



POLI 1220.2: Political Analysis

Instructor: Dr. Carlos Pessoa

Day/Time: Mondays and Wednesdays 1:00 – 2:15PM

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DESCRIPTION

This course examines philosophical issues in political analysis. It focus on the philosophical background of key theoretical frameworks in order to understand how analyses of political activities are carried out. In this course, you will learn how to differentiate between describing a political event and analyzing it.

We start discussions on theoretical frameworks. We will spend two classes discussing theoretical frameworks commonly used in political analysis. We will carry out discussions on mainstream approaches in political science and international relations. At this point, we will also look at the various definitions of politics and how - together with scientific thought - they set the basic analytical parameters in political science.

We will then examine the debate of structure and agency, which shapes how explanations can focus on political actors or their surrounding context. Discussions, then, turn towards analyses of how political systems are able to maintain themselves in place or suffer rupture and dramatic changes. This discussion is particularly relevant to the present discussion of democratization in the Middle East region.

Another deeply related topic to political analysis is the notion of power. We will examine the various conceptions of power and their implications to the analysis of politics. We will then engage discussions of the broad analytical thinking of materialism and idealism, examining their differences and similarities.

The last two classes will be devoted to two contemporary issues related to political analysis. Postmodern thought has created important challenges to social science in general. We will examine these

challenges and look at their implications to political analysis. We will finish the course by examining the topic of globalization.

OBJECTIVES

- To introduce key concepts and theoretical approaches in the analysis of politics.
- To introduce theoretical tools from which students can differentiate between description and analysis.
- To enable students to proceed into further study of the various areas of political science.

ASSIGNMENTS

-Participation

Participation is important in this course. Attendance is taken five times, *randomly*, each worth 2%. Students are expected to be in class and sign the attendance sheet. By not signing the attendance sheet, you will not get the participation points.

-Analytical Paper: 30% (two papers worth 15% each)

You are expected to write two papers on any of the videos presented in class throughout the course. You need to summarize the video's key themes, highlighting its main thesis. Equally important, you need to apply concepts and approaches discussed in class to the video.

The length of the paper should be between about four pages. A paper with less than the required length *automatically leads to an 'F' for the assignment.*

The student is responsible to keep an electronic copy of his paper, in case the professor requests it. *Failure to provide an extra copy of the paper on request will lead to an 'F' as a mark for the assignment.*

Late Policy: Essays are due at the *beginning* of the class. Extensions of deadlines are granted *only* in case of illness, and must be followed by appropriate documents.

Late papers will be penalized 5% per day, up to 3 business days.

Plagiarism is both morally and legally a form of fraud. Essays must be solely a product of student's own work. Quoting or paraphrasing the

work or ideas of others without proper acknowledgment is a serious offence in academia, and it can lead to drastic consequences.

-Examination I: 30% (February 15)

-Examination II: 30% (TBA by the Registrar Office)

Each of the exams is based on readings and lecture notes up to the exam. The Exam II will be scheduled by the Registrar's Office.

TEXTBOOKS

Readings will be taken from the following books:

Colin Hay, **Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction** (New York: Palgrave, 2002). *Reserve room*

David Marsh & Gerry Stoker (edit.), **Theory and Method in Political Science**, second edition (New York, Palgrave, 2002). *Reserve room*

Robert A. Dahl & Bruce Stinebrickner, **Modern Political Analysis**, sixth edition (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2003). *Reserve room*

In-class manners

The following is *prohibited* in the classroom:

- Listening to music
- Speaking on the phone or texting: *your phone is required to be turned off throughout the class*
- Reading newspapers or non-related class material
- Eating or drinking
- Frequent in-and-out of the classroom

Please be sure to follow these social prerequisites, or you will be asked to leave and consequently receive the letter grade 'F' for the course.

COURSE PROGRAM

January 4: Introduction and Thorough Explanation of the Course and its Assignments.

- Filling out students' profile and discussing general expectations.

- General discussion on assignments.

January 9 & 11: Analytical Approaches I (mainstream approaches in political science)

Reading:

Colin Hay, *Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction*, pp. 1-13.

David Marsh & Gerry Stroker (edit.), *Theory and Method in Political Science*, introduction.

Guiding questions:

- Does Rational-choice theory give a 'choice' at all?
- How do mainstream approaches relate to classical analytical approaches?

January 16 & 18: Analytical Approaches II (mainstream approaches in International Relations)

Reading:

Colin Hay, *Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction*, pp. 13-27.

Guiding questions:

- How do Marxism and Realism relate to social cleavages such as race, gender and culture?
- How would one use social constructivism to speak about security?

January 23 & 25: Analytical Strategies

Reading:

Colin Hay, *Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction*, pp.27- 54.

Robert A. Dahl & Bruce Stinebrickner, *Modern Political Analysis*, chapter 11.

Guiding questions:

- How do inductive and deductive logics affect political analysis?
- What is the trade-off between parsimony and complexity in formulating an analysis?

January 30 & February 1: The Politics of Political Science

Reading:

Colin Hay, *Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction*, pp.59-75.

Robert A. Dahl & Bruce Stinebrickner, *Modern Political Analysis*, chapter 3.

Guiding questions:

- Is political analysis limited to activities within the State?
- What are the implications for political analysis when 'the political' is defined as a process that can occur within any given social relation?

February 6 & 8: The Science of Political Science

Reading:

Colin Hay, *Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction*, pp.75-88.

Guiding questions:

- Is it possible to develop a science – the ability to generate neutral, dispassionate and objective knowledge claims - of social and political activities?
- Is it possible to copy methods of natural sciences into social (political) science?

February 13: Revision for Examination I

A thorough discussion of notes and readings that students will be responsible for Examination I

February 15: Examination I

February 20 – 25: Winter Break :)

February 27 & 29: On Structure and Agency

Reading:

Colin Hay, *Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction*, chapter 3.

David Marsh & Gerry Stroker (edit.), *Theory and Method in Political Science*, chapter 13.

Guiding questions:

- What are some of the fundamental problems with structuralism and voluntarism?
- Is it possible to move beyond the dichotomy of structure and agency?

March 5 & 7: Analysis of Political Continuity & Discontinuity

Reading:

Colin Hay, *Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction*, chapter 4

Guiding questions:

- How does diachronic approach differs from synchronic approach in analyzing regime change?
- Can one separate the economic causes from the political and social causes as an analytical strategy?

March 12 & 14: Analysis of Politics, Analysis of Power

Reading:

Colin Hay, *Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction*, chapter 5.

Robert A. Dahl & Bruce Stinebrickner, *Modern Political Analysis*, chapter 4.

Guiding questions:

- How does the mainstream research on power affects the scope of political analysis?
- By focusing on the nature and strategies of power, does the second stream of research on power get too entangled with philosophy and eventually lose sight of real 'power-politics'?

March 19 & 21: Idealism & Materialism

Reading:

Colin Hay, *Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction*, chapter 6

G. Goldstein & R. O. Keohane (eds). *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions and Political Change* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993)

Guiding questions:

- Should ideas or material circumstances be taken as the determinant factors in political analysis?
- Although different in what they propose, how do idealism and materialism come close to one another?

March 26 & 28: Postmodernism and its challenge to Political analysis

Reading:

Colin Hay, *Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction*, chapter 7.

David Marsh & Gerry Stoker (edit.), *Theory and Method in Political Science*, chapter 6.

Guiding questions:

- How does postmodern approach challenge fundamental beliefs in Political Analysis
- Does postmodernism offer limitations or create possibilities for political analysis?

April 2: Political Analysis in Times of Globalization (...and revision for exam II)

Reading:

Colin Hay, *Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction*, conclusion.

Guiding questions:

- How does globalization affect political analysis in our contemporary days?
- How does globalization affect the conception of structure and agency in political analysis?