

University of Toronto
Department of Political Science
POL101
The Real World of Politics
Fall 2025

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Course description

Welcome to POL 101, The Real World of Politics! This course examines politics through the major themes, issues, and questions that have defined the 21st Century. Students will engage the concepts and debates that anchor the field of political science through lectures and discussions that directly address contemporary political problems and issues such as climate change, elections and electoral systems, liberalism, race and critical race theory, democracy, Indigenous rights, social movements, political participation, the politics of personal responsibility, and political hope. Students will also learn important academic skills in this course, including how to take notes, how to read and think critically, and how to write. This is a terrific course to take in first year because our TAs are specially trained to teach writing, and the course assignments are also designed to teach critical thinking and writing.

Learning Objectives:

Through this course, students will:

- Deepen their understanding of the political events, ideas, and debates that are shaping the world
- Learn to take notes
- Become comfortable reading and extracting information from a variety of sources, including academic articles and books, media articles, reports, and podcasts
- Critically evaluate a variety of sources, analyzing the substance and merits of their arguments
- Develop their ability to make persuasive written and verbal arguments about politics

Overview

This class will be conducted in person. The course includes one weekly lecture and one weekly tutorial. If you have not yet signed up for a tutorial, please do so immediately.

In order to fully understand the lecture, students should complete the reading before the lecture. Tutorials will also be conducted with the expectation that students have attended lecture and completed the reading for the week and come prepared to discuss both.

Students should plan to do the reading before lecture each week.

Readings

All the readings for the course are available online or posted on Quercus. The reading load for this course is not heavy, but some of it will be written in a style that is not familiar.

Tutorials

Students in this course must attend a weekly tutorial. All tutorials are in person. Tutorials will involve a combination of group discussions, small group work, and opportunities to practice and get feedback on important writing-related skills.

Each tutorial group is assigned a TA, who will lead your discussions and be available to you for office hours and by email. ***Your TA should be your primary point of contact for any questions about this course.***

GRADING SCHEME

Assignments – 50 %

Assignment 1: Introductory paragraph, including thesis statement.

In tutorial, week of October 6 (15%)

Assignment 2: Using evidence to make a persuasive argument

In tutorial, week of November 3 (15%)

Assignment 3: Short essay

Due November 28, 11:59PM (15%)

Participation – 20%

Your participation in tutorial will be evaluated by your TA, based on tutorial attendance, active engagement in class discussion, and evidence that you have attended the lecture and completed the reading for the week.

Final exam (in person during exam period) – 35%

Late policy

Late assignments will be penalized at a rate of 1% per day for up to seven days. Assignments cannot be submitted more than seven days after the due date.

Corrupted files policy

It is virtually impossible for a file to become corrupted through submission to Quercus.

Therefore “corrupted files” will be penalized as late submissions. If you are concerned about your file being corrupted, please copy and paste the text of your assignment into the text box of an email and send it to the TA at the time of your submission. This way, if anything happens to your file, you can show that it was completed on time.

Extension policy

If you require an extension on the final essay, you should reach out to your TA *before* the assignment is due. Extensions will be granted for valid medical or family-related reasons.

Extensions will be no more than one week (7 days). Students registered with Accessibility must also request an extension before the assignment is due, and will be given extensions of no more than one week.

Grade Appeals

If you believe that an error has been made in one of your assignment grades, you should send an email or private Quercus message to your grading TA explaining the error, with clear reference to the answer key or rubric for the assignment. It is your responsibility to demonstrate that your work merits a higher grade. Grade appeals must be raised within seven (7) days of the assignment being returned to you.

If you are unable to resolve the issue with the grading TA, you may appeal to the Head TA. He can be reached at i.an@mail.utoronto.ca. Your appeal should clearly explain why the work you submitted warrants a higher grade than it received, with clear and explicit reference to the answer key and/or rubric.

If you believe an error has been made with your participation grade, you may appeal to your Tutorial TA. Tutorial TAs have total discretion over participation grades; you may not appeal to the Head TA or Professor to overturn a TA's decision regarding participation.

Plagiarism

Cheating and plagiarism are serious academic offences. University policy requires that course instructors refer suspected plagiarism cases to the Office of Academic Integrity for resolution. For further clarification and information, please see the University of Toronto's policy on plagiarism at <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize>

“Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University’s plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool’s reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University’s use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>).”

Use of generative AI

You may use artificial intelligence tools, including generative AI, in this course as learning aids. If you choose to use artificial intelligence tools, you must submit, as an appendix with your assignment(s), a 150–200-word reflection on how you made use of generative artificial intelligence tools in the development of the assignment(s). Your reflection must include what tools you used, how you used them, and how you incorporated the results from AI into your assignment. In addition, any content produced by an artificial intelligence tool must be cited appropriately (view the U of T Libraries Citation Guide for Artificial Intelligence Generative Tools). Finally, the course instructor and TAs reserve the right to ask students to explain their process for creating their assignment

The use of AI in this course should prompt students to think critically about how AI can be used effectively as a learning tool and not just a shortcut.

Resources

Accessibility Services: The university is fully committed to providing students with fair access to their courses. Students with special needs or disabilities are strongly encouraged to register with Accessibility Services to arrange for needed accommodations.

Writing Support: Students can attend workshops and arrange one-on-one appointments for feedback on their written work. Students can visit www.writing.utoronto.ca for information and advice on all aspects of academic writing. Students are encouraged to make use of the college writing centers for individualized consultations on their written assignments. Interested students should book their appointments with the writing centers early, as they fill up fast. Information about the writing centers is available at <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres/arts-and-science>. Students can also take advantage of the Library's free "Writing Plus" academic skills workshop series, described at <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/writing-plus>. International students can find information about the English Language Learning program (ELL), which includes practice opportunities for improving oral communication and critical reading skills, at <http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/advising/ell>.

Registrar Support: Students are encouraged to contact their registrar promptly if they experience unexpected challenges during the course that may require accommodations.

Health and Wellness: Students can access a wide range of programs and services to support their health and wellbeing. Many of these programs are listed at: <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/health-wellness/> 6

Crisis Support: Students in distress can access a range of free crisis lines available from the University of Toronto and the City of Toronto, as listed below:

- University of Toronto: <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/task/support-when-you-feel-distressed/>
- City of Toronto: <https://www.toronto.ca/311/knowledgebase/kb/docs/articles/311-toronto/information-and-business-development/crisis-lines-suicide-depression-telephone-support-lines-non-crisis-mental-health-services.html>

Most of these crisis lines are available 24 hours a day and some address specific problems that students may be experiencing. Immediate assistance is available as follows:

- My SSP for University of Toronto Students: 1-844-451-9700.
- Good 2 Talk Student Helpline: 1-866-925-5454
- Gerstein Crisis Centre: 416-929-5200
- Distress Centres of Greater Toronto: 416-408-HELP (4357)
- The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH): 250 College Street (walk-in)

You are not alone: please get help if you're experiencing difficulties or are in distress.

Course Outline

Readings and other class materials (occasionally podcasts or videos) are posted in weekly modules on Quercus. Readings may be changed over the course of the semester – if in doubt always read what is in the Quercus module. Tutorials will start in the first week of the semester (the week of September 8, 2025).

September 8: Introduction

No reading

September 15: Democracy and elections

Read: Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die*, Chapter 5, “The guardrails of democracy.”

Read: Senator Chris Murphy, Democrat of Connecticut, Senate floor speech, April 2025

Listen: *The New Yorker* podcast interview with Levitsky and Ziblatt, November 14, 2024
<https://www.newyorker.com/podcast/the-new-yorker-radio-hour/the-authors-of-how-democracies-die-on-the-new-democratic-minority>

September 22: Participation and social movements

Read: Schlozman, Verba, and Brady, “Participation is not a Paradox: The View from American Activists” *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 25, No.1 (Jan. 1995) pp1-36

Read: Deva Woodly, Chapter one, *Reckoning: Black Lives Matter and the Democratic Necessity of Social Movements*, Oxford University Press, 2021

September 29: Liberalism and personal responsibility

Read: Ryan, Alan. 1993. “Liberalism.” In *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy*, edited by Robert E. Goodin and Philip Pettit, 291–311. Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell Pub.

Read: Wiedemann, Andreas and Wise, Tess, “The Dog-Whistle Politics of Personal Responsibility, Credit, and the American Welfare State,” (July 17, 2020)

Listen: “Reasons to be cheerful podcast: The winner takes it all” with Michael Sandel

October 6: Race and critical race theory

Read: Kimberle Crenshaw, “Race, Reform and Retrenchment: Transformation and Legitimation in Antidiscrimination Law,” 101 *Harvard Law Review*, 1331 (1988)

October 13: No class (Thanksgiving)

October 20: Citizenship and immigration

Read: Irene Bloemraad, Anna Korteweg, Gokce Yurdakul, “Citizenship and Immigration: Multiculturalism, Assimilation, and Challenges to the Nation State,” *Annual Review of Sociology*, 2008. 34, 153-79 <https://www-annualreviews-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/docserver/fulltext/so/34/1/annurev.soc.34.040507.134608.pdf?expires=1755128020&id=id&accname=ar-251838&checksum=36981F2CCE8AD5A69A68A6941CA5BD06>

October 27: No class (Fall reading week)

November 3: Competitive Authoritarianism, guest lecture Professor Lucan Way

Read: “The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism.” (with Steven Levitsky) *Journal of Democracy*. 13:2 (April 2002), 51-65.

Read: Levitsky, Way, and Ziblatt, “How will we know when we have lost our democracy?” NYT May 8, 2025

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/05/08/opinion/trump-authoritarianism-democracy.html>

November 10: War and other conflicts

Read: Conflict trends: a global overview. <https://lupa.com.ec/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Rustad-Conflict-Trends-1946-2024-PRIO-Paper.pdf>

Read: Jack Levy, "Theories and causes of war," in Christopher J. Coyne and Rachel L. Mathers, eds. *The Handbook on the Political Economy of War*, Cheltenham, UK, Edward Elgar, 2011, 13-33 <https://fas-polisci.rutgers.edu/levy/articles/2011%20Theories%20&%20Causes%20of%20War.pdf>

Read: The territorial roots of interstate conflict, <https://saisreview.sais.jhu.edu/the-territorial-roots-of-interstate-conflict/>

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November 17: Reconciliation

Read: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. 2015. *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. "Legacy," pp. 135-183

Read: Courtney Jung. 2018. "Reconciliation: Six Reasons to Worry." *Journal of Global Ethics* 14 (2): 252–65.

November 24: Climate change

Read: Jessica Green, "Global Climate Policy Beyond the Paris Agreement," *Political Science and Politics*, Sept 7, 2023

December 1: Political Hope

Read: Loren Goldman, "Introduction," *The Principle of Political Hope*, Oxford University Press, 2023