

LAW & POLITICS

11:30 A.M. - 12:45 P.M. TUESDAY AND THURSDAY

SOBEY 255

Course description

This course serves as an introduction to the ways political scientists have engaged how law and politics intersect in a modern society. It will trace historical and theoretical foundations using theory and 'real world' empirical examples to allow us to understand better the complex interrelationship between law, society and politics.

THE 'RULE OF LAW'

This phrase undergirds much of our notions of the political order - a common refrain when declaring that our society and its political architecture differ from other societies around the globe. Following an examination of this foundational concept, and its linkage(s) with a notion of 'justice', the course will spend time examining a number of empirical cases: these will include the politicization of judges, morality, race, gender and violence. Beyond the core materials the course will focus on subjects such as 'net neutrality', state secrecy and wikileaks, as well as personal privacy and Facebook.



Readings

This course has no required textbooks or course-pack (nothing to purchase).

All readings will be provided on the course Blackboard site as .pdf files. If you cannot access Blackboard, or should

you have any other technical problems please do not hesitate to ask; moreover, you can take advantage of the CAID offices found across from the library in the Commons.



All assignments (other than in-class Quizzes) should be submitted by electronic means - as an attached document in .doc, .docx, or .rtf formats - to John.Measor@smu.ca prior to 11:59 p.m. (Halifax time!) on the due date.

Please approach me as soon as possible if you are unsure how to submit email attachments.

Accommodations

If you have a documented disability (learning or otherwise), please consult with me immediately at the outset of the course so we can design a solution that will help you be successful in the class.

ABOUT ME



Your Instructor:

Dr. John Measor

Office:

404 McNally North Wing

E-mail: john.measor@smu.ca

Office Hours

M 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
W 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
(or by appointment)



Assignments

Course components

Attendance	10%
Quizzes (3)	30%
Reaction papers (2)	10%
Media Review	20%
Final Exam*	30%

*(scheduled by Registrar)

On Reading

For each class, you will have a reading assignment. You need to keep up with the readings, not everything will be covered within class (either in lectures or discussions). The readings will be considered 'background' within the classroom - and required in terms of your responsibility in the course (i.e. on exams as well). Exams will be based on the text as well as class discussions. If you wish you may check out the 'Reading Skills' and 'Reading Worksheet' handouts found on the Blackboard site.



Course Requirements

This course involves reading, writing, and class discussion. It is fast-paced - so you will need to absorb textbook materials on your own outside of class (so as to be able to then apply them in class). You will need to put in consistent effort throughout the whole semester. You'll need to have (or learn) basic library and outline research skills. You will need to participate in the class discussions and demonstrate active learning, not passive absorption.

Learning is not a spectator sport!

Attendance and Participation

You should be on time and ready for discussion each day. I expect class discussion will be lively, respectful, substantive, and that you will have done that day's assigned reading prior to class. There's no such thing as an "excused absence" - you're either in class, or you're not - and I will respect your choices. Illness' and injury require the time to heal and please approach me privately to address any such impacts on your learning in this course. That being said, busy schedules, over commitment to other aspects of your education and extra-curricular lives, as well as the escalating workload as the semester progresses are all part of your responsibility.

Double-sided Printing Encouraged

In recognition that members of the university community have a personal responsibility for the way their conduct impacts the local and global environment, students are encouraged that all reports and other documents, whenever possible, be printed on both sides of the paper.

QUIZZES

Through the term three scheduled quizzes will be written in class relating to the previous week's assigned materials.

Assignment Descriptions

Reaction Papers

Reaction papers are short documents in which you respond to a weekly reading assignment. Because of space limitations, you should not provide a lengthy summary of the argument found in the reading; also avoid lengthy quotations. Each reaction paper should not exceed one single-spaced page or two double-spaced pages. You should not rely on any academic or journalistic resources as all material is expected to be original and drawn from your own personal ideas and reactions towards the course materials.

In each reaction paper, you are expected to write about an entire article, group of articles, or simply an idea or passage found in an article. The point of the exercise is to illicit your personal reaction to the course material and to offer you an outlet for reflecting on the material and what it means to you personally and intellectually. In this respect, you are encouraged to draw on both your academic and personal experiences to help you write the papers, keeping in mind however that the reaction papers must be written in proper essay language and formatting. In other words, please do not write the reaction papers as if they are elongated text messages.

Each reaction paper will be given a grade out of five (5). You are required to submit three (3) reaction papers,

out of which your top two (2) will count towards your final grade. You will be graded on the following points:

1. writing style
2. creativity/originality of ideas
3. understanding of course material

You should feel free to write whatever you want, but you are likely to find it useful to structure your paper as follows:

- a. A brief summary of the point you will criticize. This point might be the central idea of the reading; or it might be a subsidiary argument. You should avoid criticizing minor or peripheral arguments. Your summary should be no more than a short paragraph.
- b. Your criticism. Here, you might want to go after the logic of the argument, or the evidence that it relies on, or both. Avoid invective, overstatements, and one-sidedness. Think about how the author would respond to your criticisms, and discuss those responses.
- c. Implications. If your criticism is correct, what follows? If you have a positive alternative argument, make it here.

The most important criterion for grading is originality, though the coherence and correctness of your reasoning are also important. If, as you write, you think that what you are

saying is obvious, it probably is, and has probably been said before many times. See if you can think of an unusual angle or perspective. As a general matter, you are more likely to have original ideas if you focus on the (important) details of the author's argument, especially its empirical assumptions or claims, than if you confine yourself to abstractions. In a short paper, this is hard to do. If you have a background in economics, or political science, or history, or otherwise have independent knowledge on which you can draw for criticism, you should use it.

Issues and questions you may want to address in the reaction papers include:

- How did this article/passage challenge any pre-conceived notions I had?
- How does this article/passage relate to material I learned in other courses?
- What personal experiences have I had that relate to this article/passage?
- What is the relevance of this article/passage in supporting my understanding of law and politics?
- Do you see some of the ideas and processes discussed in the course material playing out in your own life/city/province/region/country?
- What knowledge have you gained and how?

MEDIA REVIEW ESSAY

throughout the term a number of documentary (and other) films and video clips will be utilized to examine issues engaged in Law & Politics. In this assignment you will be asked to complete a five-

page essay critically examining one such piece (of your choice). A separate handout will be made available to provide more in depth instructions for the essay assignment.

Weekly Readings

Week Five (Jan 31-Feb 2)

Justice and Legality

Quiz #1 (2nd)

Week Six (Feb 7-9)

Justice and Legal Remedy - or

'three men in a boat ...'

Week Seven (Feb 14-16)

Who Owns You?

Week Eight (Feb 21-23)

Winter Break | No classes

Week Nine (Feb 28-Mar 1)

'Net Neutrality' and Property

Week Ten (Mar 6-8)

Norms, Laws and Human Rights

Quiz #2 (8th)

Week Eleven (Mar 13-15)

Renditions and Torture

Reaction paper #2 (15th)

Week Twelve (Mar 20-22)

State Security and Wikileaks

Week Thirteen (Mar 27-29)

Personal Privacy and Facebook

Quiz #3 (29th)

Week Fourteen (Apr 3)

Class cancelled

Media Review Due (3rd)



Week Two (Jan 10-12)

'Politics', 'Law' and Foundations

Week Three (Jan 17-19)

The 'Rule of Law' I

Week Four (Jan 24-26)

The 'Rule of Law' II

Reaction paper #1 (26th)

Blackboard

Our class time will be complemented with the use of Blackboard. Primarily the class site will be used as a location where you can find course materials (i.e. this syllabus, assignment handouts etc.), lecture notes, as well as required readings not found in the course textbooks.

Here are directions to help you access our course shell:

1. Log in to SMUport at <http://smuport.smu.ca/> using your S# and password.
2. Click on the 'Student Academics' tab.
3. Under 'My Courses', click on the link 'Click here to access your courses'.
4. In your list of courses, click on the name of this course to access our Blackboard site.



Contact the Centre for Academic Technologies (CAT) if you would like help with Blackboard or other technologies in your coursework (SMUport, MS Word, MS Excel, MS PowerPoint, document scanning, Web 2.0 tools, Photoshop, e-mail, etc.) Phone: 496-8168 | E-mail: CAT@smu.ca | Visit in person: Atrium 107

Course Assessment Scheme *

On all issues it is strongly encouraged for students to consult the Academic Regulations section of the Academic Calendar <http://www.smu.ca/registrar/calendar.html>

	Grade Points	Percentage	Rating
A+	4.30	90-100	Outstanding, Exceptional, Brilliant. Demonstrates mastery of the subject matter, is an insightful, original thinker/writer, connects theory and practice, understands context and interdisciplinary connections, outstanding research and writing (grammar, punctuation, spelling ...) skills.
A	4.00	85-89	Excellent – Student has mastered the material/course but lacks no more than one of the other qualities listed above for A+ work.
A-	3.70	80-84	Student has generally mastered the material/course but performance in two or more above-mentioned categories is less than superior. Minor proofreading problems.
B+	3.30	77-79	Very good. Well above average and critical understanding of essential material, well-organized thinker / writer / researcher.
B	3.00	73-76	Good - Focused. Clear pattern of argument. Good survey of essential research. Well-developed paragraphs.
B-	2.70	70-72	Interesting. Beyond obvious arguments and research, some critical thinking, grammatically sound.
C+	2.30	67-69	Above Average. Very good grasp of assigned / required material. Some critical skill.
C	2.00	63-66	Average, Satisfactory - Fairly good grasp of the assigned / required material. Basic research and writing skills. Little to no creative or original writing.
C-	1.70	60-62	Fair, Adequate. Noticeable pattern of argument. Few serious grammatical or substantive mistakes / gaps. Limited documentation, substantiation of argument.
D	1.00	50-59	Marginal - pass. Meets requirements but unlikely to succeed in or get into higher level course.
F	0.00	0-49	Failure or Withdrawal after deadline **

* As taken from: <http://www.smu.ca/academic/arts/pscience/grade.html>

** See: <http://www.smu.ca/registrar/dates.html>