures. 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). Each student is permitted 2 unexcused missed lectures. (See below for policy on missed class sessions.)

For some of the LC exercises, you will be asked first to discuss the question with 2-3 people sitting near you, and only then to register your answer with LC. Lecture attendance and participation will each be marked, separately, on the following principle (with attendance and participation calculated after dropping up to 2 unexcused absences):

- 100% attendance = A (87) for lecture attendance
- 100% LC participation = A (87) for lecture participation
- Each lecture absence = loss of 4 points from lecture attendance grade
- Each lecture without LC participation = loss of 4 points from lecture participation grade
- A lecture absence automatically counts as missed LC participation for that lecture

#### **4.3. Weekly Tutorial (15%) - STARTING IN WEEK 2**

Attendance and active participation in the weekly tutorial led by your teaching assistant is required and will be worth a total of **15% of your overall grade**. You will be allowed one unexcused absence from tutorial during the term. (See policies on missed class sessions below.)

In general, tutorials will address and expand upon the topic that was covered the previous week in lecture. Prior to each tutorial, you must have carefully read all required readings for the previous week's topic. Tutorials are discussion-based. Your Tutorial Attendance and Participation mark will be based not just on whether you show up to tutorial but also whether you actively participate in discussions in a constructive manner. Your participation should reflect solid preparation – having attended lectures, done the required readings, thought about the material and done your best to understand it, and made a serious effort on the homework assignment (if one was assigned for that week). Note that constructive participation can include not only providing thoughtful answers to questions posed by your TA but also asking questions about material that you have struggled to understand. This means that, before coming to tutorial, you should think carefully about what you do not understand about the concepts and issues covered in lectures and readings and try to formulate your questions as clearly as you can.

**NOTE:** If a statutory holiday falls on the regular meeting day of your tutorial section, you must still attend tutorial that week on a different day. It is your responsibility to choose an alternative tutorial to attend and to give the TA teaching that section your name and student number when you arrive, so that you receive credit for attendance.

Tutorial attendance will each be marked on the following principle (with attendance calculated after dropping up to 1 unexcused tutorial absence):

- 100% attendance = A (87) for attendance grade
- Each tutorial absence = loss of 8 points from tutorial attendance grade
- A tutorial absence automatically also counts as no participation for that tutorial

Tutorial participation will be marked based on both how regularly you participate in tutorial discussions and on the quality of that participation. We do not expect each student to make several comments in each session. However, achieving a high participation mark will typically mean participating at least once or twice in each session. The quality of comments or questions (do they reflect solid preparation, thoughtful engagement with the material, etc.) is as important as the quantity of participation.

#### **4.4. Homework Assignment (5 x 5% = 25%)**

There will be 5 Homework assignments. All Homework assignments are due Monday at 9am, the week after they are distributed. They must be submitted electronically BOTH on the Connect course website AND to turnitin.com. 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 realworld political issues.

For each assignment, you will choose one topic discussed in one of the following 5 “card stacks” from the public affairs website vox.com. Each card stack provides 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 6 card stacks:

- ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria)
- Donald Trump’s run for the Presidency
- Marijuana Legalization
- Same-sex marriage
- The Trans-Pacific Partnership Trade Deal
- Fracking

**AGAIN: All homework assignments must be submitted both on Connect and to turnitin.com or they will not receive a mark.**

Key to Assessed Course Components

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Date / Due Date</b>	<b>Percentage of Overall Grade</b>
Tutorial Attendance and participation	Weekly (Weeks 2 - 13)	15%
Lecture attendance and participation via LC	All Lectures	15%
Homework (5 assignments)	Monday, 9am, the week after assignment is distributed	25% (5% each)
Midterm exam	October 17th (in class)	20%
Final exam	Exam Period Date and Time to be Set by Registrar	25%

## **5. Administrative Issues, Missed Class, Course policy**

### **5.1. Missing class sessions**

Each student is allowed 2 unexcused lecture absences and 1 unexcused tutorial absence without any mark deduction; there is no need to provide a reason to your TA or instructor for absences within this limit. However, missing additional lectures or tutorials will result in a deduction from your lecture participation or tutorial attendance/participation mark.

### **5.2. Late assignments**

Late Homework assignments will incur penalties, except in the event of a documented serious illness or serious personal emergency (see section on Accommodation below). Each Homework assignment is worth 5 points of your total course grade:

- The loss of half credit (2.5 points off out of 5) 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 Missed examinations will result in a grade of zero except in the event of a documented illness or emergency.

### **Accommodation for emergency situations**

Students who need additional time for an assignment or will miss a lecture, tutorial, or exam for a medical or serious personal reason must contact their Teaching Assistant (not

the course instructor) before the due date or exam/lecture/tutorial 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. Some documentation, such as a doctor's note, will usually be required to make accommodation.

For tutorials missed for an emergency, the first form of accommodation that we will offer you is the opportunity to attend another tutorial section on a different day in the same week. (There is no point attending two the following week because all tutorials in the same week cover the same topic.) Note that you must still notify your TA and the TA of the alternate section (in case they are different) to let them know about the switch. We will fully excuse a missed tutorial week only where it is not possible for you to attend an alternative session in that week.

Please note that accommodations will not be made for foreseeable circumstances, such as having multiple papers due in the same week. 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.

### **5.3. Other Accommodations**

The University accommodates students with disabilities who have registered with the Disability Resource Centre. 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.

### **5.4. Cheating and Plagiarism**

Academic dishonesty in the form of cheating or plagiarism will not be tolerated. The University considers plagiarism to be the most serious academic offence that a student can commit. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to the presentation or submission of the

work of another person, without citation or credits, as the student's own work. Whether intentional or accidental, instances of plagiarism will have serious academic consequences.

In my experience, many students who believe they know what plagiarism is do not actually have a clear understanding of where the line between proper and improper use of sources lies. I thus strongly encourage you to read the UBC library's excellent online resources. If you have any doubts about how and when to properly acknowledge another person's work, please discuss these with the course instructor. Punishment for cheating or plagiarism will include a grade of zero and other disciplinary action. Please refer to the University policies on cheating and plagiarism for examples of what constitutes academic misconduct and the extent of disciplinary action that could be taken.

#### **5.4.1. Turnitin.com**

It is the official policy of the Department of Political Science that all written course work be submitted to turnitin.com to check for possible signs of plagiarism (unless there are exceptional reasons why an assignment should be exempted).

All Homework assignments for this course must be uploaded to turnitin.com by the due date, in addition to being submitted on the course Connect website. Assignments not submitted to turnitin.com will not be marked. Before submitting, you must first visit [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com) to register for a username and password that will allow you to use the system. You then enroll in POLI 110, using details that will be given to you prior to the first homework due date.

Please be assured that results from turnitin.com will never by themselves be used as proof of plagiarism. Instructors merely use these results, along with their own knowledge of writings in the field, to help identify possible cases of plagiarism that they should look at more closely. No student can ever be accused of plagiarism solely on the basis of turnitin.com results.

## **6. Required Texts and Materials**

- **Custom course pack.** The course pack can be purchased at the UBC Bookstore and consists of a compilation of textbook excerpts that are required reading for the course. Unless specified otherwise, all the readings listed in the weekly schedule are available in the course pack. The readings are listed by author's name.
- **Readings available electronically.** As listed below in the detailed syllabus, some required readings for the course are electronically available either on the course website (see section below on the Course Website), through the UBC Library Online Catalogue, or simply through a link on the web. It is your responsibility to download all readings from the appropriate location.
- **Course webpage and emails.** There is a course webpage for POLI 110 on UBC's Connect System. You can log in at [connect.ubc.ca](http://connect.ubc.ca) with your CWL username and password. I will use this page to post important course documents (readings, syllabus, lecture slides, etc.) and send emails to you throughout the term. You will also be

instructed to use this system to post the result of in-class group work and to upload your homework assignments. Lecture slides will be posted after each class.

## **7. Communication with teaching staff**

For any questions or concerns about the course as a whole, please contact me via e-mail or stop by my office hours.

Any questions about the material covered in lectures may be directed to me or to your TA. Questions about the tutorial should be directed to your TAs, whose email addresses are listed on the first page of this syllabus. Your TAs will also hold regular office hours, and further information will be provided in tutorial.

### **Important note regarding emails:**

- Include POLI110 in the subject line.
- I will be answering non-urgent emails once a week, every Friday after lecture (questions about the class, about different topics addressed in class, etc). If your question cannot wait, please contact your TA.

As discussed above, requests for an excused absence from lecture or tutorial, or for an assignment extension, should be addressed to your TA. Emails with course announcements, details on required readings and other important information will often be sent to registered students via the Student Services system. 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.

## **8. Course Schedule and Readings**

### **Part I: Introduction to Social Science**

#### **Topic 1 (Week of Sept. 5th) - Course Structure, Requirements, Objectives and Introduction**

*Readings:*

- Course Syllabus

#### **Topic 2 (Week of Sept. 12th) - What is Social Science**

*Readings:*

- Neuman, pp 2-7 in Course Package.



## **Part II: Causality in the Social Sciences**

### **Topic 3 (Week of Sept. 19th) - Types of Questions and Claims (Prescriptive/Descriptive/Causal)**

*Readings:*

- “Distinguishing between Normative and Empirical Statements” On Course Website (Connect)

### **Topic 4 (Week of Sept. 26th) - Causal Claims: What’s causality?**

*Readings:*

- “Causality: Counterfactuals, Deterministic Claims, and Probabilistic Claims” On Course Website (Connect)

### **Topic 5 (Week of Oct. 3rd) - Types of Causal Claims**

*Readings:*

- “General and Specific Knowledge in the Social Sciences” on Course Website (Connect)

### **Topic 6 (Week of Oct. 10th) - Causal Logics**

*Readings:*

- “Causal Logics” on Course Website (Connect)
- For next week’s tutorial - Rwanda: How the Genocide Happened

OCT 17th MIDTERM EXAM IN CLASS, COVERING TOPICS 1 - 6

## **Part III: Studying Causality Empirically**

### **Topic 7 (Week of Oct. 17th) - Concepts and Measurement**

*Readings:*

- Johnson and Joslyn, pp. 49-53 in Course Package
- Hoover and Donovan, pp. 18-24 in Course Package

### **Topic 8 (Week of Oct. 24th) - Challenges of Measurement and Sampling**

*Readings:*

- Manheim and Rich, pp. 91-95 in Course Package
- “Measurement Error” On Course Website

**Topic 9 (Week of Oct. 31st) - Variables and Hypotheses**

*Readings:*

- Hoover and Donovan, pp. 24-27 in Course Package
- Manheim and Rich, pp. 27-30 in Course Package
- Johnson and Jocelyn, pp. 27-30 in Course Package

**Topic 10 (Week of Nov. 7th) - Covariation as a Means of Assessing Causation**

*Readings:*

- White, pp. 61-65 in Course Package

**Topic 11 (Week of Nov. 14th) - Why Covariation Doesn't Always Mean Causation**

*Readings:*

- Neuman, pp. 98-99 in Course Package
- For Next Week's Tutorial: Levitt and Dubner (Freakonomics), pp. 161-176 in Course Package

**Topic 12 (Week of Nov. 21st) - Process Tracing and Reasoning with Evidence**

*Readings:*

- Arthur Conan Doyle's "Silver Blaze" in Course Package
- Neuman, pp. 68-74 and pp. 78-82 in Course Package
- For Next Week's Tutorial: TBD

**Conclusion (Week of Nov. 28th)**

*Readings:*

- No Reading