



DEPARTMENT OF ARTS AND EDUCATION

COURSE OUTLINE – WINTER 2011

**PO1020: INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS, PROCESSES AND PROBLEMS
– 3 CREDITS UT -**

INSTRUCTOR: Tom Enders, PhD **PHONE:** 780-539-2996
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OFFICE HOURS: W 1 – 2:20 p.m./F 1:30-3 p.m., and by appointment

PREREQUISITE(S)/COREQUISITE: none

REQUIRED TEXT/RESOURCE MATERIALS:

- Mark Dickerson, Thomas Flanagan & Brenda O'Neill, An Introduction to Government and Politics: A Conceptual Approach, 8th edition. Toronto: Nelson, 2010.
- Selected internet, data base and Moodle postings.

CALENDAR DESCRIPTION:

This course is an introduction to the institutions, processes and problems of government emphasizing Canadian and other democratic governments. The course includes discussions of law, constitutions, civil liberties, public opinion, voting behaviours, electoral systems, political parties, interest groups, federalism and nationalism. The course offers an introduction to different fields of political study. Problems to be examined may include: political integration, the right to national self-determination, humanitarian intervention, globalization, global warming, terrorism and other issues.

CREDIT/CONTACT HOURS: 3 credits/3 instructional hours a week

DELIVERY MODE(S): Classroom time will be used for lectures and discussions

OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this course you should be able to define key terms, explain major functions of various components of political systems, and think critically about the performance of the systems. You should be better able to compare, contrast, scrutinize, analyze, question, argue and think clearly and independently about political players and political systems. You should leave with basic knowledge to utilize as a citizen – and as a student when pursuing further academic study of politics.

TRANSFERABILITY: AU, UA, UC, UL, KUC

***The grade of D or D+ may not be accepted for transfer to other post-secondary institutions.**

Students are cautioned that it is their responsibility to contact the receiving institutions to ensure transferability.

EVALUATIONS:

Short test on Part I10%

Midterm exam..... 25%

Term paper..... 30%

Final exam 35%

GRADING CRITERIA:

GRANDE PRAIRIE REGIONAL COLLEGE			
GRADING CONVERSION CHART			
Alpha Grade	4-point Equivalent	Percentage Guidelines	Designation
A⁺	4.0	90 – 100	EXCELLENT
A	4.0	85 – 89	
A⁻	3.7	80 – 84	FIRST CLASS STANDING
B⁺	3.3	76 – 79	
B	3.0	73 – 75	GOOD
B⁻	2.7	70 – 72	
C⁺	2.3	67 – 69	SATISFACTORY
C	2.0	64 – 66	
C⁻	1.7	60 – 63	
D⁺	1.3	55 – 59	MINIMAL PASS
D	1.0	50 – 54	
F	0.0	0 – 49	FAIL
WF	0.0	0	FAIL, withdrawal after the deadline

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

* You are expected to devote time in the classroom to the class itself. Use of cell phones and use of laptops for nonclass purposes is unacceptable. Socializing and working on other courses are also unacceptable.

* You are strongly advised to keep a copy of your own of any written work you submit for grading.

** Students who miss an excessive number of classes may be denied the opportunity to write the final exam, as stated in the Calendar.

** You are expected to write the final exam on the date it is scheduled. Take this into account when making any plans at the end of the term.

For information on key dates and other important matters, see the Calendar as well.

STATEMENT ON PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING:

* You are expected to reference sources fully and properly for your term paper. An instructor's handout will provide assistance. See the College Calendar for information on penalties for cheating and plagiarism. Penalties will be applied in accordance with the severity of the offense, with the most serious offenses receiving the most severe consequences.

Topics

I. Introduction.

- A. What is politics? Why care about it? What is Political Science? The value of a liberal arts education.
- B. Some basics: The political process. Branches of government. Democracy. Liberal democracy. Representative democracy.

II. Elections and Election-related topics

- A. The selection of executives and legislatures in Canada and the United States. The Single-Member Plurality System
- B. Proportional Representation and other electoral systems
- C. Political parties. Functions. Philosophies. Kinds of parties and party systems. Partisanship and bi-partisanship or post-partisanship.
- D. Elections. Functions. Voting behaviour. Voter turnout. Measures to address low voter turnout.
- E. News media. Functions. Leanings. Election coverage. Is there too much focus on personalities and scandals and not enough attention to positions on issues? Infotainment and political comedy.

III. Government institutions and political processes

- A. Political culture. Canadian and American attitudes compared - on the role of government in society, equality, war, religion and other matters.
- B. Parliamentary vs. presidential systems. Responsible government. Coalition governments. Party voting. Checks on power. Effectiveness. Accountability.
- C. The executive branch. Functions. Are the Canadian and American heads of government too powerful? Do their actions to provide security and combat terrorism unduly threaten civil rights?
- D. Legislatures. Functions. Different views on the role of the representative
- E. Bureaucracies. Impartiality, fairness, efficiency and accountability
- F. Local government. Responsibilities and issues. Organization. Voter turnout and political parties.
- G. The courts and rights. Selection of judges. The American Bill of Rights, The Canadian Charter of Rights. Issues such as the death penalty, prostitution, polygamy, same-sex marriage, etc.
- H. Interest groups. Functions. Methods. Determinants of Success. Ideological interest groups. Think tanks.

I. Health care. Why do Canada and the United States have different health care systems? How should they be reformed?

IV. Nations and nationalism. Federalism. Democracy and the right to national self-determination.

A. Sovereignty and sovereignty options - unitary, federal and confederal arrangements

B. The cases of the Quebecois, Aboriginal Peoples and others.