



**UNIVERSITY OF  
CALGARY**

**FACULTY OF ARTS  
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE**

**Political Science 590-L01: Honours Seminar**

“Knowledge, politics, order and change”

Monday 12:00-2:45 | SS 006 | Fall 2018

**Professor Pablo Policzer**

SS 710 | [policzer@ucalgary.ca](mailto:policzer@ucalgary.ca) | (403) 220-5923

Office hours Tue. 11:00-12:00 or by appointment

### **Overview**

This seminar is an advanced introduction to selected seminal works in political science. Our readings will reflect a broad understanding of the discipline as a subset of the social sciences,<sup>1</sup> and of science in general. From this broad perspective, we will discuss what constitutes a disciplined understanding of politics, analyze some of the principal theories of politics, consider some of the leading explanations and critiques of our political orders, and explore why both politics and our ways of understanding it might change—sometimes drastically.

POLI 590 is reserved for fourth-year Honours students in Political Science, in conjunction with POLI 591 (Honours Thesis), as the capstone to the Honours Program. The expectations for Honours students are high. The course is run like a graduate seminar, and requires you to read and synthesize a lot of material in a brief amount of time—a book a week. (Some books are longer than others, and I will guide you to the most relevant sections of the longer books especially.) On the other hand, in this reading and writing-intensive seminar you will *not* be required to do any reading or research outside the syllabus, for example in the form of a research paper (except in preparation for your POLI 591 proposal as noted below). Students who read and think about the assigned books carefully and can discuss them in class, in the weekly reviews, and in the take-home exams, will be well positioned to succeed in the course.

Reading a lot of material efficiently and effectively is a challenge. Few people are “natural” readers; most are not. The good news is that reading quickly and effectively is a learnable skill. This seminar aims to prepare you for more advanced work by providing you with an opportunity to master it. The best way to do this is through practice—by reading a lot of challenging material in a brief period of time. This syllabus includes some suggestions to help you do this better.

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the works we'll read are among the most cited in the social sciences:  
<http://marginalrevolution.com/marginalrevolution/2016/05/what-are-the-most-cited-publications-in-the-social-sciences.html>

## Evaluation

- Nine 600-800 word reviews of the week's assigned texts, due via D2L Discussion each week (4% each = **36%**). Because we learn collectively through and from each other, the reviews are shared with the class, through each week's discussion group. The reviews are due by midnight the evening before each class. You are encouraged to critically engage each other's reviews.
- Two take-home exams. For each exam, you will be required to write a single ~ 2,000-word essay, based on a choice of 2-3 questions (15% each = **30%**). The first is due on October 5, and the second on November 29, via D2L.
- Class attendance and participation (**34%**). This includes full and active engagement in class and online (29%). The participation grade also includes a 10-minute presentation on one week's reading (5%). The presentation should critically engage the week's reading and pose questions for the class to consider.
- A 10-minute in-class presentation of your POLI 591 thesis topic, along with a ~ 1,000-word proposal, signed by your supervisor. We will schedule five presentations on the last day of class (December 3), and the rest during the first 30 minutes of class in the weeks immediately prior (i.e. November 19 and 26, depending on the number of students). The proposal will be due one week after the final day of class, on December 10. Each of these items is graded on a Pass/Fail basis. Both must be completed in order to pass the course.

## Grading criteria

A- (80-84%) → A (85-89%) → A+ (90%-100%)

*Exceptional performance:* strong evidence of original thinking; good organization; strong capacity to analyze and synthesize; superior grasp of subject matter with sound critical evaluations; evidence of extensive knowledge base. Work at this level will also be clearly written, with no spelling or grammar faults.

B- (70-73%) → B (74-76%) → B+ (77-79%)

*Competent performance:* evidence of grasp of subject matter; some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues; evidence of familiarity with the literature. Work at this level will generally be clearly written, containing at most a few, if any, spelling or grammar faults.

D (50-54%) → D+ (55-59%) → C- (60-62%) → C (63-66%) → C+ (67-69%)

*Adequate performance:* understanding of the subject matter; ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the material; acceptable but uninspired work, not seriously faulty but lacking style and vigour. Work at this level is sometimes or often unclear, and contains from some to many spelling and/or grammar problems.

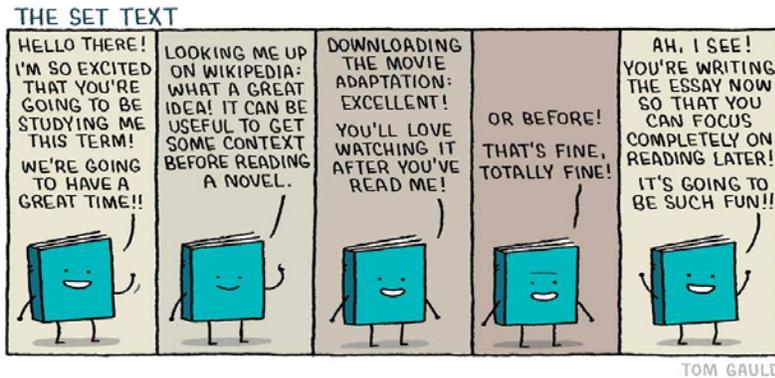
F (0-49%)

*Inadequate performance:* little or no evidence of understanding of the subject matter; weakness in critical and analytic skills; limited or irrelevant use of the literature. Work at this level is usually poorly written, with numerous spelling and grammar problems.

## Course schedule

- September 10 Philip Ball, "Quantum Common Sense," *Aeon*, 21 June 2017:  
<https://aeon.co/essays/the-quantum-view-of-reality-might-not-be-so-weird-after-all>
- Gabriel A. Almond and Stephen J. Genco, "Clouds, Clocks, and the Study of Politics," *World Politics* 29:4 (July 1977), pp. 489-522.
- Gianfranco Poggi, *The Development of the Modern State* (Stanford 1978), Chapter 1, "Introduction: The Business of Rule," pp. 1-15.
- The above readings are available on D2L. You do *not* need to write a review of the readings for this week.
- The following books are available at the Bookstore. Different editions are acceptable.
- September 17 Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago, 2012).
- September 24 Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Oxford, 1993); also available at [http://www.constitution.org/eb/rev\\_fran.htm](http://www.constitution.org/eb/rev_fran.htm).
- October 1 Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution* (Anchor, 1955).
- October 8 Thanksgiving Day – no class
- October 15 Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Napoleon Bonaparte* (International Publishers 1963). You may also find it useful to consult Part I of the *Communist Manifesto*:  
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch01.htm#007>
- October 22 Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Routledge 2001).
- Topics for first take-home essay distributed.
- October 29 Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (Beacon 1944). Focus on Parts I and II; skim enough of Part III to get the main ideas.
- First take-home essay due, via D2L.
- November 5 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (Vintage 1977). Read Parts I-III, skim enough of Part IV to get the main ideas.
- Topics for second take-home essay distributed.
- November 11 Reading week – no class

- November 19 Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (Anchor 1961/Penguin 2011)
- November 26 Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (Cambridge University Press, 1979). Focus especially on the comparisons, and on the French and Russian cases.
- Second take-home essay due, via D2L Dropbox.
- December 3 POLI 591 project presentations
- Each student will give a 10-minute presentation, which will be followed by a 15-minute class discussion. The presentation should focus on the question, the tentative argument, and the methodology of your project. What question are you trying to answer? Why is this question significant? What do you think the answer might be? What will you do to find out?
- December 10 One week after the end of classes: POLI 591 thesis proposals (signed by your supervisor) due, via D2L Dropbox.



<https://twitter.com/tomgauld/status/478114031753236482/photo/1>

## Phones and laptops in class

It goes without saying that when you're in a classroom, you should be paying attention to the discussion, full stop. That means not using cell phones for texting, checking email, or surfing the web. No, in case of emergencies, you are not required to turn them off or put them in airplane mode. But it's simple common courtesy to put the phone away in class.

With regard to laptops, while I will not ban them, if you choose to use one, you should keep three things in mind:

1. Courtesy. Use the laptop strictly for the purpose of taking notes. It's a small class, and we will notice—and get very annoyed by—any distractions.
2. A growing amount of evidence suggests that it's more effective to take notes by hand: that unrestricted laptop use in classrooms negatively affects learning outcomes;<sup>2</sup> and that “even when laptops are used solely to take notes, they may still be impairing learning because their use results in shallower processing”.<sup>3</sup>
3. Evidence also suggests that laptops in class have an effect similar to second-hand smoke: they not only distract and hurt you, the user, but also those around you, even if they're not using one.<sup>4</sup>

My suggestion: close the laptop, pick up a pen and paper, and pay full attention to the text and the discussion. You and those around you will learn a lot more.

## Reading skills (adapted from K. Chandra and D. Woodruff, MIT)

This course is structured like a graduate seminar, which means a heavy reading load. As you manage this, you are likely to find that there is little correlation between effort and outcome. It's possible to spend hours reading something without “getting it,” and equally possible to spend very little time reading something else and getting quickly to the heart of the argument. You will have to devise for yourselves ways to read efficiently and effectively. These suggestions may help:

1. *Figure out the heart of the argument before you read deeply:* skim, read the abstracts, the jacket blurbs, short reviews published elsewhere, etc. When you know the book's centre of gravity, you read more efficiently.
2. *Read actively:* don't just soak up whatever the author wants to tell you, but be skeptical, approach it with questions, and try to answer these for yourself as you make your way through the text. The more actively you read, the easier it will be to write your review.
3. *Use other peoples' skills:* you do not have to do all the work yourself. It is not “cheating” if you talk through the argument with someone else before or after you delve in, or look at reviews for guidance.

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<sup>2</sup> Susan Payne Carter, Kyle Greenberg, and Michael Walker, “The Impact of Computer Usage on Academic Performance: Evidence from a Randomized Trial at the United States Military Academy,” *School Effectiveness & Inequality Initiative (SEII) Working Paper #2016.02* (May 2016) <https://seii.mit.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/SEII-Discussion-Paper-2016.02-Payne-Carter-Greenberg-and-Walker-2.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Pam A. Mueller and Daniel M. Oppenheimer, “The Pen Is Mightier than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand over Laptop Note Taking,” *Psychological Science* 25:6 (June 2014), pp. 1159-68: <http://pss.sagepub.com/content/25/6/1159>. See also <http://www.wsj.com/articles/can-handwriting-make-you-smarter-1459784659>; <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-learning-secret-don-t-take-notes-with-a-laptop/>;

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0360131512002254?np=y>

4. *Write in order to read*: the weekly reviews are designed to force you to do that.
5. *Use diagrams if necessary*: the structure of an argument can sometimes be better expressed by “drawing” it, using arrows and lines, than by trying to understand it in words.
6. *Organize your notes* in a way that makes retention and retrieval possible: use index cards, annotated bibliographies, database programmes like Evernote, OneNote, EndNote, etc.

These suggestions may be obvious to some and not to others. Basically, do whatever works for you. But be self-conscious about reading as a skill that has to be learned and not necessarily as an ability that either comes naturally or does not.

In the age of digital distraction, you should also be aware that reading these books requires sustained focus and attention. Yes, you can consult others’ work, but you still have to make the time to sit down, block out distractions, and *read* the book yourself.

### **The weekly reviews**

The reviews should not simply describe or restate the central ideas in each book (though they should also do that), but *critically* engage them. Think of them as mini-papers:

- What question does the book address? What is its central argument? What type of reasoning, logic, or evidence does it use to support this argument? Do you find it convincing? Why or why not?
- Identify one or two key assumptions in the book that you think are questionable, controversial, or objectionable.
- What kind of analytical framework does the book advocate? What normative proposition? What are some of its blind spots?
- What view does the book argue *against*? Does it succeed in disproving it?
- So what? What general problem or question, if any, does it shed light on? What future research does it suggest?

You may also find it useful to keep in mind Anatol Rapoport’s advice for “How to criticize with kindness” (as summarized by Daniel Dennett)<sup>5</sup>:

- You should attempt to re-express your target’s position so clearly, vividly, and fairly that your target says, “Thanks, I wish I’d thought of putting it that way.”
- You should list any points of agreement (especially if they are not matters of general or widespread agreement).
- You should mention anything you have learned from your target.
- Only then are you permitted to say so much as a word of rebuttal or criticism.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.brainpickings.org/index.php/2014/03/28/daniel-dennett-rapeport-rules-criticism/>

## The POLI 591 proposal

A key task for the Fall term of the Honours program is to find a supervisor and determine a thesis project for POLI 591 during the winter. Although not a requirement, an excellent option is to work with someone with whom you've already taken a course. You should in any case settle on a project and supervisor as quickly as possible, in order to present a thesis proposal by the end of the term. A proposal is a compelling rationale for your research project. What question are you asking? Why is it worth asking? What do we already know about the problem? What do we need to know? How specifically are you proposing to contribute to this pool of knowledge? What methodology will you use? How will the rest of us be able to interpret your results—to know whether they're valid? Proposals will be graded on a Pass/Fail basis, assessed on their coherence and clarity. I will say a lot more about this in class, but in the meantime, you should consult one of the classic statements on how to write a proposal:

<http://www.ssrc.org/publications/view/7A9CB4F4-815F-DE11-BD80-001CC477EC70/>

## Writing well

Last, but certainly not least, it's not only *what* you write that matters in how you will be evaluated, but also *how* you write it. That includes such things as grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, clarity, citation, and organization. As George Orwell noted, "the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts."<sup>6</sup> The advice in these articles should help you avoid slovenly writing, at least:

<https://theamericanscholar.org/writing-english-as-a-second-language/>

<http://chronicle.com/article/Why-Academics-Writing-Stinks/148989/>

And beyond Pinker's article, I would very strongly recommend his book *The Sense of Style*:

<http://stevenpinker.com/publications/sense-style-thinking-persons-guide-writing-21st-century>

If after all this advice you still need help with writing, it is available through Writing Support Services in the Student Success Centre (3rd floor of the Taylor Family Digital Library):

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>.



<http://www.cartoonstock.com/>

(Image Copyright Unknown)

<sup>6</sup> George Orwell, "Politics and the English Language" (1946): [http://www.orwell.ru/library/essays/politics/english/e\\_polit/](http://www.orwell.ru/library/essays/politics/english/e_polit/)

## **Important policies and information**

### *Absence From a Mid-term Examination:*

Students who are absent from a scheduled term test or quiz for legitimate reasons (e.g. illness with the appropriate documentation) are responsible for contacting the instructor via email within 48 hours of the missed test to discuss alternative arrangements. A copy of this email may be requested as proof of the attempt to contact the instructor. Any student who fails to do so forfeits the right to a makeup test.

### *Deferral of a Final Examination:*

Deferral of a final examination can be granted for reasons of illness, domestic affliction, and unforeseen circumstances, as well as to those with three (3) final exams scheduled within a 24-hour period. Deferred final exams will not be granted to those who sit the exam, who have made travel arrangements that conflict with their exam, or who have misread the examination timetable. The decision to allow a deferred final exam rests not with the instructor but with Enrolment Services. Instructors should, however, be notified if you will be absent during the examination. The Application for Deferred Final Exam, deadlines, requirements and submission instructions can be found on the Enrolment Services website at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/exams/deferred-exams>.

### *Appeals:*

If a student has a concern about the course or a grade they have been assigned, they must first discuss their concerns with the instructor. If this does not resolve the matter, the student then proceed with an academic appeal. The first step in an academic appeal is to set up a meeting with the Department Head. Appeals must be requested within 15 days of receipt of the graded assignment.

### *University Regulations:*

Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the University policies found in the Academic Regulations sections of the Calendar at [www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/academic-regs.html](http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/academic-regs.html).

### *Student Accommodations:*

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit [www.ucalgary.ca/access/](http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/).

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor.

The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.pdf>.

### *Plagiarism And Other Forms Of Academic Misconduct:*

Academic misconduct in any form (e.g. cheating, plagiarism) is a serious academic offence that can lead to disciplinary probation, suspension or expulsion from the University. Students are expected to be familiar with the standards surrounding academic honesty; these can be found in the University of Calgary calendar at

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-5.html>. Such offences will be taken seriously and reported immediately, as required by Faculty of Arts policy.

*Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP):*

FOIP legislation requires that instructors maintain the confidentiality of student information. In practice, this means that student assignment and tests cannot be left for collection in any public place without the consent of the student. It also means that grades cannot be distributed via email. Final exams are kept by instructors but can be viewed by contacting them or the main office in the Department of Political Science. Any uncollected assignments and tests meant to be returned will be destroyed after six months from the end of term; final examinations are destroyed after one year.

*Evacuation Assembly Points:*

In the event of an emergency evacuation from class, students are required to gather in designated assembly points. Please check the list found at [www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints](http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints) and note the assembly point nearest to your classroom.

*Faculty of Arts Program Advising and Student Information Resources:*

For program planning and advice, visit the Arts Students' Centre in Social Sciences 102, call 403-220-3580 or email [artsads@ucalgary.ca](mailto:artsads@ucalgary.ca). You can also visit [arts.ucalgary.ca/advising](http://arts.ucalgary.ca/advising) for program assistance.

For registration (add/drop/swap), paying fees and assistance with your Student Centre, contact Enrolment Services at (403) 210-ROCK [7625] or visit their office in the MacKimmie Library Block.

*Important Contact Information:*

Campus Security and Safewalk (24 hours a day/7 days a week/365 days a year)  
Phone: 403-220-5333

Faculty of Arts Undergraduate Students' Union Representatives  
Phone: 403-220-6551  
Email: [arts1@su.ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts1@su.ucalgary.ca), [arts2@su.ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts2@su.ucalgary.ca), [arts3@su.ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts3@su.ucalgary.ca), [arts4@su.ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts4@su.ucalgary.ca)  
Students' Union URL: [www.su.ucalgary.ca](http://www.su.ucalgary.ca)

Graduate Students' Association  
Phone: 403-220-5997  
Email: [ask@gsa.ucalgary.ca](mailto:ask@gsa.ucalgary.ca)  
URL: [www.ucalgary.ca/gsa](http://www.ucalgary.ca/gsa)

Student Ombudsman  
Phone: 403-220-6420  
Email: [ombuds@ucalgary.ca](mailto:ombuds@ucalgary.ca)

**Campus Mental Health Resources:**

SU Wellness Centre: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/>  
Campus Mental Health Strategy: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/mentalhealth/>