



Section 01 (M and W 1735 – 1855, McCain Arts & SS 2102)

General Information

Instructor: Darryl C. Eisan
Telephone: 902.430.7363
E-mail: deisan@dal.ca
Office Hours: Office hours are anytime before or after class

Required or recommended prerequisites

POLI 2210.03/2220.03 or POLI 2300X/Y.06 or instructor's consent

Description

The purpose of this seminar course is to gain a thorough and critical understanding of the American political process. To this end, a series of topics are examined, beginning with the framing of the constitution and concluding with questions about political culture. There is considerable emphasis on formal and informal political institutions, especially political parties and elections.

Approach Taken

POLI 3378 will comprise interactive lecture and students are expected to prepare for each class by completing the assigned readings and participating in class discussions. The class may incorporate some additional learning technologies that will contribute to student learning and understanding as well as providing source material for class discussion and debate. As outlined below in *Method of Evaluation*, class attendance and participation will be assessed.

Learning Materials

Stephen Brooks, Douglas L. Koopman and Matthew J. Wilson (eds.), *Understanding American Politics, second edition* (North York: University of Toronto Press, 2013).

Earl H. Fry, *Lament for America. Decline of the Superpower, Plan for Renewal* (North York: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

Method of Evaluation

The requirements for this course are:

Assignment	Due Date	% of Final Mark
Course Outline Confirmation	January 6, 2016	1%
Autobiography	January 8, 2016	2%
Presidential Candidate Blog	January 17, January 31, February 14, February 28, March 13, March 27 and final assessment due April 6	12% Each bi-weekly blog post is worth 1 point and the final assessment is worth 6 points
Assessment of <i>Lament for America</i>	February 3, 2016	15%
Mid-term Examination	February 22, 2016	15%
Research Report, Presentation and Peer Assessment	Presentations commence February 29, 2016 Research Report and Peer Assessment are due by 11:59 pm the day after you present.	18% Presentation 5%, Research Report 10% and Peer Assessment 3%
Attendance	Assessed throughout term	5%
Engagement / Participation	Assessed throughout term	7%
Final Examination	During formal examination period April 9-23, 2016	25%
Total		100%

Course Requirements

<i>Course Outline confirmation — January 6, 2016 — 1%</i>
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Please send me an e-mail confirming that you have read the entire course syllabus and accept the course syllabus as our learning contract. Make sure you receive e-mail confirmation from me.

<i>Autobiography — January 8, 2016 — 2%</i>
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Among other things, this Assignment should address the following:

1. Name, number of years in University and number of years since high school graduation
2. Where are you from?
3. What contribution do you want to make to your community, society, family, etc? Why are these contributions important?
4. What types of volunteer and sport activities are you involved in?
5. Have you, or someone you know well, been involved in government related activities? If yes, what was the nature of that involvement?
6. What are your expectations for POLI 3378? Any particular issues/topics you would like to see addressed?
7. What media stories (newspaper, radio, television or social media) have you been following recently? (minimum of 3 examples)

<i>Presidential Candidate Blog — Due every two weeks (January 17, January 31, February 14, February 28, March 13, March 27 and final assessment due April 6 — each bi-weekly blog post is worth 1 point and the final assessment is worth 6 points) — 12%</i>
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Select one Democrat or Republican presidential candidate, ***preferably a frontrunner***, and blog their activity and progress from January 5, 2016 to March 31, 2016.

Your task is to provide me with an assessment of their campaign performance on a bi-weekly basis. Each assessment should be no more than one-page in length and could include, but not be limited to, some of the following: the candidate's policy pronouncements, their ups, their downs, their positions on issues / events, notable endorsements, polling performance, how they are performing relative to the other candidates, what the political pundits are saying about them, etc.

Your final assessment should critically assess how your candidate performed and offer perspective on what you would advise that he or she should have done differently.

Assessment of Lament for America — February 3, 2016 — 15%

Earl Fry's, *Lament for America. Decline of the Superpower, Plan for Renewal*, was published in 2010 and provides a summary of the challenges to the status of the United States as a world superpower. He explores the fundamental question of whether or not a relative decline is inevitable for the US and offers concrete recommendations for renewal in areas such as defense policy, health care, education, and the environment. *Lament for America* serves as a useful guide to understanding how decisions will shape both the U.S. and global landscapes.

In a critique that should not exceed 1,500 words, critically assess *Lament for America*, specifically commenting on the recommendations put forward by Fry for U.S. renewal.

Mid-term Examination — February 22, 2016 — 15%

Final Examination — During Formal Examination Period, April 9-23, 2016 — 25%

The Mid-term and Final Examinations will be a combination of multiple choice, short answer, critical thinking and essay questions. They will be based on topics addressed during lectures, assigned readings, class presentations and other materials distributed during class.

The Final examination is to be scheduled by the Office of the Registrar during the official examination period. NO travel arrangements are to be made until after the exam schedule has been released.

**Research Report, Presentation and Peer Assessment — commence February 29, 2016 — 18%
(Presentation 5%, Research Report 10% and Peer Assessment 3%)**

Working as teams, students are expected to:

- Complete a Research Report of 2500-3000 words or about 10 pages on one of the topics listed on pages 14-15. The Research Paper should include a theme or argument — not just a recitation of facts or a regurgitation of the class lecture. Your analysis should be based on solid, respectable sources, looking at different sides of the issue, and conclude with a certain amount of informed opinion. Your sources should include primary public documents, scholarly journals and books, respectable newspapers and periodicals, and perhaps official, advocacy group, and think-tank Websites.

- Present a summary of your work to class. The expectation is not for a comprehensive presentation (NO MORE THAN 10 SLIDES!), but rather the identification of a few themes, highlights and discussion questions (VERY IMPORTANT!) that can be subsequently discussed by the entire group.

The presentation will be assessed against the following criteria:

- thoroughness of coverage of the issue;
- quality of sources used;
- thoroughness, clarity and professionalism of presentation;
- engaging the class in the topic; and
- originality and interest of presentation.

During these presentations, the non-presenting members of the class are expected to participate in whatever experiential exercises the group uses, ask questions, and generally be engaged. Performance in these classes will count toward your participation grades.

- Complete a Peer Assessment that provides '**confidential**' feedback in the form of grading and comments to your fellow group member (s) regarding their contribution to the Research Report and Class Presentation. It should focus on the efforts expended and the results achieved by each group member in contributing to the group results.

<p><i>Attendance — Assessed Throughout the Term — 5%</i></p>

ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY, NOT OPTIONAL. To be successful in this course, students need to attend classes and come well prepared. Out of courtesy and personal responsibility, I ask students to email me about any absences due to illness or emergency.

Attendance sheets must be signed at the beginning of each class signing someone else's name on the attendance sheet is considered a breach of academic integrity and will have consequences. Moreover, students may only sign the attendance sheet if they attend the entire class.

<p><i>Engagement / Participation — Assessed Throughout the Term — 7%</i></p>

As a seminar class, POLI 3378 will be a combination of lecture and discussions. Course sessions are conducted with the expectation that students attend classes having reading all assigned materials in advance and are prepared to discuss materials. Grading points will also be based on class participation, engagement and respectful behavior in the classroom.

Students should make an effort to be knowledgeable of current affairs as they relate to US Constitution Government and Politics. Current affairs discussed in class are examinable material.

Submission of Work

All assignments are to be submitted via BbLearn, unless otherwise approved by the Instructor. Ten percent (10%) will be deducted for each 24 hour period that the assignment is late and after 72 hours a mark of zero (0) will be applied. **There is absolutely no exceptions!**

If you are concerned that your assignment was not successfully uploaded to BbLearn, e-mail your work directly to me as backup. It is the student's responsibility to double check their file uploads.

Students, who miss a deadline because of illness and produce a medical certificate as outlined in the *2015-2016 Dalhousie University Undergraduate Academic Calendar*, must provide the assignment within one week of their return to class. Students are advised to read relevant regulations carefully.

"16.8 Special Arrangements for Examinations, Tests and Assignments

At the discretion of the instructor, alternate arrangements for examinations, tests or the completion of assignments may be made for students who are ill, or in other exceptional circumstances.

Where illness is involved, a certificate from the student's physician will be required. This certificate should indicate the dates and duration of the illness, when possible should describe the impact it had on the student's ability to fulfill academic requirements, and should include any other information the physician considers relevant and appropriate. To obtain a medical certificate, students who miss examinations, tests or the completion of other assignments should contact the University Health Services or their physician at the time they are ill and should submit a medical certificate to their instructor as soon thereafter as possible. Such certificates will not normally be accepted after a lapse of more than one week from the examination or assignment completion date.

For exceptional circumstances other than illness, appropriate documentation, depending on the situation, will be required."

ALL written work must be:

- in proper grammatical form;
- type-written;
- double spaced;
- in 12-point Arial font;
- a one-inch wide margins on all four sides;
- inclusive of page numbers;
- written in MS-Word; and
- inclusive of a separate title page and properly annotated using the MLA style guide (footnotes or endnotes)

ADD/DROP Dates

Last day to add/drop classes – January 15, 2016

Last day to drop without a “W” – February 8, 2016

Last day to drop with a “W” – March 11, 2016

Ground rules

1. **Respectful Exchanges** – To encourage open and more engaging discussions, students are encouraged to freely share their opinions and also be receptive to hearing other viewpoints. If you have a view on an issue that is counter to that of another class member or the instructor, you may challenge or critique the viewpoint but not the individual; respectful professional behavior is demanded at all times. **Also, do not have side-bar conversations during class.**
2. **Student Technology** – Mobile phones and other communication devices are not to be used in class and should be turned off prior to entering the classroom. Texting in class is distracting to others and rude to the presenter.

Laptops are **NOT** to be used for web browsing, messaging, entertainment, paper-writing for other classes, or for any purpose other than to learn the material in this class. If you distract the Instructor or fellow students with your lap top, you may be asked to sit near the front of the classroom or leave the class altogether.

3. **Student Arrivals/Departures** – Please come to class on time and stay until class is dismissed. If you drive to campus, allow extra time during bad weather and busy traffic. If you will be arriving late or need to leave early for some special reason, out of courtesy, please try to minimize any disruption.

4. **Allergies and Chemical Sensitivities** – Students may bring beverages and food to class, but please be mindful of possible nut allergies and of disturbing classmates with noisy packaging, etc.
5. **Special Needs and Accommodations** – Students who have special needs with respect to learning, physical disabilities, and cultural issues should speak with me at the beginning of the course so that any necessary accommodations may be arranged.
6. **Class Cancellations** – Please check the Dal website for weather-related cancellations. If on account of illness or other serious issue I need to cancel a class, I will email students using the email address provided via Banner OR post an announcement on Blackboard.

Course Communication

The course BbLearn site will be the primary tool for course communications and all course submissions must be submitted electronically through this site.

The BbLearn site will be populated with some additional course materials including class slides. These overview notes are not intended to cover all material included in the course. You are responsible for considering all readings, handouts, videos, newspaper articles, and lecture comments when preparing for the mid-term and final examinations.

Please make sure that when you send me e-mails you put the course name and section in the subject line, i.e. POLI 3378.01. I will make every effort to respond to e-mails within 24-hours and please ensure that your Banner e-mail address is up-to-date.

Academic Integrity

All students in this class are to read and understand the policies on academic integrity and plagiarism referenced in the Policies and Student Resources sections of the academicintegrity.dal.ca website. Ignorance of such policies is no excuse for violations.

Any paper submitted by a student at Dalhousie University may be checked for originality to confirm that the student has not plagiarized from other sources. Plagiarism is considered a serious academic offence which may lead to loss of credit, suspension or expulsion from the University, or even to the revocation of a degree. It is essential that there be correct attribution of authorities from which facts and opinions have been derived. At Dalhousie there are University Regulations which deal with plagiarism and, prior to submitting any paper in a course, students should read the Policy on Intellectual Honesty contained in the Calendar or on the Online Dalhousie website. The Senate has affirmed the right of any instructor to require that student papers be submitted in both written and computer-readable format, and to submit any paper to be checked electronically for originality.

Students Requiring Accommodations

Students may request accommodation as a result of barriers experienced related to disability, religious obligation, or any characteristic protected under Canadian human rights legislation.

Students who require academic accommodation for either classroom participation or the writing of tests and exams should make their request to the Advising and Access Services Center (AASC) prior to or at the outset of the regular academic year. Please visit www.dal.ca/access for more information and to obtain the Request for Accommodation form.

A note taker may be required as part of a student's accommodation. There is an honorarium of \$75/course/term (with some exceptions). If you are interested, please contact AASC at 494-2836 for more information or send an email to notetaking@dal.ca

Please note that your classroom may contain specialized accessible furniture and equipment. It is important that these items remain in the classroom, untouched, so that students who require their usage will be able to fully participate in the class.

Writing Centre

Learning to write well contributes to good marks, completion of degrees and, later, success in the workplace. Now is the time to improve your writing skills. You can visit the Writing Centre for assistance with your assignments. Staff and tutors help you to understand writing expectations and disciplinary conventions. The service is available six days a week. (See our website for hours of operation at the various Writing Centre sites.)

To book an appointment call 494-1963; email writingcentre@dal.ca; visit the website for online booking at dal.ca/writingcentre; or drop in to the Killam's main floor Learning Commons (G40). (Tutors work in other locations such as on the Sexton Campus, Weldon Law Library, Black Student Advising Centre, and Native Education Centre.)

Visit the Writing Centre's Resource Guide at <http://dal.ca.libguides.com/writingcentre> for online guidance. Finally, see the website for the schedule of seminars on writing issues, including how to integrate source material appropriately into your work (avoid plagiarism).

Grade Scale and Definitions

Grade	Grade Point Value		Definition	
A+	4.30	90-100	Excellent	Considerable evidence of original thinking; demonstrated outstanding capacity to analyze and synthesize; outstanding grasp of subject matter; evidence of extensive knowledge base.
A	4.00	85-89		
A-	3.70	80-84		
B+	3.30	77-79	Good	Evidence of grasp of subject matter, some evidence of critical capacity and analytical ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues; evidence of familiarity with the literature.
B	3.00	73-76		
B-	2.70	70-72		
C+	2.30	65-69	Satisfactory	Evidence of some understanding of the subject matter; ability to develop solutions to simple problems; benefitting from his/her university experience.
C	2.00	60-64		
C-	1.70	55-59		
D	1.00	50-54	Marginal Pass	Evidence of minimally acceptable familiarity with subject matter, critical and analytical skills (except in programs where a minimum grade of "C" or "C+" is required).

F	0.00	0-49	Inadequate	Insufficient evidence of understanding of the subject matter; weakness in critical and analytical skills; limited or irrelevant use of the literature.
INC	0.00		Incomplete	
W	Neutral and no credit obtained		Withdrew after deadline	
ILL	Neutral and no credit obtained		Compassionate reasons, illness	
P	Neutral		Pass	
TR	Neutral		Transfer credit on admission	
Pending (PND)	Neutral		Grade not reported	

Course Schedule and Reading Assignments

Provided is the Course Schedule and Reading Assignments that outlines the topics to be addressed and accompanying required readings.

Date	Topic and Reading Assignment (s)
Monday, January 4	Course overview, introduction and context
PART I: INTRODUCTION	
Wednesday, January 6	American Exceptionalism Brooks et al, chapter 1, pp. 1-15
PART II: IDEAS AND BEHAVIOUR	
Monday, January 11	Political Culture Brooks et al, chapter 2, pp. 17-40
Wednesday, January 13	Public Opinion Brooks et al, chapter 3, pp. 44-59
Monday, January 18 and Wednesday, January 20	Religion and Politics Brooks et al, chapter 4, pp. 61-96
PART III: STRUCTURES OF GOVERNMENT	
Monday, January 25	The Constitution Brooks et al, chapter 5, pp. 99-127
Wednesday, January 27	Congress Brooks et al, chapter 6, pp. 129-154
Monday, February 1 and Wednesday, February 3	The Presidency Brooks et al, chapter 7, pp. 157-179
Monday, February 8	The Judiciary Brooks et al, chapter 8, pp. 181-211
Wednesday, February 10	Catch-up and review
February 15-19	No Classes – Study Break

Date	Topic and Reading Assignment (s)
Monday, February 22	<p>Mid-term exam</p> <p>Includes all topics addressed during lecture, assigned readings, class presentations and other materials distributed during class</p>
PART IV: PARTICIPATION AND POWER	
Wednesday, February 24	<p>Civic Participation in America</p> <p>Brooks et al, chapter 9, pp. 213-227</p>
Monday, February 29 and Wednesday March 2	<p>Racial Inequality</p> <p>Brooks et al, chapter 10, pp. 231-249</p>
Monday, March 7 and Wednesday 9	<p>The Politics of Inequality</p> <p>Brooks et al, chapter 11, pp. 251-277</p>
Monday, March 14 and Wednesday, March 16	<p>Parties and Elections</p> <p>Brooks et al, chapter 12, pp. 279-314</p>
Monday, March 21 and Wednesday, March 23	<p>Who Rules America?</p> <p>Brooks et al, chapter 13, pp. 317-340</p>
PART V: FOREIGN POLICY	
Monday, March 28 and Wednesday, March 30	<p>America in the World</p> <p>Brooks et al, chapter 14, pp. 343-373</p>
Monday, April 4 and Wednesday, April 5	<p>Catch-up and review</p>
During formal examination period, April 9-23, 2016	<p>End of term exam</p> <p>Includes all topics addressed during lecture, assigned readings, class presentations and other materials distributed during class.</p>

Appendix A

Research Report Topics

1. “Red and Blue America have more in common than is usually believed.” Explain the values and beliefs that characterize what are often described as Red and Blue America, including their similarities, differences, and internal divisions.
2. Discuss the ways in which religion is important in American politics.
3. The courts have played an important role in determining the relationship between politics and religion through their interpretation of the First Amendment. Discuss five key judicial rulings, and at least two each from the establishment and free exercise line of cases.
4. What is meant by “God talk” and what role has it played in American politics, especially recent elections?
5. Trace the history of leadership in both the Senate and House and how these structures have reflected and reinforced the trend of growing partisanship.
6. Presidents and Congress often battle over who has the final say about commitment of military forces abroad. Explain the constitutional source of ambiguity in this area, and how the balance of power between the executive and legislative branches in terms of military control has evolved over time.
7. Using examples, explain why Supreme Court nominations have occasionally generated significant political conflict.
8. Why is voter turnout comparatively low in the United States and does this tell us anything important about the quality of democracy in America compared to other affluent democracies?
9. What explanations have been offered for the persistence of inequalities between white and black Americans?
10. American attitudes toward immigration are mixed. So too is the experience of different immigrant groups in the United States. Discuss these claims.
11. In virtually no other Western democracy do two political parties so dominate the political scene. Why is this the case in the United States and is it a problem? Explain.
12. What are the factors that contribute to a successful campaign for a party’s presidential nomination and election to the White House?
13. Explain the use and impact of televised ads on election campaigns in the United States.
14. How would you characterize access to the political elite in the United States? Would you say that the political elite is more or less open than in other affluent democracies?

15. "Although often criticized, at home and abroad, US foreign policy has long been influenced by the idealism of America."