

Course Information

Number:	PS111
Name:	Introduction to Political Science
Description:	An overview of the basic principles, terminology and methods used to study politics in the United States and around the world. This course also will introduce students to international politics, political thought, and the decision-making process.
Credit(s):	3
Offered (DAY schedule):	
Instructor Permission Required:	N
Pre-Requisite(s):	

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, the student shall have an introductory knowledge of the following:

- (1) The Role of Power in Politics,
- (2) Major Political Theories and Ideologies,
- (3) American National Government and Politics,
- (4) Comparative Political Systems,
- (5) International Relations,
- (6) Basic Research Methodology.

PS111: Introduction to Political Science

Thomas College
Fall 2018

Professor: Dr. John D. Majewski

Day and Time: MWF | 12:00–12:50

Office: AL-141, Alford Academic Center

Hours: M/W/F 11:00–11:30, 1:00–1:30, T/Th 11:00–11:45, or other times by appointment

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Course web page available on Moodle

Catalog description for PS111: *An overview of the basic principles, terminology and methods used to study politics in the United States and around the world. This course also introduces students to international politics, political thought, and the decision-making process. (3 Credits)*

“The penalty good men pay for indifference to public affairs is to be ruled by evil men.”

—Plato

SUMMARY AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the study of politics by providing a preliminary overview of political science, as an academic discipline, which then will be the foundation for more advanced courses in the major or simply a better understanding of the political world. As the discipline is very broad, we will explore only some of the dominant questions, issues and interactions political scientists study, and how they go about studying them.


By the end of the course, successful students will be able to:

- demonstrate an introductory knowledge of the role of power in politics, major political theories and ideologies, the basic structure and functions of American national government and characteristics of American politics, various types and institutions of political systems around the world, international relations, and basic research methodology;
- differentiate between normative and descriptive approaches to politics;
- formulate a hypothesis and analyze political phenomena from a scientific approach;
- think critically about arguments relating to contemporary political issues and dilemmas.

Skills developed: Critical thinking, analytical reasoning, academic research, effective communication, and leadership.

Students are not required to have any background in political science, but should have some interest in politics.

REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

 Text (available at the [Bookstore website](#))

Douglas A. Van Belle, *A Novel Approach to Politics: Introducing Political Science through Books, Movies, and Popular Culture*, 4th edition (CQ Press, 2015)

Supplemental readings will be posted on Moodle as PDF files or available externally online. Since many of our class discussions will relate to current political events, additional readings may be added during the semester but these should be fairly minimal in length. You are responsible for all content and announcements (e.g., class cancellation, changes in reading assignments, et cetera) posted on this site. Note: All students are assumed to have access to computers and leading office software, as well as basic skills navigating the World Wide Web.

Optional books:

Gregory M. Scott and Stephen M. Garrison, *The Political Science Student Writer's Manual and Reader's Guide*, 8th edition (Rowman & Littlefield, 2016). [Note: This reference book is strongly recommended for Poli Sci majors/minors.]

Kenneth Hoover and Todd Donovan, *The Elements of Social Scientific Thinking*, 11th edition (Thomson Wadsworth, 2014)

Grading: Grades are based on the instructor's judgment of student comprehension of course material presented in lectures, assigned readings and class discussions. The following methods of assessment will be used.

✓ Exams (150 points)

There will be three exams, each worth 50 points. Examination material will be drawn from course readings, lectures, classroom discussions, and films and video clips shown in class. Each exam will be on roughly one-third of the course; a study guide will be posted on Moodle prior to each exam. Format will consist of some combination of multiple-choice, IDs, short-answer and/or short-essay questions. If you get less than 36 points on an exam (the equivalent of below a C), you should come to see me as soon as possible. **Make-up exams will be given only if you have a valid medical or personal reason for not being at the exam** (e.g., death of an immediate family member), communicate with me either by email or telephone before the exam, and provide corroborating documentation; otherwise, a zero will be given for that exam. A make-up exam must be taken within one week of the original exam date unless there are very special circumstances.

Note: Per College policy, the final exam is to be administered during finals week. The time and date are determined by the powers that be and cannot be changed.

✓ Term Paper (35 points)

Students are required to write a short paper (about 4-5 pages, double-spaced) in which a hypothesis on political party identification is developed and supported using empirical data. (Note: the argument and analysis must be based on research and reading that

extends beyond class reading assignments.) Your paper should include the following: (a) an introduction, (b) major points that are well-organized and developed, (c) evidence in support of claims, and (d) a conclusion. Papers will be graded on substance, as well as grammar and style. More specific guidelines will be posted on Moodle sometime during the first few weeks of the semester. Papers are due at the beginning of class on the last regularly scheduled session of the course. Late papers will be penalized $\frac{1}{2}$ letter grade for each 24-hour period after the original deadline (e.g., a "B" paper one day late will earn a "B-"). Papers more than a week late will not be accepted.

✓ **Participation (15 points)**

A typical class session will consist of a mixture of lectures and class discussions. Each student is encouraged to *actively participate* in classroom and online discussions by offering opinions and raising issues for debate. Most class discussions will use the readings and/or current domestic or international developments as a point of departure. This means you will need to complete the assigned readings before each class session. This also means that you should keep up with current events by reading a leading newspaper daily. Two very good daily news sources are *The NY Times* (www.nytimes.com) and *The Wall Street Journal* (online.wsj.com/home-page), however you may read any reputable newspaper. Discussion is a key part of the learning process. By actively taking part, you not only will improve your critical thinking skills but also increase your chances of doing well on the exams and written assignments. Grading will be based on the quantity/ consistency (i.e., number of classes throughout the semester in which you participate) and quality (i.e., substantive value) of your contributions. Note: This part of your grade also may incorporate in-class group activities, quizzes, and homework, including short writing assignments and/or data analysis.

The course grade will be based on the following point system:

Grade	Total Points	Demonstrated Level of Understanding
A	190-200	Excellent mastery of the material
A-	180-189	
B+	174-179	Very Good
B	166-173	Good
B-	160-165	
C+	154-159	
C	146-153	Satisfactory
C-	140-145	
D+	134-139	Poor
D	126-133	
F	<120	Does not meet college level expectations

Note: Extra credit opportunities are offered at the professor's discretion.

An Incomplete is given at the course instructor's discretion. As a general rule, this will not be an option to the student without a valid medical reason. In this case, students must (1) provide documentation from a physician stating that you are unable to complete the course, (2) have a passing course grade and be near completion of all required coursework, and (3) complete the missed work within a specific, assigned period of time. Note: Per the Registrar's office, an Incomplete is a temporary grade and will revert automatically to an F if the required work is not completed within the time limit.

Deadline for dropping the course: *"The last date to drop a course is Monday, October 29th. All students registered after that date will receive a grade for the course. No grades of L or W will be issued after that date."*

Attendance Policy: Regular attendance is mandatory, and will be taken throughout the semester. If a serious problem arises during the semester, please see me. Missing more than three classes during the semester will result in a 5% penalty against your final course grade for each absence. For example, you accumulate 175 points toward your final grade but have missed four classes, your final grade will be based on 166 points. Excessive unexcused absences will result in a failing grade. Tardiness counts as an unexcused absence. If you anticipate an excused absence, please talk to me before the day you plan to be absent. (Note: ***The only excused absences are medical and family emergencies, with proper documentation*** from a physician or some other authoritative source submitted within two weeks of the missed class.) Keep in mind that you are responsible for announcements made and material covered in any class you miss.

Also please note the course instructor *may drop a student from a course because of excessive absences or because of student conduct judged inappropriate or disruptive by the faculty member.*

Additional Policies and Comments

Academic honesty: All students are expected to comply with Thomas College's policy governing academic honesty (the policy outlining academic conduct can be found in the [Student Handbook](#)). Simply put, do your own work. When you use outside sources, you must cite them properly. Violation of the College's policy will result in a "0" for the exam or assignment. A second offense may result in course failure and other appropriate actions.

Students with disabilities: Any students with special learning needs or a documented disability that may require some modification of seating, testing or other class requirements should inform me as soon as possible so that appropriate arrangements can be made. For more information, please contact the Student Affairs Office or the [Center for Academic Support](#).

General support: Tutors are available in the [Student Success Center](#), Room AL-112 (email: tutorcoord@thomas.edu).

Class etiquette: *Thomas College views as unacceptable any behavior which infringes on the right, safety, property, and respect of another person or which impedes the educational process of any member of the College community (see Student Conduct Code in the [Student Handbook](#)).* This

means students are to treat the classroom and each other with respect; we can engage in lively debate while maintaining an open attitude and respecting a diversity of viewpoints, ideas, and backgrounds as we consider various political issues. Therefore, students are asked to refrain from making comments that may be disruptive to the learning environment. Abusive language, which includes, but is not limited to, derogatory or discriminatory comments, will not be tolerated. Students who disturb class may be asked to leave the class session.

Also:

- Please be to class on time. If you must leave class early, let me know prior to the start of class and leave without disrupting the class.
- Modern conveniences such as telecommunication devices are a significant distraction and should be turned off prior to coming to class.
- Please do not web surf, check email or social media, text message, listen to an iPod, read a newspaper or engage in any other similar activity during class. Any student caught doing so during class will be assessed a 5-point penalty for each occurrence.
- You are free to bring a beverage to class, but please limit food.

Written work: Unless otherwise specified, written assignments are to be typed, meet basic style guidelines (APA, MLA, Chicago, etc. – see [Research and Citation Resources](#)). Please submit all assignments electronically via Moodle by the beginning of class on the assignment's due date, unless another time is expressly stated. (After class begins, assignments will be considered late so do not skip class just to finish an assignment.) Late assignments will not be accepted without a penalty. Note: A computer mishap will not excuse a late paper; you should make frequent and multiple back-ups of your work. As a student, you are ultimately responsible for communicating *proactively* with me regarding any necessary issues. Also note that in order to maintain a fair playing field for all students, I do not accept rewritten or substitute assignments.

Recording: Video and/or audio recording without instructor permission is prohibited.

E-Portfolio (from College policy): E-portfolios allow students an opportunity to store work they feel demonstrates their proficiency in the four Thomas College Core Competencies of Communication, Leadership and Service, Analytical Reasoning and Community & Interpersonal Relations. Because it's an electronic format, a variety of file types can be stored in the portfolios. For this course, you may wish to consider placing the hypothesis paper in your e-portfolio used to satisfy the Analytical Reasoning or Communication Competency section. (Your e-portfolio is located on SharePoint Online, part of Office 365.)

Accessing Moodle: To access the course web page, go to the homepage for Thomas (www.thomas.edu), then click on Quick Links and select Moodle. Select User Login and enter your username and password, then, under My Courses, click on PS111. (For help with your username and/or password, see: [Moodle video tutorials](#), or call the IS Help Desk at 859-1204.) Note that it is the student's responsibility to activate her/his Thomas e-mail account and check it regularly for messages related to this course.

Disclaimer: Any or all parts of this syllabus are tentative and subject to revision based on the needs of the class. Any changes will be announced in class and/or posted on Moodle. It is the responsibility of the student to keep up with any amendments to the requirements, policies, and schedule for this course. Also please note that statements made in lectures and during discussion are for teaching purposes only and do not necessarily reflect my personal views.

Enrollment in this course implies acceptance of all stated policies and requirements.

TOPICS AND READING SCHEDULE

The course is structured loosely around the following outline and likely will be modified throughout the semester.

Monday, August 27---Class syllabus & discussion of politics

August 29 & 31

The Ideal vs. the Real

read Van Belle, *A Novel Approach to Politics*, Chapter 1

Jonathan Rauch, "How American Politics Went Insane," *The Atlantic* (July/Aug 2016)

recommended: Richard Florida, "Can Data Predict Political Revolutions?" *The Atlantic* (Mar. 1, 2011) [Moodle]; Chap. 1, "Introduction: Studying Politics" [online]; Chap. 2 from Ellen Grigsby, *Analyzing Politics* [Moodle]; David Wearing, "How scientific is political science?" *Guardian.com* (March 8, 2010) [online]; Rogers M. Smith, "Should We Make Political Science More of a Science or More about Politics?" *PS: Political Science and Politics* (June 2002) [online]

September 3 No classes – Labor Day

Weeks 2&3--- September 5–14

Why Government?

read Van Belle, Chap. 2;

Jon Meacham, "The History of Power," *Newsweek* (Dec. 20, 2008) [online]

Film: *Lord of the Flies*

recommended: Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Chapter 18 [online]; Robert A. Dahl, "The Concept of Power," *Behavioral Science* (July 1957) [online]; James H. Fowler and Darren Schreiber, "Biology, Politics, and the Emerging Science of Human Nature," *Science* (Nov. 6, 2008) [online]; Herman Simon, "Human Nature in Politics" [online]; Geoffrey Cowley, "The Roots of Good and Evil" (Feb. 26, 1996) [Moodle]

Week 4

Governing Society

read Van Belle, Chap. 3;

Dan Jones, "The Emerging Moral Psychology," *Prospect Mag.* (Apr. 27, 2008) [online]

recommended: Edward Skidelsky, "The Return of Goodness," *Prospect Magazine* (Sept., 28 2008) [online]; Vincent Lloyd, "How Democracy Hurts," *The Good Society* (2010) [Moodle]

Week 5

Government's Role in the Economy

read Van Belle, Chap. 4 (pages 102-117);

"The Gated Globe," *The Economist* (Oct 12, 2013) [online]

recommended: "It's Mine I tell You: Mankind's Inner Chimpanzee," *The Economist* (2008) [online]; "America's Economy," *The Economist* (July 29, 2011) [online]; Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science* (Dec. 13, 1968) [Moodle]

documentaries: *Ethos*; and *Frontline: Inside The Meltdown* (PBS) [YouTube]

September 26 EXAM 1

Week 6

Structures and Institutions

read Van Belle, Chap. 5;

recommended: Garth Kemerling, "Plato: The State and the Soul" [online]; Robert A. Dahl, "What Political Institutions Does Large-Scale Democracy Require?" *Political Science Quarterly* (Summer2005) [Academic Search Premier]; Jonathan Cohn, "System failure," *Boston Globe* (July 29, 2007) [online]; Larry Diamond, "Chinese Communism and the 70-Year Itch," *The Atlantic* (Oct 29, 2013) [online]; Francis Fukuyama, "The Decay of American Political Institutions," *The American Interest* (Dec. 8, 2013)

October 8 No Classes – Columbus Day

Week 7--- October 10 & 12

The Executive

read Van Belle, Chap. 6

recommended: Micah Zenko, "The Warrior King," *Foreign Policy* (Feb. 6, 2013) [online]

Week 8--- October 15 & 17

The Legislative

read Van Belle, Chap. 7 (pages 190-202, 209)

Week 8--- October 19 & Week 9--- October 22

The Courts

read Van Belle, Chap. 9 (pages 242-256, 267-272);

Garrett Epps, "The Supreme Court's Key Role in Polarizing American Politics," *The Atlantic* (Sept. 27, 2013) [[online](#)]

October 24 EXAM 2

Week 10

The Democratic Ideal

read Van Belle, Chap. 10;

"What's Gone Wrong with Democracy," *The Economist* (Mar 1, 2014) [[online](#)]

recommended: Niall Ferguson, "The Revolution Blows Up," *Newsweek* (June 05, 2011) [Moodle]; Anthony Gottlieb, "Win or Lose: No voting system is flawless," *The New Yorker* (July 26, 2010) [[online](#)]; Larry Diamond, "The Democratic Rollback," *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 2008) [[online](#)]; Carles Boix, "The Roots of Democracy," *Policy Review* (Feb. 1, 2006) [[online](#)]; Fareed Zakaria, "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy," *Foreign Affairs* (Nov/Dec 1997) [[online](#)]; Philippe Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, "[What Democracy Is...and Is Not](#)," *Journal of Democracy* (Summer 1991) [Moodle]; Excerpts from [E. Bernstein's *Evolutionary Socialism*](#) (full text here)

Week 11

Media, Politics, and Government

read Van Belle, Chap. 11

recommended: Derek Thompson, "Why Do Americans Distrust the Media?" *The Atlantic* (Sept 16, 2016) [[online](#)]; Richard Paul and Linda Elder, "Critical Thinking: How to Detect Media Bias & Propaganda in National and World News," (Foundation for Critical Thinking, 2004) [[online](#)]

November 12 No Classes – Veteran's Day

Weeks 12 & 13--- November 14–19

International Politics

read Van Belle, Chap. 12;

Stephen M. Walt, "The Bad Old Days Are Back," *Foreign Policy* (May 2, 2014) [[online](#)];

Michael Klare, "America's Dying Delusions of Empire" (May 31, 2015) [Moodle]

recommended: Jack Snyder, "One World, Rival Theories," *Foreign Policy* (Nov/Dec 2004) [[online](#)]; Robert D. Kaplan, "The Vietnam Solution," *The Atlantic* (June 2012) [[online](#)]; Christopher Layne, "Graceful Decline," *The American Conservative* (May 1, 2010) [[online](#)]; Robert Kagan, "End of Dreams, Return of History," *Policy Review* (Aug/Sept 2007) [[online](#)]; Peter J. Beck "The Relevance of the 'irrelevant': Football as a Missing Dimension in the Study of British Relations with Germany," *International Affairs* (2003) [[online](#)]

November 21–23 Thanksgiving Vacation

Week 14

International Politics (continued)

Jessica Stern, "The Islamic State Paradox," *Politico Mag.* (Nov 17, 2015) [[online](#)]

recommended: Walter Russell Mead, "How to Beat ISIS: The President Is Partly Right," *The American Interest* (11/16/2015) [[online](#)]

Week 15

Political Culture

read Van Belle, Chap. 14;

Ronald Brownstein, "Culture Is Replacing Class as the Key Political Divide," *The Atlantic* (Jun 30, 2016) [[online](#)]

recommended: Frank Rich, "The Class War Has Begun," *New York Magazine* (Oct 23, 2011) [[online](#)]; Robert D. Putnam, "Tuning In, Tuning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America," *PS: Political Science and Politics* (Dec. 1995) [[online](#)]; Stephen Chilton, "Defining Political Culture," *The Western Political Quarterly* (Sept. 1988); [[online](#)]
Stanley Milgram, "The Perils of Obedience," *Harper's Magazine* (Dec. 1973) [[online](#)]

Course Wrap-up

December 7 **Term Paper Due**

FINAL EXAM – Monday, December 10th at 1:00 p.m.

**Additional Readings** (recommended but NOT required for the course)

Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451: A Novel* (any edition)

Franklin Foer, *How Soccer Explains the World: An Unlikely Theory of Globalization* (Harper Perennial, 2005)

William Golding, *Lord of the Flies* (any edition)

Robert A. Heinlein, *Starship Troopers* (any edition)

Arthur Koestler, *Darkness at Noon* (any edition)

Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* (University of Chicago Press, 1985) [e-version available [here](#)]

David Miller, *Political Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2003)

George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (any edition)

