

Democracy and Dissent: An Introduction to Politics (POLS-1000/3)

Winter Semester 2020, W 6-8:45 PM, Room C167 + [online](#) via zoom // Exam: Tuesday April 22, 6 PM

Course Syllabus

Instructor: James Magnus-Johnston, PhD Candidate in Renewable Resources, McGill University (ant. 2022); MPhil Economics, Cambridge University; Double BA Hons in Political Studies, Theatre, and Rhetoric & Communications, University of Winnipeg

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Summary: An introductory study of democratic politics and institutions, political ideas, electoral systems and political culture. The lens of dissent is used to trace the emergence of democracy and its liberal development. Issues to be explored include: the roles of opposition, questions of accountability, the meaning and practice of justice, the evolving implications of citizenship, the crisis of the state under globalization, and the contemporary idea of democracy without dissent.

Objective: This course aims to equip students with the basic conceptual and analytical tools required to understand “politics.” The student is expected to gain an appreciation how citizenship is conditioned not only through state institutions, but also through the vehicles of political socialization, including culture and economics.

Deadline for withdrawal without academic penalty: March 17

Reading List

REQUIRED TEXT

Johnston, Larry. *Politics: an Introduction to the Modern Democratic State*, Broadview 2013.

SUPPLEMENTARY TEXTS

The following are optional readings. Some excerpts may be assigned and will be provided for you as necessary.

Balbus, Isaac. *Governing Subjects: An Introduction to the Study of Politics*, Routledge 2010.

Berry, Thomas, & Tucker, M. E. *Evening thoughts: Reflecting on Earth as Sacred Community*. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books 2006.

Brodie, Janine and Rein, Sandra. *Critical Concepts: an Introduction to Politics*, Pearson 2009.

Dyck, Rand ed. *Studying Politics: an Introduction to Political Science*, Thomson 2002.

Follett, Mary Parker. *The New State: Group Organization and the Solution of Popular Government*. University Park, Penn: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998.

Fukuyama, Francis. *Political Order and Political Decay From the Industrial Revolution to the Globalisation of Democracy*. Political Order and Political Decay. London: Profile Books, 2014.

Fukuyama, Francis. *The Origins of Political Order*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011.

Haidt, Jonathan. *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*. New York: Vintage Books, 2013.

Jensen, Robert. "Get Apocalyptic: Why Radical is the New Normal" *Yes! Magazine*, 2013.

Jon Pammett & Lawrence LeDuc, "Confronting the Problem of Declining Voter Turnout Among Youth", in *Electoral Insight*, (Ottawa: Elections Canada) July 2003.

Rafael López Pinter and Maria Gratschew, *Voter Turnout Since 1945: A Global Report* (Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2002) pp. 45-111.

Spencer, Martin. "Weber on Legitimate Norms and Authority" *British Journal of Sociology*, 21:2 (June 1970) pp. 123-34.

Assignments and Grades

Journal (Feb 5/Apr 1)	20%
Class participation	10%
Engagement with current events	10%
Open-book test on core concepts (Jan 29)	10%
Letter draft (Mar 18)	5%
Edited letter (Mar 25)	5%
Final draft (Apr 1)	20%
Final Exam (Apr 22 @ 6 PM)	20%

Letter	Percentage	GPA	Descriptor
A+	90-100	4.5	Exceptional
A	80-89	4	Excellent
B+	75-79	3.5	Very Good
B	70-74	3	Good
C+	65-69	2.5	Satisfactory
C	60-64	2	Adequate
D	50-59	1	Marginal
F	0-49	0	Failure

Class participation: Your participation grades will be posted at the middle and the end of the semester. You will be graded on the quality and quantity of interaction – that is, not only the volume of interaction, but quality and consistency as well. Someone who interacts often but attempts to monopolize the conversation, for instance, may receive a lower grade than someone who contributes regularly and is respectful of the contributions of others.

Discussion about current events: Each class, students will be required to share their response to a current event in the news and relate it to the course material (e.g., elections; a matter of public policy). Please

state your article(s) or news sources. Please note that current event engagement will be graded separately from participation and engagement with other course material.

Online journal entries: In order to catalyze class discussion on current events, you will be expected to submit a link and reflection on a current event. Your reflection on the article can be written in sentences or in point-form. Please submit a reflection using this [online form](#) twice per week.

Open-book test: You will be given a series of short-answer questions related to the core introductory concepts in the first five chapters. The test requires one (or two) paragraph responses and will be conducted in class.

Letter writing campaign (1000 words): Consistent with our theme “democracy and dissent,” students will be encouraged to (politely) dissent by writing a letter to an elected official and requesting a policy change. The letter must be well-researched and fully cited. You will be encouraged to draw from your journal in order to identify a topic.

Students will exchange letter drafts in class; the evaluation will then be handed to the author at the end of class. Revised drafts will be handed in and returned to students so they can be revised one final time in accordance with the recommendations offered. Your portfolio, which should include the first draft, evaluation, and final draft, is due on April 1st. The mark breakdown is as follows:

Draft: 5%

Evaluation of others' drafts (“feedback”): 5%

Final Draft: 20%

Academic Assistance: The Academic Writing Lab Instructor is available for writing assistance to any student who is registered in ACWR-0900.

Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) and Tutoring. PAL (Students Helping Students) is available for academic assistance in all of our programs. Watch the Daily and the bulletin boards for times. The Academic Tutor is available to all students and volunteers are available to work on a one-on-one basis with students. See the Coordinator of Student Advising to set up an appointment.

Policies

Handing in: Both e-mail and paper formats will be accepted for written assignments. If you submit by e-mail, watch for a reply from me within 48 hours confirming receipt of your document. If you do not receive my response, please contact me or drop into my office.

Late submissions: Unless otherwise specified (ie. the letter-writing assignment above), papers are due on Fridays at 4 PM in my office. Late papers are subject to a 5% per day penalty. Any paper received after 4 PM will be deemed to be received on Monday and subject to a 15% penalty (Tuesday, 20% deduction, 25% for Wednesday, etc.). Extensions can be provided for extenuating circumstances. Extensions will be given for trips and involvement in sports and music activities *with advance notice*.

Final grades: Grades submitted by instructors become final only after they are vetted by the Dean's Council. That process occurs early in January for fall semester grades and early in May for winter semester grades.

Plagiarizing: Cases of plagiarizing are taken seriously and can result in academic penalties and disciplinary action. CMU policies regarding 'academic misconduct' can be found in the Student Handbook.

Accessibility: CMU strives to provide a fair and supportive learning environment for academically qualified students with unique needs. The Accessibility Services office coordinates with the Academic Office to provide academic accommodations to eligible students.

Course Schedule (at-a-glance)

Topic		Required reading	Ch.
	Jan	Tuesdays	
<i>Introduction/Terms</i>	8	Intro to course; Terms/Approaches	Intro-2
<i>History/Democracy</i>	15	p. 55-81 (History; Democracy)	3 and 4
<i>Comparative politics</i>	22	p. 103-116 (Institutions)	5
<i>Parliamentary systems</i>	29	p. 117-127 (Forming gov't)	6
	Feb		
<i>Different states</i>	5	p.128-162 (Coalitions/Cabinets)	6 and 7
<i>Administration</i>	12	p. 163-186 (Federalism)	8
<i>READING WEEK</i>	19	<i>READING WEEK - NO CLASS</i>	N/A
<i>The political process</i>	26	p. 189-216 (Cleavages/Ideology)	9
	Mar		
<i>Elections</i>	4	p. 219-250 (Elections)	10
<i>Representation</i>	11	p. 253-282 (Parties; movements)	11
<i>Administration</i>	18	p. 283-304 (Policy-making)	12
<i>Rule of law</i>	25	p. 305-330 (Legislation)/ <i>EDITING</i>	13
	April		
<i>Governing today</i>	1	p. 333-340 (Capitalism/welfare state)	14
	22	<i>EXAM @ 6 PM</i>	