



POLS 2001AED

Introduction to Political Science

Course Guide

HKMU Course Team

Course Development Coordinator

Dr Cheuk Wai-hing, HKMU

Developer

Prof. Richard Y Chuang, Northern State University, South Dakota

Instructional Designer

Louise Aylward, HKMU

Member

Dr Lee Pak-kuen, HKMU

External Course Reviewer

Prof. Lee Nan-shong, The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Production

Office for Advancement of Learning and Teaching (ALTO)

Copyright © Hong Kong Metropolitan University 2025

All rights reserved.

No part of this material may be reproduced in any form by any means without permission in writing from the President, Hong Kong Metropolitan University. Sale of this material is prohibited.

Hong Kong Metropolitan University
Ho Man Tin, Kowloon
Hong Kong

This course material is printed on environmentally friendly paper.

Contents

Introduction	1
About the course	2
Course aims	2
Course learning outcomes	2
Course overview	3
Working through this course	4
Materials	4
Assignment File	7
Online Learning Environment	7
Assessment	8
Assignments	8
Examination	8
How to get the most from this course	9
Tutorials and supplementary lectures	10
Conclusion	11
A note about the developer of this course	12

Introduction

POLS 2001AED Introduction to Political Science is a one-year, six-credit-unit, 2000-level course. It has no prerequisite, and provides a basis for other political science courses in the programme. The excluded combination of this course is *POLS 2001ACD*.

POLS 2001AED intends to introduce students to the discipline of political science and to the basic concepts, theories and approaches to the study of politics and government. It also provides a framework for assessing the overall performance of the government and its impact on stability and change of polity. It concludes with an examination of the international environment with which national political systems interact. This course will be conducted in English.

About the course

All HKMU courses set out to provide you with a series of aims and objectives, some for the whole course, and some for the individual units. Those listed below are for the whole course.

Course aims

POLS 2001AED Introduction to Political Science aims to:

- 1 *Introduce* you to the basic political concepts, theories, and approaches to the study of political science.
- 2 *Review* various informal participants and formal decision makers and institutions, and *analyse* the interactions between them.
- 3 *Analyse* different political regime types and country examples.
- 4 *Evaluate* political issues, events, and their impacts on our daily lives.
- 5 *Acquire* the knowledge and skill to analyse politics from a comparative and international perspective.

Course learning outcomes

On completing this course, you should be able to:

- 1 *Explain* key concepts and theories in political science. (LO1, Units 1 and 2)
- 2 *Evaluate* the essence of politics — that is, who gets what, when and how. (LO2, Units 2 to 6)
- 3 *Discuss* the different political processes of several of the most powerful countries in the world. (LO3, Units 2 to 6)
- 4 *Review* how the political system of a country is influenced by both the domestic and international environments. (LO4, Units 3 to 6)
- 5 *Analyse* both domestic and foreign political issues. (LO5, Units 1 to 6)

Course overview

This table shows the units, the time needed to complete them, and the assignments.

Unit	Title	Weeks	Contact hours	Assessment activity (end of unit)
1	Foundations of political science	5	2	
2	Political ideologies and culture	5	4	Assignment 1
3	Interest groups, political parties and voting, and public opinion	5	2	
4	Structure and power of government	4	2	Assignment 2
5	Legislatures, executives and the judiciary	6	4	
6	International relations	5	2	Assignment 3
	Revision	2	2	
	Total	32	18	

Working through this course

The approach of course is designed to be as logical as possible. You will need to read this part very carefully, as it is important from the beginning that you organise your work and time effectively.

Materials

Set textbook

You need to buy the following set textbook for this course:

Roskin, M G, Cord, R L, Medeiros, J A and Jones, W S (2017) *Political Science: An Introduction*, 14th edn (Global edition), Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.

This book is very popular in the United States. The first edition was published in 1974. The authors claim that their book is not a United States government text because it draws from both US and comparative examples to introduce political science. You will notice, however, there are more examples from the United States. To balance this, we provide you with Asian examples in the study units.

For convenience, it will normally be referred to as ‘Roskin’.

Relevant chapters are also selected from the following basic reference for this course:

Magstadt, T (2021) *Understanding Politics: Ideas, institutions, and issues*, 13th edn, Boston: Cengage.

Supplementary readings

In addition to the set textbook some supplementary readings are provided with the course materials. However, in order to maximise your learning from this course, you are advised to read on a regular basis at least one of the following: *The Economist*, *The South China Morning Post*, *Newsweek*, *Time*, *The Asian Wall Street Journal*, or *Asiaweek*. These publications contain a great deal of material which is related to the study of political science and will keep you informed about current events. *Global Times*, *The China Daily* and other newspapers available in Hong Kong are also useful. The point is that you have to read newspapers or magazines regularly and should try to make sense of what you read, based on what you have learnt from this course. Politics is dynamic and ever-changing.

A reference dictionary is recommended here. It is: Brown, G, McLean, I and McMillan, A (eds) (2018) *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics and International Relations*, 4th edn, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Study units

POLS 2001AED Introduction to Political Science contains six study units. A unit takes four to six weeks to complete. It requires around 30 hours of study for a four-week unit, around 38 hours for a five-week unit and 45 hours for a six-week unit. The time required includes reading the textbook, doing the activities, writing the assignments, and calling or meeting the tutor or attending the tutorials.

The study units are largely organised according to the sections of the Roskin book. However, some chapters are consolidated, and the order in which some of them are presented is also changed. The course materials as a whole are presented roughly in accordance with the framework of David Easton's systems theory: environment or background; input; conversion process; and output. These terms may not be familiar to you now, but you will understand them after studying *Unit 1*.

The study units are:

- 1 *Foundations of political science*. This unit is the foundation on which all other units are built, so we introduce the most important concepts and ideas in political science here. We describe and explain the scope and method of political science as a discipline, with special emphasis on Easton's system approach.
- 2 *Political ideologies and culture*. In this unit, you explore the various political ideologies and how some of them have evolved into their present forms. In addition, we discuss some modern-day ideologies such as environmentalism. The concepts of political culture and subculture along with political socialization are also investigated. The real importance of political ideology and culture is that they have a great impact on a country's political system as a whole. Although they may not have a direct bearing on any particular political action, they exercise indirect or remote 'control' over the orientation of political actors.
- 3 *Interest groups, political parties and voting, and public opinion*. Interest groups and political parties are political actors in a political system. While interest groups try to influence only specific policies and do not nominate candidates in elections, political parties try to control the overall policies of the government by nominating candidates and winning elections. Public opinion and the mass media constitute an integral part of any political system. In a democracy, public opinion influences decision makers. In a nondemocracy, decision makers may create or manipulate public opinion to serve their interests. This unit attempts to explain the role of these interest groups, political parties and public opinion, and the voting behaviour of individuals.

- 4 *Structure and power of government.* The particular structure that a government takes and the power it possesses may have an enormous impact on the people. *Unit 4* examines political structures, e.g. unitary state and federation; and different forms of government such as democracy, and authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. In addition, it analyses the impact of different electoral systems on citizen participation in politics. The question of who really rules in a democracy is also explored.
- 5 *Legislatures, executives and the judiciary.* Legislatures are supposed to be the law-making bodies of political systems. But different forms of government (e.g. parliamentary or presidential), or different party systems (e.g. two-party or multi-party) may have a bearing on their law-making role. This unit demonstrates that the law-making function of legislatures has declined worldwide, especially since World War II. Executive branches of governments are supposed to execute the laws made by legislatures. However, the initiative in lawmaking has gradually shifted from the legislative to the executive branch since World War I. The executive branch has invariably become the *leadership branch* in governments. Nevertheless, different systems of government may render the executive branch more or less powerful. This unit explores the relations between the legislative and executive branches of several important countries. Your attention is also directed to the power of the executive branch during crises. The judiciary is supposed to adjudicate conflicts between individuals as well as between individuals and the government. Adjudication is supposed to be based on laws. Different legal systems have a bearing on the extent to which the individuals are protected by the due process of law. The courts may be quite independent in some countries, but not in others. In some countries, the courts may have the power of judicial review, but courts may not have this power in other countries. This unit discusses these matters as well as the definition and functions of law.
- 6 *International relations.* States do not exist in isolation but are becoming increasingly interdependent. Although a state may exert some influence over the world system, usually the international system has greater impact on a state. With states claiming and practising sovereignty, the world is horizontally structured. We do not yet have a 'world government'. Pressing concerns today are war and the proliferation of ABC weapons (atomic, biological and chemical). At the same time, we are simultaneously experiencing integration (e.g. EU, NAFTA, APEC, etc.) and disintegration (e.g. the former Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, etc.). How the world will turn is the subject of this unit, as well as the conclusion of this course.

Assignment File

There are three assignments in this course. Each deals with some important aspects of political science. Different types of assignment encourage the development of different skills. These are: the application of analytical concepts to real-world problems; descriptive and perceptual analysis; collecting, analysing and synthesising data, and rendering dispassionate opinions; using international or comparative perspectives; and writing an essay.

Online Learning Environment

The Online Learning Environment (OLE), being an additional support, gives students online access to the electronic copies of the course materials and study units, *Presentation Schedule* and assignments, and admits e-submission of assignments. Although participation is optional, students are also encouraged to take part in the Discussion Board therein to enhance their self-study and learning.

Assessment

This course is designed to assist students to move easily from the stated objectives, through the study units, readings and materials to the assignments and examination. During the course, students of *POLS 2001AED Introduction to Political Science* will have their progress assessed by assignments and a final examination.

Assignments

- Assignment 1, worth 10%, evaluates materials covered in *Units 1* and *2*, achieving LOs 1 and 2.
- Assignment 2, worth 20%, evaluates materials covered in *Units 3* and *4*, achieving LOs 3 and 4.
- Assignment 3, worth 20%, evaluates materials covered in *Units 5* and *6*, achieving LO 5.

Examination

The final examination for *POLS 2001AED Introduction to Political Science* will be of two hours' duration and have a value of 50% of the total course grade. The examination will consist of questions that reflect the types of exercises and self-tests, and assignments students have previously experienced, achieving LOs 1 to 5.

How to get the most from this course

This course deals with government and politics, which are constantly changing. In 1978, China started its economic reform, which is continuing today. In 1989, Eastern European countries underwent drastic changes, and in 1991 the Soviet Union collapsed. In 1997, the architect of China's economic reform, Deng Xiaoping, passed away. In May 1998, Indonesia's Suharto was compelled to resign, and in the same month, both India and Pakistan became nuclear powers. In November 2008 the Americans elected Barack Obama, the first African American to be the 44th president of the United States. Obviously, to get the most from this course, you need to keep up with events as they happen. To this end, you need to read a good newspaper or magazine on a regular basis.

Alternatively, you can follow news programmes on television and on the radio on a regular basis. Do not forget that the Internet carries much information both fact and opinion, and it is fun to log in and find it. The Internet has another advantage that books and journals do not usually enjoy — the information is usually current. Integrating topics you have studied from the textbook and study units with current events is the best way to understand the subject. Tutors and tutorials are also helpful.

Tutorials and supplementary lectures

There will be seven face-to-face tutorials and two supplementary lectures. You will be notified of their dates, times, and location.

Tutorials provide a wonderful opportunity to exchange your ideas with others and to interact in a meaningful way. Of course, such exchanges must have structure and purpose, allowing you to explore the themes under consideration. Students can also consult the tutor by phone or email about the study units, set books and assigned readings within the designated hours. The overall course delivery will also be monitored by the Course Coordinator.

Conclusion

Politics and the study of the way it operates are both interesting and stimulating. You will enjoy this course and find that it helps you in all kinds of ways. Not least, it will allow you to understand more fully the environment in which we live and work. As we begin to explore the exciting world of politics, we wish you enjoyment and good luck in your journey.

A note about the developer of this course

Richard Y Chuang is Professor of Political Science at Northern State University (NSU), Aberdeen, South Dakota. He was a Fulbright Professor at Beijing Foreign Studies University from 1976 to 1977. He was formerly Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at NSU, Sasakawa Fellow, and Bush Fellow at Harvard University's Institute for Educational Management. He is the author of *The International Air Transport Association: A Case Study of a Quasi-Government Organization* (Leyden, The Netherlands: A W Sijthoff) and co-author of *The Politics of Hong Kong's Reversion to China* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998). Prof. Chuang has also published more than 50 articles and reviews in professional journals.