

**THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
THE COLLEGE OF STATEN ISLAND
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND GLOBAL AFFAIRS**

**Pol 103 (21976-DSG1): Understanding the Political World
--An Introduction to Political Science**

Spring 2021 12:20-2:10 pm, Tu. & 12:20-1:10 pm, Th. Classroom: Online Office Hours: 1:10-2:00 pm, Th. Appointment Twitter: @Xiabamboohermi Skype: mingxiacunyusa	Professor: Dr. Ming Xia Office: 2N236 (John Marchi Hall) Email: ming.xia@csi.cuny.edu Office Phone: 718-982-3197 Website: www.dr-ming-xia.org
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Aristotle, the father of political science, once said, “Man is by nature a political animal.” So is woman. Unfortunately, many people, especially among the young, think that they can escape from politics by hating it or ignoring it. If honest people do not take political duties and contribute to governing, we often let us ruled by dishonest or evil people; if people do not do politics, ultimately the politics will do you. Since politics is something about “who gets what, when, and how,” the trend of “Americans Hate Politics” as well as the global spread of consumerism will dissipate people’s incentive to participate in public affairs, weaken the basis for a system of justice, and erode democracy in the U.S. and worldwide.

In the first two decades of the 21st century, politics has become a salient topic. It is extremely interesting now to take a political science class. U.S. presidential election, impeachment and some dramatic political events in the world (e.g., Brexit, Russian interferences, China’s backtracking to totalitarianism, the descent of five crises upon the world, namely the COVID-19 pandemic, the global recession, worldwide social protests and unrests, political crises and the climate change, etc.) have made American young people more attentive to and involved in politics. In response to unending political and economic crises in the U.S. and around the world, this course will introduce students—future political leaders and activists—to the political world in a “novel” way, hoping to sustain and deepen the newly resurgence of interest in politics among the youth and kindle such an interest among those who are politically apathetic.

Through relating the pop culture (novels, movies, and cartoons, etc.) to our discussion of political science, the major task of this course is to help students realize the relevance of politics to our everyday life and to provide them intellectual concepts to decode puzzling political phenomena. This course will discuss the following major topics:

- basic concepts in politics (such as state, government, power, legitimacy, and constitutionalism),
- political culture and political ideologies, political socialization and its major agents,

- varieties of democratic and non-democratic forms of government (including the American system and other governments in the world),
- major institutions within the government,
- public policy,
- the relationship between state and the mass media, the cultural politics,
- and international politics.

Through discussion and analysis of important themes and political phenomena available in novels and movies, this course is designed to arouse the interest of students in political affairs, to equip students with basic analytical tools and skills to understand our political society and to guide our real political lives.

The objectives of this class can be summarized as follows:

- Familiarize with fundamental terms in the discipline of political science and understand their accurate meanings as commonly recognized by the scholarly community.
- Learn how to relate these terms to our political society and how to use them to interpret political events in fiction and reality.
- Know where and how to identify primary sources for political information and analysis.
- Acquire basic ability to present your own political analysis in the form of oral presentation and writing.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

1. Douglas A. Van Belle, *A Novel Approach to Politics*, 6th ed., 2021, CQ Press, an imprint of SAGE Publications; ISBN: 9781544374734.
2. Suzanne Collins, *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*, 2020, Scholastic Press; ISBN: 978-1-338-65317-1.

RECOMMENDED TEXTBOOKS

1. Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games*, 2008, Scholastic Press; ISBN: 978-0-439-02352-8.
2. Suzanne Collins, *Catching Fire*, 2009, Scholastic Press; ISBN: 978-0-545-58617-7.
3. Suzanne Collins, *Mocking Jay*, 2010, Scholastic Press; ISBN: 978-0-545-66326-7.

GRADING AND REQUIREMENTS

Autobiographical Report	15%
Book Review	10%
Midterm Exam	25%
Final Exam	30%
Take-home Quizzes	10%

Participation	5%
Attendance	5%

Autobiographical Report: You are expected to write an autobiographical report for this class. This report provides a complete story in your own life and with political contents. For example, you can look at election volunteering, community campaign, running for student government, lobbying the city, the state or the federal government, encounter with the law enforcement officers, experiences with bureaucracy, overseas political activities, or participation in student demonstrations, and other issues that you think was a milestone in your political self-consciousness and indicated your socialization into politics. In the final section of this report, you shall give a theoretical analysis of your own story and relate it to the concepts you have learned in this class to elicit the deeper meaning of your own behaviors and activities. Please consult Van Belle's "A Strategic Approach to Writing for the classroom" in the textbook (pp. 463-470).

The Book Review on Collin's book, *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*. In the second half of the semester, you are required to write a book review essay. You can also choose to review the entire trilogy. A writing guide for book review is available from my homepage ("Teaching Aid" at www.dr-ming-xia.org). Since this book is a prequel to *The Hunger Games* trilogy which has been out for a decade and has been very popular, there have been tons of review articles available. You are encouraged to learn from previous reviews on the trilogy and this book. Authenticity, theoretical reflection and the context of the class discussion are three most important components that I look for. A simple cut-and-paste strategy or a commissioned essay from "paper-mill" will be considered as plagiarism and an F grade will be given. The instructor may also report plagiarism to the university office for further disciplinary action.

The autobiographical report will be due on March 11, 2021, Thursday. The book review essay is due on April 15, 2021, Thursday. For your written assignments, you must mail electronic copy to my mailbox (ming.xia@csi.cuny.edu) and should also save your work for record. Delay will incur penalty. You may revise or rewrite your writing assignment to demonstrate your improvement. But it must be done and submitted to me within one week after I return your paper. If your revision is judged substantial, you will get a new grade.

Both reports shall be typewritten and double-spaced. They should have 3~5 pages. You shall use 12 font size, one-inch margin, page number, and for the second report, you shall provide at least one piece of footnote or endnote, and sources of information. Reports without spelling check and proofreading will be penalized.

From the second week on, I will give you a take-home quiz. You turn it in on the designated deadline. In each quiz, there are some multiple-choice questions. In the whole semester, I will give you seven such quizzes. All quizzes will be uploaded to the Blackboard. The midterm and final exams will be a mixture of definitions and essay questions.

Considering my lecture will give information not covered by textbooks, attendance is very important. According to the college attendance policy, students who are absent from this course more than six hours (two weeks) will **NOT** get graded. Considering the special

circumstances of pandemic, I will consider a less strict enforcement of this policy. However, anyone who is aspiring for a straight A should keep this limit in mind, each recorded absence will automatically deduct one point from your attendance grade.

My grading for all these requirements will follow 100-point system. My final score report will be converted into A-F system. This conversion will roughly follow this formula:

A	A-	100-90	B+	B	B-	89-80	C+	C	79-70	D	69-60	F
below 60												

Final grades will be assigned roughly on the basis of:

- A 93-100
Though understanding of all material; sound grasp of all theoretical and empirical materials directly listed in the syllabus. Independent reading and research following the suggestions in the syllabus. Expression of insights, both orally and in writing, at an adult level of presentation. Attend class regularly and participate classroom discussion actively.
- A- 90-92
Though understanding of all material; sound grasp of all theoretical and empirical materials. Expression of insights at an adult level of presentation. Attend class regularly and participate in classroom discussion.
- B+ B B- 89-80
Reasonably sound understanding of most conceptual principles and familiarity with most of the empirical materials. Attend class regularly.
- C+ C 79-70
Weak understanding of conceptual principles. Marginal familiarity with empirical materials. Attend class regularly.
- D 69-60
Serious conceptual and factual errors. Attend class irregularly, come late or leave early. Behavioral problems in classroom.
- F
Completely detached from the materials of the class. Excessive absence or serious behavioral problems resulting in disruption of lecture.

SUGGESTED WEBSITES FOR EXPLORATION

One primary goal of this class is to enable all students to comfortably consume political information from the quality news sources (such as prime time news from ABC, NBC or CBS, CNN News, BBC News, PBS News Hour, and the New York Times). Some news stories and analytical reports are to be selected from these sources for class discussion. It's strongly suggested that you watch, listen (such as "All Things Considered" from NPR), or read one major news medium regularly.

- **General News**

C-SPAN at <http://www.c-span.org/>

CNN at <http://www.cnn.com/>

New York Times at <http://www.nytimes.com>

The London Times at <http://www.the-times.co.uk/news/pages/home.html/1280399>

National Public Radio at <http://www.npr.org>

ABC News (www.abcnews.com)

- **Political Science**

American Political Science Association at <http://www.apsanet.org/>

John F. Kennedy School of Government at <http://ksgwww.harvard.edu/>

Political Scientist's Guide to the Internet at <http://www.trincoll.edu/~pols/guide/home.html>

Political Science Resources on the Web at <http://www.lib.umich.edu/libhom/documents.center/frames/polscifr.html>

- **American Politics and Government**

U.S. Federal Government Agencies page at <http://www.lib.lsu.edu/gov/fedgov.html>

The Great American Website at <http://www.uncle-sam.com/unclesam/>

U.S House of Representatives at <http://www.house.gov/>

U.S. Senate at <http://senate.gov/>

National Conference on State Legislatures at <http://www.ncsl.org/>

Federalist papers at <http://www.law.uoknor.edu/hist/federalist/>

Constitution Society at <http://www.constitution.org/>

US Historical Documents at http://kuhttp.cc.ukans.edu/carrie/docs/docs_us.html

NAACP at <http://www.naACP.org/>

ACLU at <http://www.aclu.org/>

Christian Coalition at <http://www.cc.org>

Republican Party index at <http://www.republicanparty.com/>

Democratic Party Index at <http://www.democraticparty.com/>

- **Global Politics**

The United Nations at <http://www.un.org/>

CIA Publications and Handbooks at <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/pubs.html>

Foreign Affairs Magazine at <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/>

American Foreign Service Association at <http://www.afsa.org/>

The National Endowment for Democracy at <http://www.ned.org>

“Global Trends” reports from The National Intelligence Council at <http://www.dni.gov/index.php/about/organization/national-intelligence-council-global-trends>, especially the latest one: “Global Trends 2030” at http://www.dni.gov/files/documents/GlobalTrends_2030.pdf.

The Davos Forum (World Economic Forum) at <http://www.weforum.org/>

The World Social Forum at <https://fsm2015.org/en>.

The Diplomat online magazine at <http://thediplomat.com/>.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Introduction

Feb. 2, 2021, Tu.

Introducing the syllabus, discussing the relevancy of political science to our everyday life,
Discussing the etiquette in classroom (pay special attention to the “Three Strikes, You Are Out” rule.)

Feb. 4, Th.

The Sampling of Politics in Entertainment, Literature and Movies
From Disney Land to the Hollywood: Two Agents of Political Socialization in U.S.
Watch Some Movie Episodes

Part One: Basic Concepts and Political Foundation

Feb. 9, Tu.

(Reading: Chapter 1 in Van Belle. Here I mean before you attend each class, you should have finished your reading.)

Is Politics a Science?
Various Theories

Feb. 11, Th. And Feb. 16, Tu.

Ideologies: Realism vs. Idealism
A Framework for Political Analysis

Feb. 18, Th.: Watch Movie.

(Please start reading Collins’ *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*. There will be no specific schedule for this book. However, you should start your reading as soon as possible and as much as possible.)

Feb. 23, Tu.

(Reading Chapter 2 in Van Belle)

Power, Authority, and Legitimacy
Nations, States, and Governments

Feb. 25, Th.

Functions of the State
Nation-building and State-building

March 2, Tu. and March 4, Th.

(Reading: Chapter 3 in Van Belle)

State and Society

March 9, Tu.
(Reading: Chapter 4 in Van Belle)
State and the Economy

Part Two: Political Institutions and Processes

March 11, Thur.
First Autobiographical Report Due!
(Reading Chapter 5 in Van Belle)
The Basic Structures of Government

March 16, Tu. And March 18, Thur.
(Reading Chapter 6 in Van Belle)
Executives

Mid-term Exam (Questions given on 2021.03.18, administered online, finish the exam in 24 hours)

March 23, Tu. and March 25, Thur.
(Reading: Chapter 7 in Van Belle)
Legislatures

March 30, Tu. And April 1, Th.: Spring Recess, No Class.

April 6, Tu. and April 8, Th.
(Reading: Chapter 8 in Van Belle)
Administration and Bureaucracy

April 13, Tu.
(Reading: Chapter 9 in Van Belle)
Legal System and the Courts

April 15, Th. And April 20, Tu.
(Reading: Chapter 10 in Van Belle)
Varieties of Democracy

The Book Review Due on 2021.04.15!

Part Three: The Reach of State Power

April 22, Th. And April 26, Tue.
(Reading: Chapter 11 in Van Belle)
Media and Politics
Public Opinion
Political Communication and the Media

April 29, Thur. and May 4, Tue.

(Reading: Chapter 14 in Van Belle)

Political Culture and Political Socialization

The Cultural Politics

May 6, Th. And May 10, Tu.

(Reading: Chapter 12 in Van Belle)

International Politics and Foreign Policy

Global System

Fundamental Changes in Global Political Economy

May 13, Th.

(Reading: Chapter 15 in Van Belle)

The Study of Politics

Wrap-up discussion

Review for the Final Examination

May 18, Tue.

Final Exam (administered online, you have 24 hours to finish)

Thank you for taking this course and I wish you a happy summer break!