



**DALHOUSIE
UNIVERSITY**

Department of Political Science
POLI 3378 American
Politics: Polarization and Crisis
Winter 2023: January 9-April 11

RECOGNITION OF MI'KMAQ TERRITORY

Dalhousie University is located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq. We are all Treaty people.

The [Elders in Residence program](#) provides students with access to First Nations Elders for guidance, counsel and support. Visit the office in the Indigenous Student Centre, 1321 Edward Street, or email Elders@dal.ca.

Contact Information:

Instructor: Darryl C. Eisan, MA

Office Hours: Before or after class or via an MS Teams Appointment

E-mail: deisan@dal.ca

Telephone: 902.430.7363

Class Days and Time: Tuesday and Thursday – 1605-1725

Class Location: Studley LSC-COMMON AREA C206



Pre-Requisites for Course:

POLI 2210.03 or POLI 2220.03 or POLI 2300X/Y.06, or POLI 2301.03 or POLI 2302.03 recommended.

Course Communication:

Please check Brightspace daily for:

- Course Syllabus
- Weekly Materials (Overview, Learning Outcomes, Required Readings, PowerPoint Slides, Videos, Key Terms)
- Announcements
- Writing Assignments
- Etc.

When sending me e-mails, I request that you put the course code in the subject line, i.e., POLI 3378.

I will make every effort to respond to e-mails within 24-hours on weekdays.

If your issue is of an urgent nature, do not hesitate to call me. No text messages!

Remember that university prepares you for the working world, so please strive to be professional in your communications with me.

Please refer to me as 'Darryl.'

Ensure that your Banner e-mail address is up to date.

Brief Teaching Philosophy Statement:

I was and continue to be drawn to teaching at the university level because it is an excellent complement to my professional responsibilities with the Government of Nova Scotia. Moreover, the opportunity to provide students with practical, real-life perspectives on how government organizations work is a direct benefit to the university, our city, province, and country. Assisting youth is my prime motivator to teach, and it provides me with significant personal and professional satisfaction. Teaching at the university level keeps me up to date on current literature and research, and I am also energized by being on campus, interacting with students and networking with faculty. I am challenged by today's students and encouraged by their depth of knowledge.

I teach with a great deal of enthusiasm in the hope that this will inspire my students. I also want to be as engaging as possible, because I want students to be stimulated by the course content and not preoccupied with their smart phone devices or other distractions. This approach has resonated with my students and my attendance figures are consistently high. I want my students to become good writers, to feel comfortable in participating in class discussion and small group activities and presentations. I balance this strategy with practical examples that I draw on from my career in the Nova Scotia Public Service.

I strive to treat all students with respect and to be sensitive to their opinions. This approach is critical in gaining the respect of your students and maintaining a high level of credibility in the classroom. I make every effort to be available to students outside of the classroom and I regularly encourage students to communicate with me with course related questions. I enjoy interacting with my students and getting to know them. This in my view is one of the more gratifying elements of teaching in a university.

Course 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.

Learning Objectives:

POLI 3378 aims to:

- Provide students with an introduction to the contemporary political landscape of the United States (U.S.).
- Familiarize students with U.S. domestic politics and American identity.
- Introduce students to American institutions and learn how they work and how they have changed over time.
- Identify the main attributes of American politics and society, past, present and current.
- Cultivate student confidence and skills for conducting research and writing essays.

Description of Class Format:

POLI 3378 will be a combination of lecture and seminar using PowerPoint Slides that will outline the material, emphasize essential information and focus on key concepts, principles, and ideas.

POLI 3378 will comprise regular and meaningful interaction between the students and the Professor. As such, students are to prepare by completing the recommended readings and actively participate in class discussions.

Students are encouraged to approach the Professor with any questions and / or concerns at any time.

Learning Management System Site Information:

We will use this online course space <https://dal.brightspace.com/d2l/home/250395>.

Sign in with your NetID and password and look for the course: “POLI 3378 American Politics: Polarization and Crisis”.

If you have trouble logging into Brightspace or have questions about how to use it, please contact the Help Desk at helpdesk@dal.ca.

More information on Brightspace can be accessed here:
https://www.dal.ca/academics/online_learning/getting-started-.html.

Learning Materials:

1. Stephen Brooks, Douglas L. Koopman and Matthew J. Wilson (eds.), *Understanding American Politics, second edition* (North York: University of Toronto Press, 2013) – available via <https://utorontopress.com/9781442605992/understanding-american-politics-second-edition/>.
2. Additional required readings may be placed on Brightspace.
3. Students are encouraged to keep up to date with U.S. politics and government by reading the New York Times, the Washington Post, Politico, and other well-respected news / media sources.

Course Assessments:

Course Requirement	Due Date	% Of Final Grade
INTRODUCTORY		
Self-Introduction	January 20	3%
PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT		
Participation and Engagement	Assessed Throughout Term	7%
CLASS ATTENDANCE		
Class Attendance	Assessed Throughout Term	5%
INDIVIDUAL WRITING ASSIGNMENTS		
Individual Writing Assignment #1	February 10	15%
Individual Writing Assignment #2	March 31	20%
EXAMS		
Mid-term Exam	February 16 – In-class	20%
End of Term Exam	During Formal Examination Period April 13-25	30%
TOTAL		100%

INTRODUCTORY

Self-Introduction – January 20 - 3%

Introduce yourself to me and make it interesting!

This Assignment is to be presented in paragraph form, be at least one–page in length, include a recent photo, i.e., a headshot (if you wish), and ideally 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.?
4. Why are these contributions important to you?
5. What types of extracurricular activities are you involved in?
6. Aside from attaining a good grade, what are your expectations for POLI 3378?
7. Any issues / topics you would like to see addressed?
8. What could the Professor do to support your learning and contribute to your academic success in POLI 3378?
9. What media stories have you been following recently? (Minimum of three examples)
10. Confirm that you have read the Course Syllabus and accept it as the Learning Contract for POLI 3378.

PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Participation and Engagement - Assessed throughout the Term - 7%

POLI 3378 will comprise regular and meaningful interaction between the students and the Professor. Our time in class provides opportunity to actively engage with the material we are exploring, and participation during class is important because it is an important avenue for learning. So, I encourage you to be active in every class session.

The participation grade serves to credit you with the effort and work you are putting into the class in and out of the classroom. However, I do understand that you all have different levels of comfort regarding speaking in class. Participation will thus be counted as speaking to the whole group, in smaller groups, and completing in-class activities.

Students should try to be knowledgeable of current affairs as they relate to the course material. Current issues discussed in class are examinable material. You may positively affect your Participation and Engagement grade by:

1. Making effective comments that raise overall level of discussion and set examples for others. (Comments that are off task and disruptive will negatively affect your grade).
2. Asking thoughtful questions that will enhance discussion and engage peers.
3. Asking questions when you don't understand or would like a second explanation. Often there are others that will benefit as well.
4. Listening carefully to, supporting, and engaging your peers in discussion. This will essentially improve other's learning experience and your own.
5. Attending class and actively participating in a meaningful way.
6. Preparing for each class.
7. Being respectful and kind towards every person in the class.

CLASS ATTENDANCE

Class Attendance - Assessed throughout the Term - 5%

I expect you to attend all class sessions unless you are ill or have a valid reason for missing. I plan to track class attendance to help me understand how and when students are engaging in the course.

You may positively affect your Attendance grade by:

1. Attending class regularly.
2. Letting me in know in advance if you're going to be absent and stating the reason why.
3. Arriving on time.
4. Not leaving class early.
5. Not interrupting the class / lecture by wandering in and out of the classroom.
6. Signing the attendance sheet.
7. Not signing someone else's name on the attendance sheet.
8. Signing the attendance sheet only if you have attended the entire class.

INDIVIDUAL WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

February 10 - 15% and March 31 - 20% = 35%

For these written assignments, students are expected to prepare properly structured papers that critically evaluate the assigned questions.

It is expected that students follow accepted norms of evidenced-based opinion writing and students are encouraged to be critical and provocative. This of course is contingent on your points being argued clearly, logically, and persuasively.

Since communication is an important skill, a high standard of writing will apply for these assignments, including the format, footnotes, and references.

Please see page 9 for specific grading criteria.

Individual Writing Assignment #1 - Media Analysis – February 10 - 15%

For Individual Writing Assignment #1, students are to research current events in the media that are related to “American Politics: Polarization and Crisis” and to develop a Media Analysis.

Specifically, you are to:

1. Pick one of the following media sources:
 - www.cbc.ca
 - www.ctvnews.ca
 - www.theglobeandmail.com
 - www.thechronicleherald.ca
 - www.cnn.com
 - www.nytimes.com
 - www.washingtonpost.com
2. Log on to your chosen web site and search for titles that incorporate “American Politics: Polarization and Crisis” or some variation, and record how many ‘Results’ you get.
3. Pick six of the 2022 or 2023 results of your search and create a Media Analysis that relates to “American Politics: Polarization and Crisis” or some variation.
4. Each Assignment is to include:
 - a. A Title Page.
 - b. An Executive Summary that provides an overview of your Media Analysis by summarizing its key points.
 - c. A review of each article that includes a summary and an explanation / analysis that is at least three-quarters of a page in length (single spaced typewritten) of how it relates to the course material of POLI 3378, other elements of the course or “American Politics: Polarization and Crisis” in general.
 - d. A Conclusion that simply and succinctly restates the principal findings of your Media Analysis.

Individual Writing Assignment #2 – March 31 - 20%

For Individual Writing Assignment #2, students are to prepare a properly structured paper that critically evaluates one of the following questions:

1. Discuss the ways in which religion is important in American politics.
2. 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.
3. Trace the history of leadership in both the Senate and House and how these structures have reflected and reinforced the trend of growing partisanship.
4. Using examples, explain why Supreme Court nominations have occasionally generated significant political conflict.
5. 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?
6. What explanations have been offered for the persistence of inequalities between white and black Americans?
7. American attitudes toward immigration are mixed. So too is the experience of different immigrant groups in the United States. Discuss these claims.
8. 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.
9. What are the factors that contribute to a successful campaign for a party's presidential nomination and election to the White House?
10. Explain the use and impact of social media on election campaigns in the United States.

Word Count: Minimum: 2,000 words; Maximum: 2,500 words.

Students are to provide documented evidence in the form of at least **ten** third party sources taken from textbooks, academic journals, government sources, the news media or other literature to support their work.

The word limit is inclusive of quotations and students should present their ideas thoughtfully and succinctly. The bibliography is not counted as part of the word limit.

Topics will be assigned on a first come first ask basis with a maximum of four students for each topic.

EXAMS

Mid-term - February 16 - 20% - In-class

End of Term Exam - During Formal / Official Examination Period – April 13-25 – 30%

The Mid-term and End of Term Exams **will most likely** comprise Multiple Choice, True and False, Short Answer and Essay type questions.

The Mid-term Exam will cover material up to and including February 14.

The End of Term Examination is cumulative.

No travel arrangements are to be made until after the official exam period schedule has been released by the Registrar's Office.

Grading of Written Work:

Written work will be assessed against the following criteria:

Elements	Criteria
<i>Thesis</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clearly stated, creative, original, and insightful. - Presents a Point of View (POV) based on a critical analysis of factual evidence and relevant theory.
<i>Background, Course Content, Research, and Analysis</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contains relevant background information. - Draws upon course readings, lecture material, external sources, and other research. - Includes a critical analysis of the sources used
<i>Conclusions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are clear, creative, and insightful. - Contain a clear, cogent reiteration of and support for the central points of the thesis.
<i>Writing Style and Essay Structure</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Essay is very well organized. - Central ideas are presented very clearly, cogently, and effectively. - There is critical analysis and integration of ideas throughout the paper.
<i>Grammar and Mechanics</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Written in MS-Word. - All sources are cited accurately using APA style. - Inclusive of a separate title page. - Minimal spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors. - Respects minimum and maximum word counts. - Type-written. - Single-spaced. - 12-pt Times New Roman font. - One-inch-wide margins on all four sides.

Due Dates and Late Assignments:

All Assignments are to be submitted in MS-Word (**not as a pdf document, or in pages, etc.**) and to Brightspace by 11:59 PM ADT the day they are due.

The required format for electronic submissions should include the student's first name, last name, and assignment name. For example, john_smith_essay#1 is the acceptable format.

If you are concerned that your Assignment was not successfully uploaded to Brightspace, e-mail your work directly to me before the deadline. It is the student's responsibility to double check their file uploads.

Students are responsible for knowing the due dates for all Assignments and Exams.

Deadline extensions or make-up assignments will not be given.

Drop Dates:

Last day to add/drop classes – January 20

Last day to drop without a “W” – February 6

Last day to drop with a “W” – March 13

Ground Rules:

1. To encourage free and open class discussions, I ask that students be open to, and respectful of, diverse perspectives, and offer comments or feedback in a constructive fashion. I also ask that any personal student experiences shared during the course be held in confidence.
2. Please refrain from having side-bar conversations during class.
3. 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 Professor and to your fellow classmates.
4. 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 laptop, you may be asked to leave the class.
5. Students may bring beverages and food to class, but please be mindful of nut allergies and of disturbing classmates with noisy packaging, etc. Please also refrain from wearing scented hair or body products as many people are sensitive and/or have allergies to the chemicals found in these products. No food is allowed during exams.

6. 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.
7. Please check the Dal website for weather-related cancellations. If on account of illness or other significant issue I need to cancel a class, I will e-mail students using the email address provided via Brightspace.

In addition, the following are considered unethical behaviours in this course:

1. Lobbying me for a certain grade.
2. Asking for extra assignments or different weightings for the purpose of raising your grade.
3. Making fraudulent excuses to postpone / request extensions for Assignments or Exams.
4. Having someone impersonate you, do your work for you, or sign your name on work you did not do.

Weekly Schedule:

This section presents a weekly schedule identifying course topics, recommended readings, course assessments, etc.

Week 1 - January 10 and January 12

- **Topic:** *Course Orientation*
 - Review the Course Syllabus and the expectations for POLI 3378
- **Topic:** *American Exceptionalism*
 - Preparatory Materials
 - Brooks et al (2e), chapter 1, pp.1-15

Week 2 - January 17 and 19

- **Topic:** *Political Culture*
 - Preparatory Materials
 - Brooks et al (2e), chapter 2, pp.17-40
- **Note:** *Self-Introduction due by 11:59 PM ADT, Friday, January 20*

Week 3 - January 24 and 26

- **Topic:** *Public Opinion*
 - Preparatory Materials
 - Brooks et al (2e), chapter 3, pp. 43-59

Week 4 - January 31 and February 2

- **Topic:** *Religion and Politics*
 - Preparatory Materials
 - Brooks et al (2e), chapter 4, pp. 61-96

Week 5 - February 7 and 9

- **Topic:** *The Constitution*
 - Preparatory Materials
 - Brooks et al (2e), chapter 5, pp. 99-127
- **Note:** *Individual Writing Assignment #1 due by 11:59 pm ADT, Friday, February 10*

Week 6 - February 14 and 16

- **Topic:** *Congress*
 - Preparatory Materials
 - Brooks et al (2e), chapter 6, pp. 129-154
- **Note:** *Mid-term Exam, Thursday, February 16, In-class*

Week 7 - February 20-24 - Winter Study Break - No Classes

Week 8 - February 28 and March 2

- **Topic:** *The Presidency*
 - Preparatory Materials
 - Brooks et al (2e), chapter 7, pp. 157-179

Week 9 - March 7 and 9

- **Topic:** *The Judiciary*
 - Preparatory Materials
 - Brooks et al (2e), chapter 8, pp. 181-211

Week 10 - March 14 and 16

- **Topic:** *Civic Participation in America*
 - Preparatory Materials
 - Brooks et al (2e), chapter 9, pp. 213-228

Week 11 - March 21 and 23

- **Topic:** *Racial Inequality*
 - Preparatory Materials
 - Brooks et al (2e), chapter 10, pp. 231-249

Week 12 - March 28 and 30

- **Topic:** *The Politics of Inequality*
 - Preparatory Materials
 - Brooks et al (2e), chapter 11, pp. 251-277
- **Note:** *Individual Writing Assignment #2 due by 11:59 pm ADT, Friday, March 31*

Week 13 - April 4 and 6

- **Topic:** *Parties and Elections*
 - Preparatory Materials
 - Brooks et al (2e), chapter 12, pp. 279-314

Week 14 - April 11

- **Topic:** *Catch-up and Review*
- **Note:** *April 13-25 - End of Term Exam - During Formal / Official Examination Period*

[Dalhousie is scent free](#) - Thank you for helping us all breathe easier!

Appendix

UNIVERSITY POLICIES, STATEMENTS, GUIDELINES and RESOURCES for SUPPORT

This course is governed by the academic rules and regulations set forth in the University Calendar and the Senate ([University Regulations](#), [Academic Regulations](#))

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	0-49.9	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
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W	Neutral and no credit obtained	Withdrew after deadline
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ILL	Neutral and no credit obtained	Compassionate reasons, illness
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P	Neutral	Pass
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TR	Neutral	Transfer credit on admission
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Pending (PND)	Neutral	Grade not reported
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University Grading Practices

The [Grading Practices Policy](#) outlines the university's commitment and professors' responsibilities on how grading will be achieved. The policy applies to all credit-bearing courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels at the university.

Academic Integrity:

At Dalhousie University, we are guided in all our work by the values of academic integrity: honesty, trust, fairness, responsibility, and respect (The center for Academic Integrity, Duke University, 1999). As a student, you are required to demonstrate these values in all the work you do. The University provides policies and procedures that every member of the university community is required to follow to ensure academic integrity.

Dalhousie offers many ways to learn about academic writing and presentations so that all members of the University community may acknowledge the intellectual property of others. Knowing how to find, evaluate, select, synthesize, and cite information for use in assignments is called being “information literate”. Information literacy is taught by Dalhousie University Librarians in classes and through Dalhousie Libraries’ online [Citing & Writing](#) tutorials.

Do not plagiarize any materials for this course. For further guidance on what constitutes plagiarism, how to avoid it, and proper methods for attributing sources, please consult the University Secretariat’s [Academic Integrity](#) page.

Please note that Dalhousie subscribes to a plagiarism detection software that checks for originality in submitted papers. 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 very serious academic offence that may lead to loss of credit, suspension or expulsion from the University, or even 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.

Furthermore, the University’s Senate has affirmed the right of any instructor to require that student assignments be submitted in both written and computer readable format, e.g.: a text file or as an email attachment, and to submit any paper to a check such as that performed by the plagiarism detection software. As a student in this class, you are to keep an electronic copy of any paper you submit, and the course instructor may require you to submit that electronic copy on demand. Use of third-party originality checking software does not preclude instructor use of alternate means to identify lapses in originality and attribution. The result of such assessment may be used as evidence in any disciplinary action taken by the Senate.

ACCESSIBILITY

The Student Accessibility Centre (Halifax Campus) and the Student Success Centre (Agricultural Campus) are Dalhousie’s centres of expertise on student access, inclusion, and accommodation support. We work collaboratively with students, faculty, and staff to create an inclusive educational environment for students.

If there are aspects of the design, instruction, and/or experiences within this course that result in barriers to your inclusion please contact the [Student Accessibility Centre](#) (dal.ca/access) and/or make arrangements to discuss with the instructor.

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

STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

Everyone at Dalhousie is expected to treat others with dignity and respect. The Code of Student Conduct allows Dalhousie to take disciplinary action if students don't follow this community expectation. When appropriate, violations of the code can be resolved in a reasonable and informal manner—perhaps through a restorative justice process. If an informal resolution can't be reached, or would be inappropriate, procedures exist for formal dispute resolution.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION – Culture of Respect

Every person at Dalhousie has a right to be respected and safe. We believe inclusiveness is fundamental to education. We stand for equality. Dalhousie is strengthened in our diversity. We are a respectful and inclusive community. We are committed to being a place where everyone feels welcome and supported, which is why our Strategic Direction prioritizes fostering a culture of diversity and inclusiveness (Strategic Priority 5.2).

Learning and Support Resources:

- [Undergraduate Advising Office](#)
- [Writing Centre](#)
- [Studying for Success Program](#)
- [Indigenous Students](#)
- [Black Students](#)
- [International Students](#)
- [LGBTQ2SIA+ Collaborative](#)
- [Student Health & Wellness](#)
- [Human Rights and Equity Services](#)
- [Dalhousie Student Advocacy Services](#)
- [Dalhousie Ombudsperson](#)
- [Fair Dealing Guidelines](#)
- [Dalhousie University Libraries](#)
- [Copyright Office](#)
- [E-Learning website](#)