

Faculty of Arts and Science  
 Department of Political Science  
 Fall term 2025

**POL 485 H1S**  
**Topics in Political Thought: Institutions of Liberal Democracy**  
**Fall 2025**  
**Syllabus: 4 March 2025**

**Meets: Thursdays, 1-3 p.m.,** OISE (OI) Room 4422.

**Note: class will not meet during week 2 (11 September).**

**INSTRUCTOR:**

Andrew Sabl (rhymes with “bauble”)

Professor of Political Science

Email: andrew.sabl@utoronto.ca

(Emails will be answered within 24 hours. **Feel free to re-send if one is not.**)

Sidney Smith Hall (100 St. George St.), Room 3030

Office hours (**that is, student meeting hours, whether or not you have a particular problem**):

Friday, 10 a.m.-noon, or by appointment (but no office hours the first week of class or during reading week).

Please make appointments via Calendly app:

<https://calendly.com/andrew-sabl/office-hour-meeting>

Meetings at other times are also possible, including Zoom meetings if necessary: please email.

However, please schedule a meeting for office hours if at all possible.

**COURSE THEMES:**

This course will examine familiar political institutions and practices from the perspective of historical and contemporary political-theory debates regarding their foundations, their ontological basis (that is, their essence or fundamental nature—we’ll discuss what this means in class); their normative point(s) or purpose(s), and proposals for improving them. Topics to include the rule of law, representative democracy, political parties, the market, the welfare state, and the administrative state.

The course will explore—though not impose—some tentative theses: regarding what these institutions and practices have in common:

(1) They are **distinctively modern**, in three senses

—they are large-scale rather than face-to-face;

—they operate by managing conflict and diversity rather than seeking ethical agreement or respecting an alleged cosmic hierarchy;

—they involve steady improvement and borrowing of best practices rather than hearkening back to an idealized past.

(2) They draw their justification in theory, and their robustness in practice, from their ability in a rough sense to **promote the interests of all members of society**. To the extent that they fail to do so, they are constantly open to criticism, and demands for reform, on that basis.

(3) They promote **multiple values and purposes** rather than giving exclusive priority to one.

(4) They **do not require a plan or consensus regarding the reasons behind them**. They often arise as the unintended consequences of acts by agents who would not favor the way they end up

working; their aggregate effect often does not reflect the desired outcome of any one agent; they persist and flourish in spite of disagreement among their analysts and defenders regarding their foundation or justification.

(5) They tend to **conflict with one another in real but manageable ways**: each of the above institutions tends to assert authority over the others. Modern, pluralistic societies must, but usually can, constantly negotiate, settle, and resettle the boundaries among these institutions.

### **REQUIREMENTS (all assignments due via Quercus):**

- |    |  |                                      |
|----|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1. | Self-description (name and a few sentences, photo optional but encouraged) due Sunday, 21 September, 11:59 p.m. (via Quercus). | <b>Weight: 1 extra-credit point.</b> |
| 2. | Short paper (1100-1500 words) on an assigned topic (with choice), Due Sunday, 19, October, 11:59 p.m.                          | <b>Weight: 15 percent</b>            |
| 3. | Précis (500-600 wds., including outline and short bibliography) of term paper, due Sunday, 9 November, 11:59 p.m.              | <b>Weight: 10 percent</b>            |
| 4. | Term paper (3000-3600 words), due Sunday, Nov. 30 (with lots of flexibility on extensions)                                     | <b>Weight: 65 percent</b>            |
| 5. | Attendance and quality of participation  | <b>Weight: 10 percent</b>            |

### **Submission of Assignments**

Papers must be turned in via Quercus: no hard copies will be accepted. The paper assignments will appear in Quercus under "Assignments".

To avoid the risk of lost work, you should retain an electronic copy and a backup copy (hard copy, or an electronic copy stored in the cloud or somewhere other than the device where the original is) of all work submitted. You are strongly advised to retain the rough work, notes, and draft material that went into the essay or assignment in case there is any question regarding academic integrity (see below).

### **Quercus and Email**

Course assignments and guidelines will be posted on the course webpage on Quercus. You *must* have a valid UTOR email and set it so that you will receive course announcements. You are expected to consult Quercus regularly and to enable prompt (same-day) Quercus announcements so that you will hear promptly about urgent matters.

### **Email protocol**

- Please leave adequate time for a response. For instance, do not assume that a request for more time to submit course work will be read and answered if submitted two hours before work is due.
- As noted above, **if I fail to respond to an email within 24 hours, please feel free to re-send it. You will never be penalized, formally or informally, for doing so.**
- Please consult the syllabus or Quercus before asking questions that are answered there.
- Norms of politeness apply.

### **Late Work Policy**

*Late papers and other assignments will be penalized three points on the 100-point U of T grading scale per day late or part thereof.* Exceptions may be granted to students who have faced serious medical or other emergencies, and who have substantial and convincing documentation fully accounting for the length of delay. If you are facing such a situation, inform the instructor as soon as possible. **It is**

course policy to be understanding when you face difficult circumstances, but please contact the instructor as far in advance as possible and provide as much detail as is consistent with university rules, medical privacy, etc.

### **Smartphone and Laptop Policy**

Laptops are allowed during class for note-taking purposes. You will learn less, and receive a lower mark, to the extent that you use them for any other purpose. (You are encouraged to explore apps that turn off internet access for a specified period, thus enabling you to devote your full attention to learning. The instructor recommends, but does not profit from, an app called Freedom.)

**Cellphones/smartphones should *not* be used during class, since there is no pedagogical reason for doing so.** Those using smartphones during class, even quietly, may be asked to stop. Please contact the instructor for any exceptions (e.g. disability accommodations). In almost all cases, however, those can be accommodated through the use of laptops.

Those awaiting urgent messages should seat themselves near an exit; put their phones on vibrate; and excuse themselves from the classroom if they receive an alert requiring the use of a phone.

### **\*\*Academic Integrity Issues (Please read these paragraphs more than once)**

The University of Toronto treats cases of academic misconduct very seriously. Academic integrity is a fundamental value of learning and scholarship at UofT. Participating honestly, respectfully, responsibly, and fairly in this academic community is the only method of ensuring that you learn what you are expected to learn at university and that your degree will be valued accordingly.

The University of Toronto's [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](#) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic misconduct, the processes for addressing academic offences, and the penalties that may be imposed. You are expected to read it and be familiar with it.

Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

In papers and assignments

- Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement
- Submitting your own work in more than one course without the instructor's permission
- Making up sources or facts
- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment (this includes working in groups on assignments that are supposed to be individual work, as *all* the assignments in the course are)

On tests and exams

- Using or possessing any unauthorized aid, including a cell phone.
- Looking at someone else's answers.
- Letting someone else look at your answers.
- Misrepresenting your identity.
- Submitting an altered test for re-grading.

Misrepresentation

- Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor's notes.
- Falsifying institutional documents or grades.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following the procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. If you have any questions about what is or is not permitted in this course, please do not hesitate to contact the instructor. If you have questions

about appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information from me or other available campus resources like the [College Writing Centres](#), the [Academic Success Centre](#), or the [U of T Writing Website](#).

**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>).**

If you object to using the plagiarism detection tool, please contact your TA to establish alternative arrangements for submission of your written assignments.

Once again, you are strongly encouraged to retain an electronic file or other copy of each of your papers before submitting it to your TA, in case the submitted copy is lost.

The use of generative AI at any stage in the preparation of assignments (taking notes, outlining, drafting, revising), except for checking spelling, is prohibited. Such use will be considered a serious violation of academic integrity, under the category of "unauthorized assistance" (see above). You should also be aware that chatbots do not, as a rule, write good answers to the kind of questions posed in this course. Using them will therefore expose you to extreme hazards for negligible benefit.

### **TEXTS:**

All the readings marked on the syllabus are required, unless otherwise stated. Reading selections may be modified at the Instructor's discretion – you must consult Quercus regularly for new, revised or updated assignments.

Assigned books (order online or from UofT library; online access from the library is sometimes available as noted below). The final number is the ISBN-13 for easier ordering.

Lisa Jane Disch, *Making Constituencies: Representation as Mobilization in Mass Democracy*.

Univ. of Chicago Press, 2021. Available online through UofT library, with unlimited readers. 9780226804507.

Lon Fuller, *The Morality of Law*, Rev. ed. Yale Univ. Press, 1969. 9780300191653.

Available online through UofT library, with unlimited readers.

Hannah Fenichel Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation* (Univ. of California Press, 1972 [1967]).

Available online through UofT library, with unlimited readers—but a bit hard to find, so here's the link: <https://www-degruyter-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/document/doi/10.1525/9780520340503/html> ISBN:

9780520021563.

Jonathan White and Lea Ypi, *The Meaning of Partisanship* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2016). Available online through UofT library, with unlimited readers. 9780199684175.

### **CLASS FORMAT AND EXPECTATIONS**

**Students are expected to read the readings listed for each class section *before* coming to class.** Study questions about the readings will be distributed a few days before class. The professor will not

lecture but will make points throughout the class (and sometimes present a “reverse lecture”, lasting a few minutes, at the end).

Please bring an electronic or hard copy of each week’s reading to class.

## CLASS SCHEDULE

**Readings marked with an asterisk (\*) are articles/book chapters available via Quercus (under “Files”). Please bring an electronic or hard copy of each week’s reading to class.**

### I. Introduction and class outline (Week 1) 4 September

\*David Mayhew, “Political Science and Political Philosophy: Ontological not Normative.” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 33, No. 2 (June 2000): 192-193.

**WEEK 2 (11 SEPTEMBER): CLASS WILL NOT MEET’; the instructor will be attending the American Political Science Association’s annual conference.**

### II. The Rule of Law (Weeks 3-4) 18 September

Week 2: Basic concepts

Fuller, *The Morality of Law* (in print or online through the library):

—Appendix (245-253; please read this first);

—Chapter 1, pp. 1-13;

—Chapter 2, all (pp. 33-94); some skimming should be possible.

—Chapter 4, pp. 152-170, 178-86.

### Week 3: Complexities of the Rule of Law and the Role of Legislation 25 September

\*Jeremy Waldron, “The Rule of Law and the Importance of Procedure,” *NOMOS* 50 (2011): 3-31.

\*\_\_\_\_\_, “Legislation and the Rule of Law,” *Legisprudence* 1:1 (2007), 91-123.

### III. Representative Democracy (Weeks 5-7)

#### Week 4: The “Electoral” Model 2 October

\*Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* 3d ed. (Harper Perennial, 2008), Chapters 21 and 22 and Parts I and II of Chapter 23 (pp. 250-296).

\*Bernard Manin, *Principles of Representative Government*, Chapters 3-4 (pp. 94-160); some skimming should be possible.

Recommended: \*Adam Przeworski, “Minimalist Theory of Democracy: A Defense.” In Ian Shapiro and Casiano Hacker-Cordon (eds.), *Democracy’s Value*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Week 5: Representation as Democratic activity 9 October

\*Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*, Chapters 6 and 7.  
(Recommended: Chapter 4 on “descriptive” representation, and Chapter 10).

\*Jane Mansbridge, “Rethinking representation.” *American Political Science Review* 97, No. 4 (2003): 515-528.

Week 6: “Responsiveness”, Manipulation, and Constructed Political Identities 16 October

Disch, *Making Constituencies*:

—Introduction (“Responsiveness in Reverse”);

—Chapters 1, 2, 4 (“In Defense of *Mobilization*”, “From the Bedrock Norm to the Constituency Paradox”, and “Realism for Democrats”);

—Conclusion.

In the print edition this corresponds to pp. 1-50, 71-89, and 137-140. The online edition may differ slightly.

**Short paper due Sunday, 19 October, 11:59 p.m.**

**IV. Political Parties (Weeks 8-9)** 23 October

Week 7: Partisanship for the sake of Aggregation and Contestation

Assigned:

\*Russell Muirhead, “A Defense of Party Spirit.” *Perspectives on Politics* 4, No. 4 (2006): 713-727.

\*Russell Muirhead and Nancy L. Rosenblum, “The Political Theory of Parties and Partisanship: Catching Up.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 23 (2020): 95-110.

\*Shanto Iyengar et al., “The Origins and Consequences of Affective Polarization in the United States.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 22 (2019): 129-146.

Recommended:

\*Richard Johnston, “Affective Polarization in the Canadian Party System, 1988-2015.” Prepared for presentation at the 2019 annual meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, Vancouver, 4-6 June 2019.

<https://rgcjohnston.files.wordpress.com/2019/08/johnston-polarization-cpsa-2019-text.pdf>

\*Jon Kingzette, et al., “How Affective Polarization Undermines Support for Democratic Norms.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 85, No. 2 (2021): 663-677.

E.E. Schattschneider, *Party Government*. With a new Introduction by Sidney A. Pearson, Jr. London: Routledge, 2004 (1941). Available online through UofT library:

<https://doi-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/10.4324/9781315126050>

**30 October: Reading Week—No class.**

Week 8: Parties as Embodiments of Justification (?)

6 November

\*Jonathan White and Lea Ypi, *The Meaning of Partisanship* (Oxford University Press), Introduction and Chapters 1, 3, 6. Online via UofT library (<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199684175.001.0001>) but also available via Quercus under “Files/Week 8”.

**Term Paper Précis (with outline and brief bibliography) due Sunday, 9 November, 11:59 p.m.**

**V. The Market (Week 10)**

13 November

\*Leonard E. Reed, “I, Pencil: My Family Tree” (1958).  
<https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/read-i-pencil-my-family-tree-as-told-to-leonard-e-read-dec-1958>

Selections from Friedrich Hayek, TBA

**VI. The Welfare State (Week 11)**

20 November

\*Chapters from *The Welfare State Reader*, 3d ed. (Christopher Pierson, Francis G. Castles, and Ingela Naumann, eds.; Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 2013):  
—\*Asa Briggs, “The Welfare State in Historical Perspective”  
—\*T.H. Marshall, “Citizenship and Social Class”  
—\*Gøsta Esping-Andersen, “Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism”

\*Robert E. Goodin, *Reasons for Welfare: The Political Theory of the Welfare State* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1988): Preface, Introduction, Chapter 6, and Conclusion (pp. ix-xi, 3-22, 153-83, 363-69).

**VII. The Administrative State (Week 12)**

27 November

Readings TBA.

**Sunday, 30, November, 11:59 p.m.: term paper due via Quercus. Extensions will be generously granted, but please consult me in advance.**