Congratulations on your acceptance to Wadham to study PPE. We were impressed by your application and we are looking forward to having you join us. This note gives you an overview of the structures of teaching and assessment that you can expect from the PPE course when you arrive. Enclosed with it are introductions and reading lists for each of the component subjects of PPE.

How the teaching is structured

University education is very different from secondary education. We assume that you are independently motivated to develop your understanding and skills in your chosen subjects—that you are basically interested in investigating questions and arriving at answers yourself, rather than relying on the authority of others.

For those who are motivated enough, Oxford provides the ideal context in which to do this. You can work closely with world-leading experts, trying out your ideas and refining your ability to articulate them and defend them. These experts will recommend things to read and they will talk to you about your ideas. But although tutorials and classes and the preparatory work for them are compulsory, and there are compulsory exams at the end of the first and third years which tell others that you have reached a certain standard, no one is going to force you to make the most of yourself or Oxford. That is entirely down to you, although we will support you wholeheartedly in your efforts.

Something of all this will be evident from the enclosed guidelines and reading lists designed to help you prepare for your studies at Oxford. PPE is a ‘joint school’—a degree course jointly administered and examined by separate faculties or departments, each of which maintains a distinct identity. (There is no department of PPE.) The departments and faculties, which are located in different places around Oxford, are responsible for providing lectures and centrally organised classes, and for setting and marking University exams. Each faculty or department seeks in your first year to provide you with the materials for the same comprehensive grounding in its subject that a single-honours student would get, and to train you in its distinctive methods and ideals. So you will not only be joining the community of PPEists and Wadhamites. You will also be
joining a community of philosophers, a community of students of politics, and a community of economists, each of which is broader than the community of PPEists, and each of which has its own history, ideals, methods, and accomplishments.

The College, meanwhile, is responsible for organising tutorials and classes for you, and the tutors in the different subjects are also engaged in the task of training you in the ways of thinking and skills associated with their distinct subjects. So you will have distinct reading lists in each subject—just as there are distinct preparatory reading lists enclosed with this note—and you will also have distinct lectures, tutorials, classes, and exams for each of the three subjects. Your schedule will be packed, and you will have to develop excellent time-management and work-prioritisation skills.

Colleges and departments try to align the content of their lectures and tutorials to some extent, and they coordinate with one another to avoid clashes where possible, but it will ultimately be your responsibility to ensure that you can attend the lectures, classes, and tutorials you need to attend, and prioritise or rearrange as necessary when there are conflicts. In the first year, the timings are fairly carefully worked out by the tutors and lecturers, because the PPE first-year course covers a great deal and students have little choice about what they study. In the second and third years, the diversity of options makes such regimentation of the teaching impossible, and you will be expected to engage more actively with planning your teaching schedule.

How you are assessed in the first year

The first year of PPE gives you degree-level grounding in each of the three subjects. This prepares you for more focused study on particular areas in your second and third years. A condition of proceeding to the second- and third-year course is that you pass the University’s Preliminary Examination at the end of your third term, in June 2019. After the Preliminary Examination you may, but need not, specialize in only two of these subjects.

The Preliminary Examination consists of three unseen written exams. They are:

(i) Introduction to Philosophy

This paper covers Logic, General Philosophy (central problems in
philosophy), and Moral Philosophy (specifically Mill’s utilitarianism).

(ii) Introduction to the Theory and Practice of Politics

This paper covers The Theory of Politics (central topics in political theory), The Practice of Politics (the analysis of political systems and institutions).

The Politics first-year course has an additional assessed component, Political Analysis, which introduces the methods of empirical political analysis. It is assessed by means of a 2000-word essay, submitted at the beginning of the third term.

(iii) Introductory Economics

This paper covers elementary Economic principles and the use of mathematics in Economics.

In addition to the Preliminary Examinations, you will be set ‘collections’ at the start of your second and third terms. These are College-administered written exams with roughly the same structure as the papers of the Preliminary Examination, set on topics studied in the preceding term. They provide you and your tutors with an opportunity to assess your academic progress and readiness for the Preliminary Examination. You will receive feedback on your collection scripts and the opportunity to discuss them with your tutors. And of course you will be expected to prepare essays and problem sheets for tutorials and classes. These will not always be given a mark, but you will receive feedback on them, which will indicate to you how to develop your understanding.

This introduction to PPE and the enclosed subject-specific introductions and reading lists may seem very daunting. But do not worry. Although you will have to work hard, and you should get started right away, the work is very fulfilling. Your tutors and peers will be here to help you navigate it all, and Wadham more generally is a supportive, friendly community. We look forward to welcoming you into it.

The PPE tutors
August 2018
ECONOMICS

Information for those intending to read the School

1. Those who have not studied Economics before will find Begg, Dornbusch, Fischer, *Economics* helpful as introductory reading. The study of Economics requires more mathematics than some students can command when they arrive in Oxford. For this reason, those who do not have mathematics at A-level will need to do some preparatory work before coming up: they should be familiar with the ground covered in: Jacques, *Mathematics for Economics and Business* (chaps 1–2). Some preparatory reading on calculus from the same book would also be helpful. Students with A-level in mathematics will benefit from reading the entire book.

2. Preparatory Reading

The following books will give you an idea of the different aspects of the course. These are books for general preparatory reading. You do not need to buy any book before arriving in Oxford. An asterisk (*) denotes a book of special interest.

**General Interest**
Paul Krugman, *The Accidental Theorist*
M Friedman, *Free to Choose*
R Heilbroner, *The Worldly Philosophers*
J Robinson, *Economic Philosophy*

**Microeconomics**
* Begg, Dornbusch, Fischer, *Economics*
J K Galbraith, *The Affluent Society*
J K Galbraith, *The New Industrial State*
T Harford, *The Undercover Economist*

**Macroeconomics**
* Begg, Dornbusch, Fischer, *Economics*

**Mathematics**
M Anthony and N Biggs, *Mathematics for Economics and Finance*
or
PHILOSOPHY IN THE 1ST YEAR

The purpose of this note is to tell you something about the 1st year Philosophy component of Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (PPE) at Wadham. We will also mention some of the preparatory reading that you will need to do before you arrive in October. If you have any questions relating to the Philosophy course not covered by this letter, feel free to contact us by email (at the addresses below).

Philosophy at Wadham is studied as a component not only of PPE, but also of several other joint schools: Philosophy and Modern Languages, Physics and Philosophy, Maths and Philosophy, and Classics. So you will be joining a group of philosophers that includes students reading for other degrees, and studying alongside them for some parts of your first year. We look forward to welcoming you as a Wadham Philosopher.

The first term of the first year will be spent on Logic. The course textbook is *The Logic Manual* (Oxford University Press), written by our Oxford colleague Volker Halbach. The paperback edition is cheap and well worth purchasing. You should read at least the first four chapters and preferably the whole book—which is short—prior to arriving in October.


The third term of the first year will be spent on General Philosophy. There is no set text for this paper, but there is a list of topics to be covered: knowledge and scepticism; induction; the relation of mind and body; personal identity; free will; God and evil. Good introductions to these and other topics are Simon Blackburn’s *Think* (Oxford University Press), Bertrand Russell’s *The Problems of Philosophy* (Oxford University Press), Ian Hacking’s *Why Does Language Matter to Philosophy?* (Cambridge University Press), and Peter Inwagen’s *Metaphysics* (Westview Press).

Do make an effort to read some of these books before you come up to Wadham. But do not read them as if they were novels. Philosophy involves giving reasons in support of answers to particular questions. Getting clear about what the questions are and what the reasons are that
are being offered is an essential skill, and you should read all these books with this aim in mind. That will often involve jumping back and forth between different parts of a text, reading the same parts several times over, and skipping others. You should also continually try to articulate for yourself what you take to be going on in the text, so get used to trying to write summaries of arguments and positions as you read, rather than taking notes along the way of what seem to you to be ‘key points’ as you read a text from beginning to end. (That is not a good way to study.)

The pace of university work is extremely fast and, unlike school, prior preparation is essential. The students who do best are invariably those who have done a considerable amount of preliminary work in the vacation. Happy reading!

The Tutors in Philosophy
Prof. Alexander Paseau (alexander.paseau@wadham.ox.ac.uk)
Dr Thomas Sinclair (thomas.sinclair@wadham.ox.ac.uk)
Introduction to Politics (PPE)

Introduction to Political Institutions (History and Politics)

Introduction and Teaching Notes

Paul Martin
Wadham College
paul.martin@wadham.ox.ac.uk
Pretty much everything you receive between now and the end of Freshers’ Week will begin “welcome to Wadham”, and this document is not very exceptional. Welcome to Wadham!

Please read the following notes carefully, hang on to this document, and keep referring back to it over the course.

If you have any questions please contact me (paul.martin@wadham.ox.ac.uk) and I’ll try to answer them.

This is version 11 of the “Introduction” document and responses, suggestions, ideas for improvements, etc, would be greatly appreciated.

I’d like future versions of the document to have more in the way of practical advice (libraries and so on) and would be grateful in particular for suggestions of that sort.
**Organisation**

**Reading list and the course**

There will be an initial meeting on MONDAY OF NOUGHTH WEEK at 6.15pm in my office (SCR 1) which you must attend.

I'll talk a bit more about routes through the course at the initial meeting, where you will also be set your first piece of work in politics. In addition, PPEists will do a course on Political Theory in Trinity Term, which will be organized separately.

Before you arrive in Oxford, you need to have done the following.

*Look over the course*

Attached to this document is a copy of the departmental reading list (for last year - there will be minor changes to the list this year, and you should download a new copy when you arrive). Note that there are different documents for HPOL and PPE students to reflect the different choices available:

- **PPE students** take a unified course covering both the theory and practice of politics.
- **History and Politics students** must take a course on the practice of politics. They must also choose one of:
  
  (a) the same political theory course that the PPE students take
  
  (b) an additional history course “Theories of the State”, which covers related material from a historian's perspective, and which is also taken by the main school History students. This is a potentially important choice, and unfortunately one you need to make early in your course; please do feel free to ask for advice.

The departmental list covers a wide range of topics that can be covered over the course - students don't actually cover, in Wadham and elsewhere, all of those topics, but it's very useful to have a prior sense of what the whole course looks like. In particular, it will help you understand what sort of subjects get studied in politics at university in general and Oxford in particular, which can sometimes be rather different from the content of A-level and similar courses.

*Do some preparatory reading*

You'll make quicker, easier progress, and have more precious free time in term if you do a little preparatory reading. A key text for the Practice of Politics section is:


If you have particular difficulty getting hold of any of the book (as I write this, it's available within a few days from Amazon) please get in touch.

I would recommend, in addition, starting regularly to read the [Monkey Cage](https://monkeycage.blogs.washingtonpost.com) blog on the Washington Post website, which is an excellent way of keeping up with political science/political theory as it applies to current world events.
**Tutorials, classes and lectures**

At the first meeting we’ll organise the college side of politics teaching for Michaelmas.

I’ll usually see you in tutorials of two to four students, usually fortnightly – there’ll be more details about this in our initial meeting. We’ll also do some classes covering broader topics and methodological readings, as well as (eventually) revision. Tutorials for Practice of Politics are likely to be in Michaelmas and Trinity terms, and for Theory of Politics in Hilary.

In addition to tutorials and classes organised in college, you should plan to attend the lectures offered by the department. I’ll hand out lecture lists in the initial meeting, and you will be able to download them from the politics department website at:

https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/hierarchy/socsci/politics/students

The lectures will provide you with a wide array of information which you will need for the exam, and include material we’re not going to cover in any detail in the tutorials and classes. So make absolutely sure that you attend them.

There is much useful information also at the [politics website](https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/hierarchy/socsci/politics/students), including the course handbooks for PPE and History and Politics, and you should take some time to look over it in detail once you have a password to access it. There will also be a departmental induction meeting which you must attend, which will also cover use of the Social Studies Library.
Libraries and sources

Libraries

One distinctive feature of Oxford is that there are many different libraries with different (but complementary) collections. Since you will need access to a lot of books during your course, it will be necessary to identify useful sources. You will probably need to use the Wadham library and the Social Studies Library (www.ssl.ox.ac.uk) most weeks. Additionally, you might want to use the Bodleian library, the Modern History Library, the Philosophy library (for Political Theory), the Vere Harmsworth Library in the Rothermere American Institute (http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/vhl), and others. The Vere Harmsworth in particular is a great library for American politics reading. Generally, the University libraries are organised into a single library service (www.ouls.ox.ac.uk) which organises the various sites and runs the online catalogue. You can search the catalogue through SOLO.

There will be induction sessions in various libraries, and these are really very useful - tutors (including me) will expect you to be able to use the library system to find relevant resources, and it’s not always obvious how to do so if you’ve not regularly used a scholarly library before. If you’re having difficulties finding books and other resources, the librarians are often a great source of wisdom and guidance and tea.

Online resources

Paper copies of scholarly journals are kept in the libraries, but many students prefer to access online copies of journal articles. The University has subscriptions to many useful online resources, most of which are listed at through the e-journals link on the SOLO web site linked above.

There are a range of other helpful sources online. One which students sometimes want to lean on is Wikipedia. Used properly, Wikipedia is an immensely useful resource. In many ways it is much more informative, thorough and sometimes more accurate than traditional encyclopaedia material, and some (but not all) of the material is of exceptional quality. However, it is not a work of organised scholarship, it can be patchy and incorrect, it is hard to tell what is good quality material and what isn't, and thus Wikipedia is usually best regarded as a starting point for further research when starting from a position of ignorance on a specific topic. You should not use Wikipedia as a direct source for facts or claims, although it can be a useful research tool en route to finding original and reliable sources. As with all sources, you should assess it critically and think carefully about what you read there. The possibility of anonymous authorship and intentionally misleading information should make you wary. (For an interesting discussion see the Wikipedia article on “Reliability of Wikipedia”.) Similar rules (but with even more caution) apply to unsourced material you might find through Google and other search services.

If you are using online sources please pay particular attention to the “plagiarism” section at the end of this document.
Work Expectations

Reading

I’d expect that you will read 5-6 pieces (books/articles) at minimum before embarking on an essay. It’s crucial that you have a wide enough basis in the literature to be able to understand and interpret the question in an appropriate context, and also to be able to have a productive and helpful discussion in tutorials. If you are having difficulty prioritising your reading, especially if the reading list does not make priority suggestions, then I’ll try to help guide your reading productively. If you haven’t done the reading, the tutorial will not be productive.

Essays

You should write an essay for each tutorial, unless specifically instructed to do otherwise. Most Oxford students spend too long writing their tutorial essays, and – relatedly - put too much irrelevant material into it. That is, they fail to distinguish between what should go in their notes, and what needs to go into the essay itself. I’ve therefore adopted the following rule: You can spend as long as you like reading for, thinking about, and planning your essay, but the physical writing at the computer must be done inside of an hour. I will not mark essays that aren’t. Obviously, you should use the spare time to read more widely and to think more carefully about what you want to say. Please indicate at the end of the essay the total word-count; it is unlikely that you will be able to write more than 1200 words in an hour. (People sometimes test this, so let me be clear I’m totally serious - if you hand in a 2500 word essay, it’s not that you’ve done more than you were asked to, it’s that you’ve failed to do the work set.)

How much work to do...

This is a tricky question! Some people work well in short, intense bursts, while others need to invest much more time to do their best work. At Oxford you will be faced by many competing demands on your time – plays, sports, politics, hobbies, socialising – and it can be difficult to find a good balance with work. On the one hand, it’s generally healthy not to let work overtake your whole life; on the other, it’s not helpful to let anything else overtake it either, and work should always be a core element.

A rule of thumb would be this: if your work is not fulfilling your potential, then we’ll want to know how much work you are doing. If it’s less than you’d do in a full-time job – less than, say, 40 focused hours a week – then we’re likely to think that you need to put in more hours. If on the other hand you’re feeling thoroughly miserable and not enjoying the course at all, but working 60 hours a week, then we’ll want to try to help you find ways to cut back a bit and work more efficiently.

As ever, if you feel you’re struggling, talk to someone - another student, a peer supporter, a tutor, etc. The links at the end of the “change from school to university” section below can be a helpful guide, too.
Some Thoughts on Essays and Writing

The tutorial system, as a teaching method, is very, very dependent on good communication. If you have problems, or questions, it’s usually more help to communicate these earlier rather than later. If you believe that your work isn’t going well, or if you would rather change to a different tutorial group, or if you’re having specific difficulties with a piece of reading, then it’s usually more helpful to communicate that as early as possible rather than suffering in silence. Most tutors – including me – will be happy to respond to emails about work and reading in advance of a tutorial. Some more specific points about the skills you will need follow. Please note that all the advice here is specifically aimed at politics writing. Since all of you are doing joint degrees, you will be working in other academic subjects, which may well have different norms/expectations/rules. Much of this document’s advice is generalisable to other subjects, but some of it is not, and you need to think carefully before applying it in other contexts.

Writing

Good writing matters above nearly everything else. It’s central to teaching and learning at Oxford, and it’s also the only form in which your work at Oxford will be evaluated. Good writing is an unconditional necessity for doing the work you need to do: you can’t express ideas, draw distinctions, set out arguments, use evidence, ... without being able to write clearly and precisely. You should aim for clarity and precision in everything you write.

If you’re not sure of your argument, clear and precise writing will help you decide what you think. If you are sure of your argument, it will help you communicate it to the reader. (Unclear and imprecise writing won’t successfully disguise those moments when you’re not really sure.)

Students sometimes feel obliged to write in a florid or arcane style, or to fill their writing with technical or scientific language, long or obscure words, pomposity or pretension. Really, though, especially for Prelims, all you need is simple English, perhaps including the odd technical term. You don’t need to use unusual vocabulary, or long words, or complicated sentences, or anything else which is likely in practice to interfere with clarity and precision. The purpose of your writing is to communicate meaning to the reader – writing which makes the reader’s task more difficult, or which seems forced or opaque, will work against that purpose.

If you’re unsure about your writing, you need to have the relevant tools. Almost everyone will need a dictionary – the Concise Oxford Dictionary is widely recommended – and a thesaurus. (I’ve left the previous sentence in this year, but I’d appreciate feedback - are online dictionaries more useful to you?)

For technical language and definitions it may help to look at the Oxford Dictionary of Politics. Note that the university has free online access to the Oxford English Dictionary if your dictionary needs get really serious, though it’s not often going to be the case that the medieval origin of some word is really important to a Prelims essay in Politics.

Additionally, you might want to look at some works on writing in English. One classic work that is often recommended is Fowler’s Modern English Usage (1st or 2nd ed, probably only available second hand). Other classic works are Gowers’ The Complete Plain Words, Partridge’s Usage and Abusage, and Ritter’s The Oxford Style Manual. Some of these works are highly prescriptive in a way which is no longer fashionable (compare the rewritten 3rd edition of Fowler, dating from 1996). While we might deplore their commitment to entrenching social hierarchy through language, they do - thereby - provide a very helpful guide to formal English
usage, in a way that less prescriptive works might not (see the aforementioned 3rd edition of Fowler). You should read them with a critical eye.

(You should read everything with a critical eye.)

There are quite a few books devoted to giving more specific help with academic writing, and essays in particular. It's probably most helpful to browse through a few in Blackwells before deciding whether you'd like to buy one, but I've seen the following recommended:

Bryan Greetham, *How to write better essays* (Palgrave)

Peter Levin, *Write great essays!* (Open University Press)

Phyllis Creme, *Writing at University 2nd ed* (Open University Press)

Peter Redman, *Good Essay Writing: A Social Sciences Guide* (Sage)

If you have any thoughts about these or other study skills guides I'd be very grateful to hear it.

If you think you might have a problem with reading and writing – for example, systematic difficulties with spelling, or problems with reading as quickly as your classmates – it may be that there is an underlying disorder of the sort sometimes categorised as dyslexia or dysgraphia. In that case, please talk to me, to one of your other tutors, or to the college Tutorial Office about it as soon as possible. Such problems are very common among Oxford undergraduates, although often not diagnosed until they arrive here, and we may be able to arrange an assessment leading to any of various forms of assistance, including extra time in exams.

If you already have a diagnosis of this sort - or any other disability, please let us know as early as you can.

**Essays**

Essays are the sole mode of assessment for almost all teaching in PPE and MHP, and getting essay-writing right causes many students a lot of trouble. Sometimes, tutors give rather cryptic feedback (“answer the question!”, “focus!”) and so on, and often these sorts of comments only make sense to people who already write good essays – they don't actually help to explain what makes a good essay.

What follows is an attempt at initial guidance, using an example. Don't worry about the substantive political points – I'm trying here to suggest how you might approach any question.

The key thing is this: an essay is your answer to the question.

If that seems trivial, it can be unpacked three ways:

i. It’s your answer to the question – it responds to the specific question asked, rather than to the general topic. The question is never “Write down everything you know about X”.

ii. It’s your answer to the question – it resolves the question, showing how it must be understood and what response is necessary, rather than merely providing information
relevant to the question. The Fox News motto “we report, you decide” should not apply to an essay.

iii. It’s your answer to the question – it is a response derived from your own thinking about the question and it shows evidence of that thought process, rather than reciting an answer derived from someone else’s thinking about the question.

The question
The question you are being asked is very carefully worded. For example:

“Parliament is effectively powerless against a determined Prime Minister.” Discuss.

It’s important to pay close attention to the wording of the question. This, for example, is talking about the relative power of the Prime Minister and Parliament. But it isn’t saying “Write down everything you know about the relative power of the Prime Minister and Parliament.”

Let me repeat that for emphasis. This question does not say “Write down everything you know about the relative power of the Prime Minister and Parliament” and it should never be answered as if it did.

Rather the wording raises a number of further questions, such as (but not limited to):

• It uses the phrase “effectively powerless”; why not just “powerless”? (what is the difference between the two phrases? Does the distinction make sense?)

• Why focus on the Prime Minister rather than the government, cabinet, executive? (Is there something special about the relationship between Prime Minister and Parliament that isn’t true of, say, Cabinet and Parliament?)

• Why construe the situation as one of opposition between Parliament and Prime minister? (How far do their interests clash? How far do their goals clash? Could we, alternatively, consider the PM as essentially representative of Parliament? Could we think of other institutions – parties, for example, or media, or public opinion, or capital, or interest groups, or ... – as controlling both?)

• Why make an issue of whether or not the Prime Minister is “determined”? (is Parliament powerless against a feckless PM? what constitutes “determination”?)

• Might the powers of Prime Ministers vary as between Prime Ministers? (as between Parliaments, too, perhaps)

• How specific is this to the UK? (Is the answer to this question true only of the UK, or is it true more generally: are legislatures generally “effectively powerless” against determined heads of government? do the examples of the US President or the German Chancellor shed any light on the Prime Minister’s situation?)

The answers to these questions (and any others that you can think of) ought to help you shape your answer.
Your answer

Rather than get too precisely into the details of the answer, I want to start you thinking about different outline approaches to the question above. Firstly, what does it mean to “answer the question”?

In practice, if this were an exam question, a significant number of candidates would fail to answer it. Their outlines might go something like this:

"Parliament is effectively powerless against a determined Prime Minister.” Discuss.

1. Introduction: Prime Ministers and their successes and failures
   1.1. Tuition fees
   1.2. Lords reform
   1.3. NHS reform
   1.4. Terrorism Acts, detention, etc

2. UK legislature – structure and function
   2.1. Bicameral (power of House of Lords vs Commons)
   2.2. Committees (Standing, Select, HoL)
   2.3. Parties (whips, re-election)
   2.4. Coalitions (novelty, uncertainty)

3. Prime Ministers
   3.1. “First among equals” versus Presidential
   3.2. Cabinet Committees
   3.3. Role in media coverage
   3.4. Foreign vs domestic policy subject to party control?
   3.5. Examples of PM winning and losing fights over policy

4. Conclusion: It all depends

It might well be that this essay would be, when written out, tremendously well-informed – it might be thoroughly knowledgeable, even insightful, about the material it covers. However, if it included an answer to the question, that answer would largely be hidden inside the structure of the essay: the structure is of an overall view of the general topics of parliament and the PM, rather than a specific analysis of the question. It would be a poor essay: it would provide a lot of material relevant to an answer, but would not provide an answer.
How could we answer the question more specifically? Suppose you think that the UK legislature is effectively powerless against Prime Ministers. A better essay might have the following structure:

“Parliament is effectively powerless against a determined Prime Minister.” Discuss.

1. Introduction: what’s the question getting at? why is this worth asking a question about?

2. These (1,2...N) are reasons we might think Parliament isn’t effectively powerless against PMs

3. However, for these (1,2...N) reasons, that argument is wrong.

4. Indeed if we consider these (1,2...N) reasons, Parliament is effectively powerless, as the question says.

5. Conclusion: this is important because ...?

The difference between this outline and the previous one ought (I hope) to be clear. While the first essay set out all sorts of relevant and irrelevant knowledge, the second essay has the form of an argument – that is, it seeks to persuade the reader that a particular answer to the question is correct. It does this through setting out what the question means (in 1), considering alternatives (in 2 and 3), giving reasons to show that its answer is the best one (in 3 and 4), and explaining what the consequences of this view are (in 5). In talking about these reasons, the answer would have to display a lot of knowledge of the topic. But, the structure would be based around persuasion/argument rather than knowledge/facts.

To make that point more briefly: the structure of your essay should be completely different to the structure of your knowledge of the underlying topic.

Of course, this isn’t the only possible structure for an answer to the question. Nor is it the right answer, necessarily; one could construct similar outlines for any of a range of possible answers to the question. We could decide that the reasons point us the other way, towards the view that Parliament isn’t effectively powerless against a determined PM; or that the question is silly; and that it shows a lack of understanding of the relationship between Parliament and the PM, or etc. But whatever you decide the answer to the question is, you need to make your essay an argument for that answer. You will of course need to include some knowledge – but the knowledge is there to persuade the reader of your argument, not to demonstrate your precision recall skills.

It’s key, therefore, that you think of each essay not as a demonstration that you have done the reading, or as a reminder of how you came to the answer you have, or as a process of discovery, or some other purely self-regarding reason. Rather, an essay is a performance for an audience – it’s an attempt to engage the reader(s) and persuade them that your answer is the correct one.

**General essay hints**

Some basic hints follow from the above:
Firstly, you need to be clear about what your answer is before you start writing your essay! If you don't know what the answer is as you write, your essay can't be focussed on persuading the reader of that answer. It can be helpful to try to identify a one-sentence answer: what is the core of your answer, in under fifteen words?

Secondly, you have to be absolutely ruthless in staying on the topic, and on the line of argument, that you are pursuing. Facts or ideas or reasons or views which aren't directly used to pursue your argument, no matter how interesting/funny/exciting/drawn-from-your-personal-experience-during-your-gap-year/blah, don't belong in the essay. Every sentence you write should have a clear function in your mind. It should be clear exactly what that sentence is doing to persuade the reader of your argument. Any sentence that doesn't have such a function needs to be excised.

Thirdly, you need to think about your essay from the reader's point of view. This is absolutely crucial. As a reader, it's easy to get lost in someone else's argument or to misunderstand what the writer is trying to do. In writing an essay, you should try to lead the reader through your argument – you should make it easy for the reader to follow your argument, your logic, and your evidence, to see that your conclusions follow, and you should also make it easy for the reader to agree with you. Signpost your argument – tell the reader what you have done, what you are doing, what you are about to do – and emphasise important points and conclusions. Organise your writing to make it easier to follow (for example, in lists like this). Most people err towards far too little, rather than too much, signposting and structure – it can be helpful to get someone else to read your essay for you to point out where you could do more for the reader.

Fourthly, a crucial fact about the reader is that he or she is not you, so parts of the argument that remain only in your head will not be accessible to the reader. You need to be explicit about definitional choices you make, about why you reach the conclusions that you do, about how your evidence supports your argument.

Fifthly, you should pay close attention to the logic of the question. For example, the above question includes a phrase which is both vague and crucial – “effectively powerless”. In order to answer the question you have to have a clear account of what “effectively powerless” means, and how to assess evidence to identify it as in favour of, or against, the proposition that the UK legislature is effectively powerless against a determined prime minister. That is, you need criteria for deciding what counts as effective powerlessness. Most questions involve vague phrases of this sort which need to be carefully defined and operationalized (made usable) so that evidence can be brought to bear on the question. In the absence of well-defined criteria, all you can do is recite the evidence – you can't analyse it one way or the other. For example – is Labour doing well in the opinion polls? We don't know until we know what counts as doing well in the opinion polls - 35%? 40%? 45%?

It can be difficult to take all this in – as I said, many students struggle with essay-writing. The important thing in the early stages is to try to make progress on a clear argument, a focussed essay, and keeping the reader's needs in mind rather than the author's. It might help to get someone else to read your essay before the tutorial (or to share your essay with your tutorial partner/s in advance) – just to get some idea of whether someone else can follow your argument.

**Good and bad**

Some thoughts, the first two especially focussed on writing about real political systems:
A. You need to specify mechanisms. It’s not enough just to say “The Prime Minister will be constrained by public opinion”. We need to know more about it. Particularly, we need to know how the Prime Minister will be constrained. For example, will it be fear of violent overthrow? of a future General Election defeat? of a threat to the PM’s leadership from within her own party, leading to an enforced resignation? or all three? or something else?

There are two reasons we need to know the exact mechanism. Firstly, the claim “The Prime Minister will be constrained by public opinion” is vague: understanding the mechanism will help us understand exactly what constraints the Prime Minister faces. (Fear of a violent overthrow will constrain some potential Prime Ministerial actions; fear of a future General Election defeat will constrain quite a different set of actions). Secondly, the aim of studying politics empirically is broadly scientific. That is, it attempts not only to show correlations (between say prime ministerial unpopularity and certain kinds of policy outcomes) but also to identify patterns of causation (why is the correlation the way it is?) which can be applied in other situations. These patterns need to be identified precisely if they are going to be applicable in other situations. (Fear of a violent overthrow might also constrain an unelected dictator, but fear of a future General Election defeat would not.)

B. You need to specify agency. For example, be careful with the use of passive verbs. (Reminder: active form: The dog ate the cake; passive form: the cake was eaten by the dog.) The problem is that with the passive form, but not usually with the active form, it’s possible to omit the agent – the dog in the previous example. It’s grammatically OK to write “The cake was eaten.” but not “Ate the cake”. The problem with “The cake was eaten” is that it omits a crucial fact – who had agency (who ate the cake?) So if you find yourself writing (or reading) “Members of parliament are required to spend a great deal of time on constituency business.” you should realise that the sentence is potentially leading the reader astray. A sharp reader will wonder who or what does the requiring (and, as in point 1, how). Similarly, sharp readers of this document will notice a couple of references to books which are “widely recommended”, where I don’t specify who does the recommending, and therefore give the reader no chance of deciding whether the recommendation is trustworthy. This is bad of me!

C. An essay isn’t teaching – often students try to adopt the style of a textbook and write their essay in the form of introductory summary of a topic suitable for a new student. Sometimes these are quite good textbook extracts, but they aren’t really essays. You’re not trying to provide an introduction to the topic – your essay is being read by someone who already knows about it – you’re trying to provide an argument in answer to a question. If you find yourself repeating a lot of factual or narrative material, ask yourself if you are trying to teach an imaginary novice rather than answer the question.
Modes of teaching and learning

Tutorials

What we mean by tutorial is an hour in which one tutor and one to four students discuss some issue on which reading and an essay have been set. Generally speaking, teaching in larger groups gets referred to as classes or lectures, the former being more interactive than the latter. Tutorial time is quite limited – in total over the whole of the three year PPE course a student would typically get about 110-120 hours of tutorials. It’s important to use your time in tutorials effectively, therefore.

A working definition first: a tutorial is a conversation about the week’s reading and writing. It should often (we hope!) feel quite natural, as if you’ve just turned up for a chat that merely happens to be intensely focussed on some arcane question from the godforsaken depths of political science. Some things I’m usually trying to do in tutorials include:

1. finding out if students have produced a workable essay (sometimes by getting a student to read out all or part of it, or by asking them to summarise the main argument) and providing constructive criticism on style and content.

2. ensuring that students are reasonably well-prepared – that they have done enough reading, are reasonably confident with any factual material, and have considered some basic issues about the topic, as well as answering basic factual questions and uncertainties students might have.

3. critically engaging with students’ own arguments about controversial or ambiguous questions – how well-supported are those views? Do they make logical sense, are they plausible, and what would an opponent say? How can the argument be extended in new areas? Do the students have any tricky or interesting questions that have occurred to them?

Roughly speaking: 1 is important, largely because of the central role of (essay-)writing in teaching and learning at Oxford, although preferably it’s something that wouldn’t detain us all that long. 2 is necessary, but we’d also hope to be able to limit how long it takes. 3 is fun and useful. Ideally, then, we’d spend most time doing 3 – that’s when the tutorial is most intellectually effective.

Some basic rules:

1. Be prepared! (Do the reading, do the writing.) If you aren’t, the tutor might just give up (how can you possibly have a conversation if you aren’t equipped to participate?), or at best give you an inefficient mini-lecture.

2. Try to turn up with some ideas – not necessarily ones that appear in your essay – but ones you might be willing to drop into discussion, or bring up as a question. In other words, think about the topic in advance.

3. Try to see the topics not just as the basis of answering an essay, but also as the starting point for discussion. (Would you, having done the reading, have set the question that was asked? Would a different question be more effective in identifying the key problems and issues in the discipline? How does this topic, and the questions it raises, relate to other topics you’ve
covered, and to other important questions? What parts of the reading were helpful, thought-provoking, interesting, stupid, or wrong, and why?)

4. Try not to get hung-up on a single point in tutorials. Sometimes it just doesn’t matter that much whether or not Bernie Sanders should have been President (of course, some other times it matters a lot) and if we can’t leave that behind we can’t make much progress.

5. It’s not a matter of point-scoring – against your colleagues in the tutorial or even, God forbid, against your tutor. You don’t get academic credit for tutorial performance – what you get, if it all works, is a fuller and more critically developed understanding of the subject, and a sense of how to approach other topics. In other words, efficiently using tutorials enables you to develop for the future – often by cooperating with others in the tutorial – rather than to “finish” a topic for now by winning the argument.

6. Try to take some time shortly after a tutorial to write down your thoughts – even briefly – since you will soon forget much of what was covered, and it’s good to try to capture that while it still seems like live material.

It’s also important to realise that tutorials are not “the course”. To use the Higher Education jargon, tutorials are not “content delivery” – to get to grips with material and a broad topic, a course of lectures and/or wide reading will get you there. Tutorials are a focussed means of developing skills in argument and analytic thinking, in resolving intellectual problems, and in bringing out new ideas. Tutors may set work which only covers a small part of the course, specifically in order to work on skills rather than coverage – and they will assume (correctly!) that you are capable of reading widely and productively on your own, and of making good use of lectures and other resources.

**Lectures**

Lectures are usually designed to give students a well-structured introduction to some field of study. In one sense you could argue these aren’t very efficient – after all, you could probably read a chapter of a textbook in the same time from the comfort of your room – but they do help to provide a structured basis for your understanding of the topics, and they bring everyone up to speed. They also provide a core of knowledge which everyone is expected to have for Prelims (and this is why you need to attend them even if you think they’re inefficient).

So how to use them? It seems a bit more passive than a tutorial, but you shouldn’t feel afraid to ask questions during or after the lecture. You should listen actively – that is, rather than just passively absorbing everything the lecturer says, you should think about the meaning of what they are saying. Think critically about the lecturer’s arguments and judgements – is the lecturer right or wrong, and why? You need to take notes (otherwise you will forget what was said) – but those notes should themselves not be a transcription. You should try to record important factual content, significant arguments, and your own response to them. This will, of course, require you to make judgements about what’s important and significant, but that’s actually a good thing – it will help you engage with what the lecturer is trying to say.

**Reading**

Similarly, when you’re reading, you need to be more than passively absorbing the text – you need to engage with it, question it, and develop your own thinking about what the book/article says. You will need to take notes, but, again, those notes should be not just a summary of the
reading you've done, but also notes about your response to that reading – both of whether and why you agree or not, and also of any further ideas you might have as a result.

To prepare for an essay/tutorial well, you do need to do a substantial amount of reading – ideally six to eight pieces (books or major articles). Certainly fewer than four to five pieces of reading will usually leave you wholly unprepared and unable to engage fully with the extent of the question.

It will not escape your notice that reading six to eight pieces is quite a lot of work. What we don't mean, then, is that you should read each from cover to cover; rather you should try to identify key arguments, questions, evidence and so on in the book (often helpfully delineated in introductions and conclusions), while looking further to understand how specific arguments work, what specific evidence is provided, and so on. Sometimes this is called “gutting” a book rather than reading it – your aim is not to find out how effusively the author thanks her great-nephew in the acknowledgements, but what the author's ideas are, what reasons they have to hold those ideas, and how those ideas relate to the essay and the topic. Choosing what to read, and what to read in detail, is an important skill and one which it may take some time to develop, but it's important to getting through the reading efficiently.

There is a bit of a tension between getting through the reading for your essay question (which will help you write the essay) and getting through the reading more generally. Often tutors will direct your reading to particularly important or helpful articles. But these are not meant to be “the answer” to the question, and may not turn out to be all that important for the specific question. The point about this tension is that, while your short-term interest is in finishing the essay, you have a longer term interest in covering the topic broadly enough to be able to answer different questions at a later time – in the tutorial or in the exam. So, do read enough to answer your question, but don't completely ignore readings that seem less than completely related to it; they will at least come in useful at a later point, and may well help give you ideas for the essay in any case.

**Your learning**

There are a few themes in the preceding which it's worth summarising and emphasising.

Many of the skills you need are ones you need to develop, rather than being ones which your previous educational experience has provided. University is a very different thing to school, and while there are some continuities there are also many discontinuities – what we expect from an essay, for example, is often quite different. We sometimes talk about this as a move from “receptive” to “critical” learning - a move from taking on board what teachers and textbooks say, to arguing and criticising as autonomous thinkers. There's a bit more on this in the next section.

You shouldn't feel downcast if it takes time to develop some of these skills – as long as you are moving in the right direction, you will eventually be able to gut a book, criticise a lecture, talk in a tutorial about your new ideas, write a coherent and interesting essay, and so on. The point is that a lot of this stuff is difficult – that being what makes it worthwhile and productive – and will take time.

Much of your study will be self-directed to an exceptional degree. Apart from lectures, classes and tutorials – totalling perhaps 15 hours a week – your time is wholly your own to organise as you see fit. How you make use of the various facilities of Oxford is also, largely, up to you. That
doesn't mean that you won't face consequences if you don't take your work seriously, but it
does mean that you need to be organised and to have an idea of what you're trying to do with
your work. There is going to be no-one whose role it is to spoon-feed you through the testable
parts of a course (or rather there is: it's you). Your learning is your own.

It can be difficult to strike the right balance between understanding the material you're
covering, and growing your own views about it. At one extreme, views that aren't supported by
(for example) empirical evidence aren't particularly helpful. On the other hand, we don't tend
to value knowledge as such -- rather, we value interpretation, judgements, ideas, analysis. One
way to think about this is as follows: what we're aiming for is not just for you to have your own
ideas, but for you to have ideas and try to persuade readers/listeners of their validity. To do that
you'll inevitably have to refer to arguments in the literature you've read, to empirical evidence
you've discovered, and so on. The aim is reasoned originality.

**The change from learning at school**

(this was a new section for 2013, and I've been away from teaching most of the time since. If
you after you've arrived and settled in, you think it gets it wrong, or could be written better,
could you let me know?)

The transition from school can be... tricky. Some people adapt immediately, but for others it
takes time to work out what is going on and how to get the best out of an Oxford education.
It's not straightforward to articulate all the reasons why, but here are a few:

1. Relative placement: a lot of Oxford students were among the top few students of their
school. Given that, the usual experience of study at Oxford is of suddenly struggling a lot more
than previously; of not always being towards the top of the group, not always getting the best
grades, and so on. This is just a consequence of selection - it doesn't mean that the struggling
student is less smart, but that they're being compared to a different group - but it can be hard
to come to terms with, though of course it can also be inspiring to join such a clever and
talented group of people. If you're finding it difficult, it would be a good idea to talk about this
- either to us or to other students. It's such a common problem that it can be reassuring just to
discuss it; and you might also get some useful advice which would help you do better, too.

2. Feedback and autonomy. Relative to educational experiences at school, you'll be tested less
frequently. Your work will be assessed against explicit criteria (which are in the course
handbook), but those criteria are not immediately transparent and need reflection. A lot of
feedback will be verbal rather than written, and it will only sometimes be able to give you
straightforward ways to improve your mark. (At other times, your mark would be improved by
thinking more deeply, reading more widely, having a better argument - but none of these is
straightforward.) Feedback is also often directly engaged with the point you are making and
looking to test your counterarguments. This can be disconcerting. It embodies a valuable move
from jumping-through-hoops to being an autonomous learner whose arguments can be taken
seriously - but the latter can be quite unsettling. On the whole, if anything is going terribly
wrong and you are underperforming, you will get extremely clear feedback to that effect. If
you're not getting feedback of that sort, things are OK. But if you are feeling lost it's very
helpful to express that & most tutors will be very happy to explain in more detail how you are
doing.
3. Tutorials. Tutorials are new to nearly every first year undergraduate, and it takes a while to get used to them, and to work out what you're trying to do in them. Some people adapt immediately; for others it can feel awkward and distracting and not work well. As with the other two points, if you think you're struggling, or not enjoying or benefiting from them, please say so outside the tutorial. A conversation can lead to reorganising the tutorial or just to better ways to work within it, but in any case is going to be more productive than suffering in silence.

There are some good documents on the transition to university life here:

https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/counselling/self-help/academic-life

under the “Freshers: adjusting to university life” tab - especially the “Top Tips For Freshers” section. There are also useful podcasts and other materials.
Plagiarism

The importance of not plagiarising

I don’t have a grand finale for this document. I want to close with an example of something which you absolutely must not do. There is no greater academic offence than plagiarism and you can be sure that if the college or Department discovers evidence thereof you will be in deep trouble – possibly even facing the end of your time at Oxford. It is important that you read this section carefully and understand what it refers to. When you get them, you should also read the University PPE handbook/MHP handbook, the Proctors’ and Assessor’s Memorandum, and the Wadham Handbook, for further important rules concerning plagiarism. The University’s plagiarism policies are online:

http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/goodpractice/about/

and they include links to other material, including an online course on plagiarism. The burden is on you to avoid plagiarism: it will be no excuse to say that you did not realise what you were doing was plagiarism. Note that plagiarism is not just of other students’ work, and not just of printed scholarly works – plagiarism can be of any source (online, a textbook, an encyclopaedia, “study notes”, etc etc).

Defining plagiarism

Plagiarism might best be defined as passing off another’s work as your own. One example might be to place your own name on someone else’s essay, or to pay someone else to write your essay, but there are less straightforward cases which are also serious.

For example, suppose Bloggs wrote an article in 2003 in which she says:

The Ruritanian government has developed the South of the Country at the expense of the North. North to South transfers in tax and government spending per capita were approximately $1500 per annum in every year from 1997 to 2002 (Smith [2002]). Given their party’s support base, which is largely concentrated in the South, it is not wholly unsurprising that the Ruritanian government has followed this path – they have been rewarding their supporters. But the scale of the transfer, and its consequences in the North, have been breathtaking.

You are writing an essay about Ruritanian government in these years. It would (of course) be plagiarism to write the following in your essay:

The Ruritanian government has developed the South of the Country at the expense of the North. North to South transfers in tax and government spending per capita were approximately $1500 per annum in every year from 1997 to 2002 (Smith [2002]). Given their party’s support base, which is largely concentrated in the South, it is not wholly unsurprising that the Ruritanian government has followed this path – they have been rewarding their supporters. But the scale of the transfer, and its consequences in the North, have been breathtaking.

It would also be plagiarism to slightly alter the piece and then include it:

The Ruritanian government has developed the South of the Country at the expense of the North, even though the North is already poorer. The scale of the transfer, and its consequences in the North, have been breathtaking.

Equally it would be plagiarism to produce a close paraphrase of part or all of the piece:
Ruritania’s leaders have taken funds from the North to give to the South for development. North to South net effects of tax and spending per person were roughly $1500 a year for six years following 1997 (see Smith’s interesting 2002 article). Since their partisan supporters are mainly focused in the South, it isn’t completely shocking that the Ruritanian government have benefited their supporters in this manner. It is the amount of funds transferred, and the effects on Northern areas, which has taken many observers’ breath away.

It wouldn’t be plagiarism, but it also wouldn’t be very interesting, if you just quoted the source:

As Bloggs (2003) says: “The Ruritanian government has developed the South of the Country at the expense of the North. North to South transfers in tax and government spending per capita were approximately $1500 per annum in every year from 1997 to 2002 (Smith [2002]). Given their party’s support base, which is largely concentrated in the South, it is not wholly unsurprising that the Ruritanian government has followed this path – they have been rewarding their supporters. But the scale of the transfer, and its consequences in the North, have been breathtaking.”

It would be dishonest and extremely bad practice to misquote the source:

As Bloggs (2003) says: “la la la I can’t hear you”.

So much for various bad and unacceptable practices. Ideally you would engage with, rather than simply quote, Bloggs. For example:

As Bloggs (2003) points out, the Ruritanian government has undertaken significant transfers of funding from the North to the South, of the order of $1500 per capita in the late 1990s and thereafter. She regards this as on the one hand “not wholly surprising”, but on the other hand “breathtaking” in its scale. However, she ignores the importance of population movements in her analysis: given the significant flow of population from North to South in recent years (Jones [1998]), any government would have had to undertake major infrastructure developments in the South, and it is infrastructure investment which has been the main focus for the expenditures (Smith [2002]).

What is better about this argument is that not only does it attribute claims as appropriate; it also puts together a range of authors and evidence to address the argument Bloggs is making.

The least straightforward element of plagiarism is plagiarism of ideas. You should attribute ideas you use in your essays to the authors from whom you took them; but inevitably, sometimes you will have ideas that happen to be the same as those someone else has already had. This isn’t necessarily a problem: with plagiarism of ideas, the issue is credit and honesty.

In summary, there are at least four different kinds of plagiarism:

1. handing in another's work as your own
2. copying another writer’s works without attribution
3. narrow paraphrase of another author’s work
4. passing off other people’s ideas as your own

All of these should be avoided, and the best way to do so is to employ good academic practices. You should assume that any submitted work may be subject to testing for plagiarism, and that there will be serious and irreversible consequences for you if it is found that your work is plagiarised.
Plagiarism and good academic practice

What you need here is just clarity about what is going on and what category materials fall into. That is: when you’re making notes (or planning an essay, or writing an essay), you need to indicate very clearly indeed what you are doing that is your own work, and what is summarising/copying the lecturer/book/article on which you’re working. As you move towards writing an essay be clear in your own mind about what is fundamentally your ideas/words (which ought to be the majority of what you’re writing!), and what is directly taken from other sources and needs to be attributed.

You should, with each essay you hand in, include a bibliography: a list of sources on which you rely. (You can find common formats for bibliographies in most books and scholarly articles). This can help clarify for you, as well as for the reader, what sources you have relied on, and hence the distinction between your own work and that which you are relying on.

A common cause of “accidental” plagiarism is failure, in notes which then get turned into parts of an essay, to be clear about what’s directly taken from another source. But, importantly, even if plagiarism weren’t actually a problem, an essay written like that wouldn’t be very good: you shouldn’t, in writing essays, be including large chunks of notes even in your own words, because it’s unlikely that these notes will be developing your own argument (instead you’ll be reciting facts, or someone else’s argument, at length). It’s that original argument that is the purpose of your work in politics here.
Introduction to the Theory and Practice of Politics (PPE) and Political Analysis in Empirical Politics (PPE)

Academic Year 2016-17

Course providers:

(The Theory of Politics) Daniel McDermott, Keble, e-mail: daniel.mcdermott@keble.ox.ac.uk;
(The Practice of Politics) Paul Martin, Wadham. e-mail: paul.martin@wadh.ox.ac.uk;
(Methods Programme) Andrew Eggers, Andrea Ruggeri, Robin Harding, Spyros Kosmidis.

IMPORTANT:

1. This document sets out the structure of the first-year course undergraduate Politics course FOR PPE only. For the undergraduate degree in History and Politics see the relevant document for that degree.
2. Section A (the Theory of Politics) was substantially revised for 2015/16; Section B (the Practice of Politics) was first taught and examined in its current form in 2014/15. Examination papers set before 2015 are not a good guide to the format of the First Public Examination. Specimen papers for Sections A and B are available on the Prelims section of WebLearn to assist candidates, in addition to the examination papers available via OXAM.

(1) Introduction to the Theory and Practice of Politics is composed of:

   Section (a) The Theory of Politics
   Section (b) The Practice of Politics.

The two sections are taught through departmentally-provided lectures, delivered during Michaelmas and Hilary Terms, and college-provided tutorials and classes. They are examined together in the First Public Examination for the Honour School in Philosophy Politics and Economics.

(2) Political Analysis provides an introduction to the methodology of empirical political analysis. It is taught in Hilary Term through 8 departmentally-provided lectures and 4 workshops, and is assessed by a 2000-word essay to be submitted by 12 noon Tuesday 2 May 2017.
Examination Decrees and Regulations 2016:

(a) **The Theory of Politics.** Questions will be set on the following topics: (i) the nature and grounds of rights; (ii) the nature and grounds of democracy; (iii) the role of civil society; (iv) power in the democratic state; (v) the nature and grounds of liberty; (vi) state paternalism; (vii) free speech. Questions will also be set on the following texts: (i) John Locke: *Second Treatise on Government*; (ii) J. J. Rousseau, *The Social Contract*; (iii) Alexis de Toqueville, *Democracy in America*; (iv) Karl Marx and Freidrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*; (v) J. S. Mill, *On Liberty*.

(b) **The Practice of Politics.** Questions will be set on the following topics: (i) regime types; definition and measurement of variations between types of democracy; (ii) political institutions and practice outside the advanced industrial democracies; stability, state capacity and state formation; (iii) the state and its institutions (executives, legislatures, parties and party systems, electoral systems, courts, constitutions and centre-periphery relations); (iv) parties and party systems; political values and identity politics.
SECTION A: THE THEORY OF POLITICS

Aims and objectives:

Section A aims to familiarise students with major approaches to and issues in understanding political theory. Specifically, students will be encouraged:

1. to acquire knowledge and understanding of the basic concepts which inform theoretical and empirical discussion of politics, such as ‘rights’, ‘democracy’, ‘power’ and ‘liberty’;

2. to acquire knowledge and understanding of at least some of the core normative issues which concern democratic politics, such as the legitimate scope of state authority, the desirability of democracy, and the role of civil society;

3. to acquire knowledge and understanding of major theoretical frameworks used to understand the distribution and exercise of power in a state, including Marxist and pluralist approaches;

4. to acquire knowledge and understanding of the work of selected major political thinkers who have addressed major theoretical issues concerning democratic government;

Through a combination of lectures, classes and tutorials, students will acquire a basic grounding in all of these topics, though there will be considerable flexibility as to which topics students, in consultation with their tutors, elect to concentrate on in preparation for the Prelim exam.

Structure

The syllabus for Section A is organized into seven major topics. Questions will be asked on each of these topics in the Prelims exam (see the advice on examining contained under each theme heading below). In addition questions will be asked on certain texts (Locke: Second Treatise on Government, Rousseau, Social Contract, Tocqueville, Democracy in America, Mill, On Liberty, and Marx: The Communist Manifesto): these are referred to as basic texts. The basic texts have a clear relationship to the major topics, and students are encouraged to study texts and topics in conjunction, e.g., a student might spend 1 or 2 tutorials on The Social Contract and 1 or 2 tutorials on the nature and grounds of democracy. But the texts may also be studied in their own right, and questions on the texts in the exam may invite students to discuss any significant question raised by the texts. Thorough exploration of a given topic or basic text may reasonably take up more than one class or tutorial. It is necessary, therefore, for tutors to exercise a degree of selectivity in the topics and texts they teach. They can do so, however, assured that no topic or basic text will go uncovered in the Prelim exam.

TUTORIAL TOPICS

*** indicates a basic text.
* indicates a reading that is particularly recommended.
1. THE NATURE AND GROUNDS OF RIGHTS:

1.1 ASSOCIATED BASIC TEXT: LOCKE’S SECOND TREATISE ON GOVERNMENT

Core Reading:

*** Locke, John, Second Treatise of Government

Further Reading:

Locke, John, First Treatise of Government
* Dunn, John, The Political Thought of John Locke, (1969)
Ashcraft, Richard, Locke’s Two Treatises of Government (1987), Esp. Chs. 5 – 8
* Tully, James, A Discourse on Property, John Locke and his adversaries, (1980)
Tully, James, An Approach to Political Philosophy: Locke in Contexts, (1993)

Essays

- Why, according to Locke, is consent necessary for state legitimacy?
- Can individuals gain exclusive property rights by mixing labour with unowned goods?

1.2 RIGHTS

Core Reading:


Further Reading:

* Jones, Peter, Rights (1994)
Freeden, Michael, Rights (1991)
Shue, Henry, Basic Rights (1980)
Finnis, John, Natural Law and Natural Rights (1980) ch 8.

Essays

- Can rights conflict?
- Can states legitimately violate the rights of their citizens?
2. THE NATURE AND GROUNDS OF DEMOCRACY

2.1 ASSOCIATED BASIC TEXT: ROUSSEAU’S THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

Core Reading:


Further Reading:


Rawls, John *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy* (2007), 1st lecture on Rousseau

Essays:

- What problem is Rousseau seeking to solve in The Social Contract? To what extent does his proposal succeed in addressing this problem?
- In what senses are individual citizens in Rousseau’s state ‘free’?

2.2 DEMOCRACY: WHAT IS IT? IS IT DESIRABLE?

Core Reading:


Further Reading


**Essays:**

- Does a commitment to democracy require accepting the decisions of the majority regardless of the content of that decision?
- Is democracy necessary for liberty?
- How defensible is deliberative democracy?

### 3. THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

#### 3.1 ASSOCIATED BASIC TEXT: TOCQUEVILLE’S DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA

**Basic reading:**

*** de Tocqueville, Alexis, *Democracy in America*, Volume 1, Author’s Introduction; Part 1, chapters 3-5; Part 2, chapters 6-9, Volume 2, Part 2, chapters 1-8; Part 4, chapters 1-8.
Welch, Cheryl, *De Tocqueville*, 2001, especially chapter 2.

**Essays:**

- Is de Tocqueville an optimist or a pessimist about the prospects for democracy?
- What, in de Tocqueville’s view, are the virtues and what are the vices of democratic government?
- What is the role of freedom in de Tocqueville’s theory of democracy?

#### 3.2 CIVIL SOCIETY

**Basic reading:**

* de Tocqueville, Alexis, *Democracy in America*, Volume 1, Author’s Introduction; Part 1, chapters 3-5; Part 2, chapters 6-9, Volume 2, Part 2, chapters 1-8; Part 4, chapters 1-8.


**Essays:**

- Why do some political scientists think that a strong 'civil society' is essential to effective democratic government? Are they right to think so?
- In what way or ways does a vibrant associational life contribute to the health of a democratic polity?
- What is 'civic engagement'? How have political scientists attempted to explain differences across democracies and/or over time in the level and quality of civic engagement?

**4. POWER IN THE DEMOCRATIC STATE**

**4.1 ASSOCIATED BASIC TEXT: THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO**

*** Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*


* Elster, Jon, *An Introduction to Karl Marx*, 1986. 5 Prelims 2011-12


Essays:

- Assess Marx’s claim that the capitalist state is ‘but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie’.
- Explain Marx’s account of the relationship between technological and political change.
- Why should the capitalist state give way to communist society, according to Marx?
- Is Marx right to think that the state could wither away?
- Explain and evaluate Marx’s theory of the ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’.

4.2 WHO RULES?

Core Reading:

Further Reading
* Ham, Christopher and Hill, Michael J., *The policy process in the modern capitalist state*, 1984, chapters 2-4.

Essays:

- How can we determine which social groups have the most power in a democratic state?
- Which social groups do have most power in a democratic state?
- What are the sources of power in a democratic state?

5. THE NATURE AND GROUNDS OF LIBERTY

5.1 ASSOCIATED BASIC TEXT: MILL'S ON LIBERTY

Basic reading:

Essays:

- Is Mill’s harm principle a clear and plausible basis for evaluating the community’s efforts to restrict individual freedom?
- How persuasive is Mill’s defence of freedom of expression?
- What place does ‘rationality’ have in Mill’s theory of liberty?
- Does Mill make a compelling case against state paternalism?
- Does Mill's celebration of individuality subvert the needs of citizenship?

5.2 THE CONCEPT OF LIBERTY

Basic reading:
Skinner, Quentin, Liberty Before Liberalism, 1998, especially chapter 2..

Essays:

- Is there a single concept of liberty underpinning the many ways in which the term is used by political thinkers?
- Is liberty primarily about the absence of law or the authorship of law?
- How (if at all) do economic circumstances affect an individual’s liberty?
6. STATE PATERNALISM:

Core Reading:
Devlin, Patrick, The Enforcement of Morals, (1965)
Hart, H. L. A., Law, Liberty, and Morality (1963)

Further Reading:

Essays
- Should the state restrict people’s freedom for their own good?
- Would it be wrong for citizens to disobey paternalistic laws?

7. FREE SPEECH

Core Reading:
* MacKinnon, Catherine, Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law (1987),

Further Reading:
Fiss, Owen M., The Irony of Free Speech, (1996) ch1
* Parekh, Bhikhu, 'The Rushdie Affair: Research Agenda for Political Philosophy', 709, also in Kymlicka, Will, ed., The Rights of Minority Cultures, ch 14
* Wolff, Jonathan, An Introduction to Political Philosophy ch 4
Waldron, Jeremy, The Harm in Hate Speech (2012)
Ten, C. L., Mill on Liberty (1980), Ch. 8
Lewis, Anthony, Freedom for the Thought That We Hate (2007)
Hare, Ivan and Weinstein, James, Extreme Speech and Democracy (2009)

White, Stuart, ‘Freedom of Association and the Right to Exclude’, *Journal of Political Philosophy* 5


Section B Lecture Programme

Michaelmas Term and Hilary Term 2016-17

Weeks 1-8, Wed and Fri at 10 am

Please see the termly lecture lists for the most up-to-date schedules.

1. Constitutional variations under democracy: parliamentary, presidential and semi-presidential government
2. The range of regime types: how do we distinguish democracy from non-democracy?
3. The USA and the classical separation of powers
4. The Westminster model and constitutional change
5. Semi-presidentialism: the French model
6. Majoritarian and consensus democracies: defining the difference and measuring performance
(i)
7. Majoritarian and consensus democracies: defining the difference and measuring performance
(ii)
8. Political institutions in non-democracies: African cases
9. State formation and state capacity
10. Conflict over rules and regimes: (i) Social Movements
11. Conflict over rules and regimes: (ii) Revolution
12. The modern French state
13. Are democracies different? The democratic peace thesis
14. Legislative politics: what are legislatures for? How much variation between them?
15. Executive politics: the political dimension and the administrative dimension
16. Case-studies of the legislative/executive relation: President and Congress in the USA
17. Case-studies of the legislative/executive relation: the UK
20. The evolution of the multi-party system in the United Kingdom since the 1980s
21. Why the party system in the USA, and why no socialism in the USA?
22. Party politics under complex cleavage patterns: the French case
23. Constitutional counter-powers: how effective in checking majoritarian power?
24. The US Supreme Court
25. Multi-layered government: purposes and consequences
26. Identity politics (1) value change in advanced democracy
27. Identity politics (2) when, how and why is ethnicity politicised in advanced democracies?
28. The politics of populism and radicalism in advanced industrial societies
29. Culture wars: culture as a source of conflict in international relations
SECTION B: INTRODUCTION TO THE PRACTICE OF POLITICS

Aims and Objectives:

These tutorials introduce you firstly to the way government is classified across democratic regimes, and to debates about the merits and drawbacks of each type: particularly the implications for political stability, and for policy performance. In this section of your tutorial work there is an explicit link with the work you will do in the Political Analysis lectures and classes. The next set of tutorial topics considers political institutions under regimes that are only partially democratic, or not democratic at all. In this section more general questions are asked about the nature of the state: where it comes from, and what determines differences between states – particularly in terms of “state capacity”, and stability. The third set considers, mainly in advanced democracies, key government institutions, the debates surrounding each type of institution, and the issues that arise when comparing specific institutions between countries. In this section you look mainly at the key dynamic tension between legislature and executive, though you also consider the operation of counter-powers against majoritarian government (based in the judiciary, direct democracy, decentralisation etc). Finally, the tutorials examine – again mostly in advanced democracies - what determines the shape and operation of political parties and the party system, and the extent to which the values and attitudes on which political preferences rest in advanced democracies appear to be changing, why this is so, and how we might measure such changes. In this section, you consider not only stable attitudes and structured partisan competition, but also more deeply divided and contested politics, and sources of populism and radicalism.

Objectives:
• To introduce you to regime classification and comparison, to develop your understanding of the necessary conditions for democratic government and political stability
• To develop your analytical skills.
• To introduce you to social science methodology in the context of historical explanation and comparative analysis.
ESSAY TOPICS

I. Constitutional variations under democracy

I. What is the difference between a presidential, semi-presidential, and parliamentary system? What other variables does the real-world operation of a regime depend on, besides those found in constitutions?

Why this topic? To enable you to understand basic constitutional differences in the way power is allocated between branches of government. In stable and long-established democratic government, power is often said to derive from a constitutional agreement (usually written down, but, even when written down, qualified by conventions and understandings which may not be written down). Similarly power is said to be allocated to branches of government in patterns that vary from country to country. The topic introduces several long-established concepts: the constitutional allocation of power; the separation of powers between governmental branches and its claimed effects on legislative politics; the fusion of executive and legislature under parliamentary government; the impact of separation or fusion on executive strength; variations in the real meaning of fusion depending on legislative and party politics. In one way this is a sorting and classifying exercise to make sure you use terminology clearly, and to help you understand how political science literature uses it. Your tutor may spend some time simply working through these definitions to be sure you see how they are conventionally used. However, underlying the exercise is an implicit debate about how useful classification is, and if it is useful, what it should be based on. One part of this debate is whether a constitution and its rules are a useful power-map at all, when so much seems to depend on informal and contingent aspects of politics like the nature of party politics, or where a country is in an electoral or political cycle, or how popular a government is at any particular point, etc. If the location of political power can vary so much, do constitutions only serve as background constraints, and if so, are comparisons of how they work only of limited usefulness?

Reading:

2. What claims have been made about the merits and defects of so-called majoritarian and consensus democracies, and how have these claims been tested in scholarly research?

Why this topic? A more advanced part of the debate begun in the first tutorial topic is whether there are better ways of getting at key differences between regime types than by examining constitutional rules. One example of this, which you can only touch on lightly at this stage, is veto-player analysis, which is squarely rooted in rational-choice approaches to political analysis, and which seeks to understand political processes by examining decisions according to the number and strategic location of actors who influence outcomes by their positional or institutional power of veto (and hence their bargaining power). Proponents of this approach observe that formal constitutional power is at times a poor guide to the bargaining power observable using veto-player analysis. A further area of debate relates to assumptions about “how democracy should work” in a more purposeful sense: is democracy there to deliver clear choices between alternatives, or is it there to bargain between, reconcile, and integrate, the wide range of interests and demands that society is composed of? Here we reach the debate between majoritarian democracy and consensus democracy, which forms the empirical background question to much of the work you will do in Hilary Term in Political Analysis.

Reading:


II. Political institutions and practice outside the advanced industrial democracies

3. Can we draw a sharp distinction between regimes that are democratic and those that are not? If so, what are the criteria? If not, why not?

Why this topic? The concept of democracy is one of the most used in the study of politics and yet there exists enormous scholarly debate over what precisely constitutes ‘democracy’ and symmetrically, how to define non-democratic regimes. This tutorial explores the debate over conceptualizing political regimes and also touches on theories that explain transitions between regimes and variation within them. The tutorial readings begin with the classic distinction between ‘thick’ and ‘thin’ conceptions of democracy and the associated debate over measuring democracy. Some scholars argue for a multi-dimensional conception of democracy including contestation, inclusion, the separation of powers, the granting of civil liberties, and the responsiveness of government to demands. Accordingly, fine-grained scales of democracy or ‘polyarchy’ have been created to capture such distinctions. Conversely other scholars have argued that democracy should be considered a ‘bounded whole’ that is a binary ‘either/or’ concept. Still other scholars argue that formal democracy even in paradigmatic cases like the United States might be undermined by socioeconomic inequalities, producing oligarchy rather than democracy. The tutorial then turns to variations among authoritarian
and democratic regimes, examining literature that explores the worlds of ‘electoral’ or ‘competitive’ authoritarianism. These works problematize the connection often made between holding elections and being ‘democratic,’ noting the ways in which authoritarian regimes might use elections to underscore rather than undermine their hold on power. Finally the tutorial concludes by examining the prospects of democratic survival and consolidation, also drawing on the literature explaining the origins of democratic transitions. These readings should help students think about which structural or strategic forces hold together political regimes or split them apart.

**Conceptualizing Democracy: Thick vs Thin Conceptions**


**Hybrid and Authoritarian Regimes**


**Consolidation**


4. **What is state strength?** What determines how strong a state is?

**Why this topic?** The state is one of the fundamental units of political life in modern politics. Why do states exist? This question has intrigued political theorists, scholars of international relations, and comparative political scientists. Scholars looking at the rise of the state in Europe (and elsewhere), often locate its origins in both the need for decisive action in the face of military conflict and the need for tax revenue to fund it. Yet, we continue to explore the historical origins of the state, in part...
because we continue to debate both the rationale for the state and what explains variation in state structure. Literature looking at more recent state building, particularly outside of Europe but also in the post-Soviet context, points to quite different constellations of factors affecting the development and structure of states, raising further questions. While states as political units share a number of factors, scholars have pointed to wide variation among states. Political scientists often apply adjectives such as “high capacity” “low capacity” “strong” and “weak” to describe the role of states. This work points to both the institutional and social origins of state variation. States often possess highly varying bureaucratic structures, which are in part the product of their internal structure as well as their relationship to social groups. Can states promote beneficial societal outcomes through the right institutions? Can states withstand lobbying (or corruption) from societal elites without becoming predatory?

Readings:

State formation in Europe:

- Tuong Vu. 2010. “Studying the State through State Formation” World Politics. 62(01)

State formation outside of Europe:


State Capacity – Institutions and Society:

5. What have social movements contributed to modern political practice?

Why this topic? Political action such as strikes, demonstrations, and manifestations of civil disobedience most often take place outside of traditional political institutions such as political parties, and the purpose of this topic is to help understand what drives individuals, groups, and movements to mobilize in this way, and whether this kind of collective action is different in form and nature (and notably whether it helps to bring disadvantaged groups into the political process, or groups which are less inclined to participate); how social movements cut across national boundaries; under what conditions these groups interact with formal institutional processes (for example elections), and with what effects; and in overall terms the conditions under which this kind of collective action may be successful. One of the issues in the literature is whether this kind of collective action is ‘rational’; there are also significant debates about whether these different forms of collective action can be regrouped under the heading of ‘contentious politics’. There are discussions about the success of social movements, and the extent to which they may contribute to wider political socialization. The study of social movements is an important prism for understanding how politics is experienced at grass-roots and national levels, and how forms of political authoritarianism – in both democracies and non-democracies - may be challenged.

Readings:

- Nathan Brown, When Victory is Not an Option: Islamist Movements in Arab Politics, 2012.
- Frances Piven and Richard Cloward, Poor People’s Movements: Why they Succeed, How they Fail, 1979, pp. 1-37
- Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow, Contentious Politics, 2007.


6. How and why do revolutions either succeed or fail?

*Why this topic?* Political orders and regimes are sometimes transformed comprehensively (for example from a monarchy to a republic, or from an authoritarian regime to a democracy) and the purpose of this topic is to help understand how, why, and under what circumstances this sort of political change happens, and what it tells us more widely about politics. The important issues to be addressed are the causes of revolutions (what kind of factors make for their occurrence, and how they are to be prioritized), the processes of revolutions (what happens during the revolutionary moment;), and the consequences of revolutions (the nature of the political change: partial change or complete rupture; the type of new political order; its impact on society). Particularly important in thinking about consequences is the time factor, which can be distinguished between short-, medium-, and long-term factors. There are substantive ongoing contemporary debates in political science about classic historical revolutions (the French Revolution of 1789, the Russian revolution of 1917) and their relation to modern ones. There are different analytical frameworks in the literature on revolutions, which stress the varying importance of structural factors such as class and material conditions, the role of conjuncture, and the contributions of social actors and ideas. Among the main issues about modern revolutions are the identification of the causes, and whether they can be generalized; the hierarchy of factors, and in particular the role of revolutionary ideas and political culture; and how and why revolutions succeed or fail.

*Readings:*

• Lisa Anderson, ‘Demystifying the Arab Spring: parsing the differences between Egypt, Tunisia and Libya’, *Foreign Affairs*, 90-3 (2011)
• Eva Bellin, ‘Reconsidering the robustness of authoritarianism in the Middle East: lessons from the Arab Spring’ *Comparative Politics* 44-2 (2012)
• Henry Hale, ‘Regime change cascades: what we have learned from the 1848 Revolutions to the 2011 Arab uprisings’ *Annual Review of Political Science* 16 (2013)
• Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*. Cambridge, 1979. Introduction and Conclusion.
III. The institutions of the democratic state

7. “Judgments about the effectiveness of legislatures can only be made in the context of specific political cultures and state traditions. There are no absolute standards of judgment”. Discuss

Why this topic? Elected legislatures at national level are a key part of our understanding of how modern democracies operate, and have made centralized representative government, (rather than direct democracy or highly decentralized systems of government), one of democracy’s key legitimizing components. We have already seen in topic 1, above, that the role of a legislature varies a great deal between presidential and parliamentary systems, with legislatures interacting with both the constitutional structure, and the nature of the party system, to produce different patterns of governance. This has generated a range of concerns about what legislatures “ought” to be delivering in a democracy, as perceptions have ebbed and flowed about their effectiveness in particular contexts. Sometimes the concern has been about the “decline of legislatures” while at other times it has been about “over-mighty” or excessively fragmented legislatures. The central issue is whether a legislature can fulfill a variety of sometimes contradictory tasks at the same time. We think that legislatures should be representative; that they should sustain the executive’s legitimacy, particularly in parliamentary regimes; that they should scrutinise the work of the executive and bureaucracy; they should appropriate resources, especially financial, for the other branches of government to do their work; and perhaps most of all they legitimate the laws of the polity through their internal procedures. So we want them to contribute to cohesive and purposive government (in the case of parliamentary government by creating and sustaining a parliamentary majority; in the case of presidential government, by retaining sufficient programmatic cohesion to enable a directly-elected executive to do so without the enforcing cohesion provided by a parliamentary confidence-relationship) while at the same time performing the role of holding the executive to account, scrutinizing its performance, and making national political debate meaningful to citizens. The way the two demands are reconciled in any given country will depend on how members of legislatures are socialized into expectations about the roles they are to perform, on the rules governing the legislature and its relationship with the rest of the national institutions, and on the operation of the party system. Even definitions are difficult. What for example does it mean for a legislature to be representative? Geographically, demographically, ideologically, federally…? How is this related to structure? How many chambers should a legislature have for these purposes? Given how differently these factors are configured even in otherwise similar democracies, claims about legislative effectiveness are likely to remain very difficult to confirm or refute. Nevertheless comparative study of their role and operation, helping us understand them in some of the most highly-studied contexts (the USA, UK, France, Germany), is important in understanding where there are common functional imperatives in democracies, and where culture, history and state tradition continue to affect operation.

Reading:

- Kerrouche, E., “Gone with the wind? The National Assembly under the Fifth republic” in S. Brouard et al, The French Republic at Fifty: Beyond Stereotypes, 2009
Executive power has a personal quality linked to popular support and party-based authority that sits alongside its formal, constitutionally-derived, qualities. How in practice do the two elements interact in real-world contexts?

**Why this topic?** The role of the executive, especially chief executives, is difficult to compare across countries. How can political science establish grounds for comparison between presidents, prime ministers, chancellors and their subordinates in different regimes? How do chief executives wield power and become effective leaders in different polities? Is this a function of the institutional structure of the executive? Or should we consider contingent factors like the scope for ‘charismatic’ leadership? Some models of executive power consider it to be wielded in a command-and-control way, and judge success by how far the chief executive ‘wins’ in a contest with others. Alternatively, executive power is a bargaining process, acknowledging that the chief executive can only succeed in achieving goals by working collaboratively with others. In newer democracies, problems of winner-take-all executive competition can cause problems with democratic stability.

**Reading:**

- ***Arend Lijphart Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in 36 Countries*** ch. 7
- ***Giovanni Sartori Comparative Constitutional Engineering: An Enquiry into Structures, Incentives and Outcomes*** (2nd ed.) Part 2
- ***George Tsebelis Veto Players: How Political Institutions Work*** chs. 1-4
- Peter Hennessy *The British Prime Minister: The Office and Its Holders since 1945*
- Rhodes & Dunleavy *Prime Minister, Cabinet & Core Executive*
- Martin Smith *The Core Executive in Britain*
• Charles O. Jones *The Presidency in a Separated System*
• Gillian Peele et al. (eds.) *Developments in American Politics* 7 ch. 6
• Robert Elgie ‘Duverger, Semi-presidentialism and the Supposed French Archetype’ *West European Politics* 32(2) 2009
• Vincent Wright & Andrew Knapp *The Government and Politics of France* (5th ed.) chs 3, 4, & 5
• Ramachandra Guha ‘Political Leadership in Independent India’ in Niraja Gopal Jayal & Pratap Bhanu Mehta (eds.) *The Oxford Companion to Politics in India*
• Juan Linz ‘The Perils of Presidentialism’ in *Journal of Democracy* 1 (1) 1990
• Tom Lodge *Politics in South Africa: From Mandela to Mbeki* Prologue & ch.12

9. **Democracies usually provide a range of counter-powers to majoritarian power, including judicial review, decentralisation of power, bi-cameralism, a permanent professionalized bureaucracy, direct democracy, and the media. Consider, in the case of any two, what the effectiveness of such counter-powers depends on, and how we would measure and compare effectiveness.**

**Why this topic?** Democratic government is widely thought to require a balance between *purposive government* that is capable of identifying and addressing policy problems, and *restraints on government*. These restraints seek to ensure that power is exercised within agreed limits, and under agreed rules, that proper deliberation precedes key decisions, that different voices are heard as policy is being made, and that where possible (a big qualification) decision-making power is devolved to levels close to those most affected by it. Such checks and balances supplement the central tension between the executive and the legislature, which is itself potentially (though not always) a check on power. With the exception of the role of the media, the role of these restraints is usually described in a constitution, though they are not all present in every constitution, and the use of the constitution in understanding how power is wielded varies a good deal from country to country. (In rare cases there is no formal constitution at all). They have come to be known in much modern comparative political analysis as *institutional veto players*. The most fundamental restraint on executive power is constitutional: the commitment of government itself to be governed by a set of authoritative rules and principles. Constitutionalism requires a codified constitution that describes both the powers of different branches of government and a bill of rights. It also seems to require an umpire: a constitutional court, though an activist court’s behavior may become so engaged in the political process that it can start to resemble a participant in the policy-making process as well as an umpire. In a federal state, sovereignty is split constitutionally between different levels – usually the federal and state levels – so that each has at least some final authority in given policy areas. Bi-cameral legislatures are those with two distinct assemblies, usually based on the representation of different territorial entities. The actual power of each assembly varies. Less common in constitutions, and in general less dramatic in their effects, are those procedures that bring public opinion to bear on decision-makers through routes other than elected ones. Provisions for referendums and plebiscites are obviously constitutional, while others – for example factors which facilitate a free and pluralistic media - generally have non-constitutional roots. Finally, in advanced democracies, there is the impact of a permanent, professionalized bureaucracy. Since it lacks democratic roots, and is by some regarded as thwarting the effectiveness of policy action, bureaucracy may not immediately seem to fall into the category of a democratic check. However its professional expertise, set against impulsive and inexpert politicians, may allow it to be a type of check and its strategic role in decision-making certainly makes it a potential veto-player. Given the range of counter-powers to the power exercised through the central institutions of legislature and executive, there are no simple ways of assessing the
functionality of checks and balances as a whole. Each particular institution needs first to be understood in its own national context, and comparisons then need to be made across jurisdictions focusing on individual institutions. Conceptually however all these institutions have certain common features and effects, and beyond asking how well each operates in a national context against the purposes set for it, comparative political analysis (in more advanced courses than the Prelim, however) can also assess, through formal veto-player theory, how much concentration or dispersal of power a particular jurisdiction displays.

Reading:

- Sarah Binder “The Dynamics of Legislative Gridlock”, *American Political Science Review*, 93, 1999: 519-533

10. Is there a distinctively democratic way of waging war?

**Why this topic?** The absence of a world government has led many analysts of International Relations (IR) to believe that all countries exist within a constant state of war and insecurity. As Thomas Hobbes famously put it in *Leviathan*, ‘in all times kings and persons of sovereign authority, because of their independency, are in continual jealousies, and in the state and posture of gladiators, having their weapons pointing, and their eyes fixed on one another’. However, one of the most robust empirical findings of IR scholarship over the last fifty years has been that democracies are different, in that they do not seem to fight wars with other democracies (although, of course, they do continue to fight wars against non-democracies). Many have drawn the conclusion that, while the Hobbesian state of war continues in the rest of the world, a ‘zone of peace’ now exists among democratic states, and that regions such as the Middle East would be more peaceful if more regimes within them were democratic. This belief has been a major theme within recent US foreign policy: see, for example, George W. Bush’s Second Inaugural Address.
Several controversies remain. For a start, some dispute the empirical claims of the ‘democratic peace thesis’, arguing that it rests on excessively narrow ways of conceptualising democracy, war and peace, or that its findings are statistically insignificant. But perhaps the largest literature has emerged around the question of why the democratic peace exists. Is it a result of the institutions within democratic political systems, such as the publicness of decision-making, or the checks and balances that inhibit the executive? Or is it the result of liberal values and a culture of bargaining and compromise that are unique to democratic states? Or might it even be due to some other factor that has less to do with democracy as such, such as high levels of economic interdependence among liberal democracies, or the hegemonic influence of the United States? There are also disagreements about the conclusion that democratisation will make the world a more peaceful place: perhaps the pacific qualities of democracy in the western world will not travel to new democracies elsewhere, while some believe that newly democratising states are exceptionally belligerent during the unstable process of political transition, which implies that the dangers of promoting democratisation may outweigh the possible benefits of a more democratic world. Finally, the tendency to focus on explaining the democratic peace has attracted criticisms that it has led to the neglect of other important aspects of the relationship between democracies and war: for example, their continuing tendency to make war against non-democracies, or the fact that they mobilise their forces and actually fight their wars in different ways from non-democratic states.

Reading:

- International Politics. 2004. Special Issue on the democratic peace. 41 (4), especially articles by Hasenclever and Wagner, MacMillan, Müller, and Owen.

IV. Parties, party systems, values, identity politics

11. The determinants of party systems:

a) What are the sociological and institutional determinants of party systems? What are the major weaknesses of these explanations?

b) To what extent are party systems in developing world democracies based on social cleavages?

Why this topic? To understand a key body of literature seeking to explain the sociological determinants of party systems across all democracies, from the emergence of mass democracy to the third wave of democratisation. In addition, to understand how political institutions, particularly the type of electoral system, shape the party system, thereby augmenting the sociological approach.

A key interpretation of modern party systems in the advanced industrial democracies is that parties (thanks also to the freezing effect of strong party organisation) were frozen in the mould established in the late 19th and early 20th century, with the transition to mass democracy, raising the barrier to entry for new parties. From this perspective therefore, parties present in any particular advanced democracy primarily reflect the underlying social cleavages, which were important in the period of mass democratisation. With the third wave of democratization in the early 1980s, we also witnessed the emergence of new democracies from Latin America, Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe. While the literature on party systems in Western Europe sees party competition as programmatic, and the bases for it as social and ideological, work on party systems in other parts of the world often highlight competition, which is not rooted in social cleavages and stress alternatives to programmatic links, in particular clientelism. This topic introduces the concept of a party system, of political cleavages and party organization. It also highlights the differences between party systems in the advanced industrial democracies and newer, developing world democracies.

However, political parties vary a good deal, both within and between countries, across advanced and developing democracies, and in the extent to which they are rooted in strong and distinct social identities. Many look as if they are not built on social identities at all. The rate of formation of new parties in recent decades seems to have increased in several advanced democracies, and their sociological origins are often difficult to pin down. What is more, in developing democracies, party systems often do not appear to reflect social cleavages at all. Since Maurice Duverger’s (1954) seminal work, observers have pointed to the effect of institutions on the shape of the party system, most notably the electoral system and more recently, the format of the executive. This topic introduces the mechanical and psychological effects of electoral systems on party systems. It also
contrasts the effect of majoritarian electoral systems and proportional representation on party systems, and examines the interaction of electoral systems and cleavage structures.

The hypothesis that parties in the advanced industrial democracies reflect social cleavages, and that party systems are frozen in time, is much contested on several levels. The thesis of long-term historical continuity in party systems often requires a very stretched interpretation of “continuity”, even across the period from the 1880s to the 1960s, let alone subsequently. Parties vary a good deal, both within and between countries, in the extent to which they are rooted in strong and distinct social identities, and many look as if they are not built on social identities at all. The rate of formation of new parties in recent decades seems to have increased in several advanced democracies, and their sociological origins are often difficult to pin down. Although this does not render the sociological thesis of Lipset and Rokkan redundant, it does raise questions about its utility as an explanation for the contemporary party systems of the advanced democracies.

Secondly, this sociological thesis also struggles as a framework of understanding for party systems outside of the advanced industrial democracies. Party systems in these countries often have not followed the evolutionary development pattern of the Western European party systems described by Stein and Rokkan. Rather the development of party systems outside of the advanced industrial democracies has tended to be discontinuous; reflect divergent responses to expanded political mobilization; or simply reflect long-standing historical elite divisions. In many of these party systems as a consequence, competition, is often not based on programmatic policy proposals, but on catch-all parties centred upon personality and clientelism.

Finally, while it is widely agreed that the relationship between electoral and party systems is mutual, nearly all work has been focused on the effect of electoral systems on party systems, and a general consensus exists on this topic. However, electoral institutions may shape party systems, but these institutions also emerge from party systems. How party systems shape electoral systems remains completely underdeveloped and under-theorised and no clear consensus yet exists on this issue.

**Reading:**

**Sociological Determinants**

Institutional Determinants


12. Do voters still exhibit stable links to established parties in advanced democracies, and if not why not?

Why this topic?

Perhaps the single most important notion in the study of voting behavior is that of party identification, which denotes an affective orientation towards a political party. It is thus hardly surprising that the observed trend towards weaker party attachments over the last half century has featured as a key issue in the study of voting behavior. Almost any textbook of party politics dedicates a lengthy section to explain the loosening of partisan ties in advanced democracies at least since the 1960s. The stylized picture that emerges from this literature is one of partisan dealignment, whereby party loyalties have eroded, electoral volatility has increased and turnout has decreased. By delving into this literature, this topic allows us to assess the generalizability of these conclusions and unpack the underlying mechanisms of electoral change. Consider, for example, the contrast between this dealigning pattern described above and the pattern of increased partisan polarization and sorting in American politics. What accounts for this divergence within advanced democracies? Why does party seem to be becoming less important in Europe and more important in the US? What are the implications of dealignment for individual voting behavior and party competition? How have parties’ strategies changed as a result of this change? These questions addressed in this topic. We will focus both on top-down factors of political change driven by party competition, and on bottom-up developments from partisan dealignment.

As a way to explain electoral change, it is not always good practice to perceive the electorate as a single homogeneous entity. Electoral change may not therefore be the result of unanimous opinion shifts among the electorate. It may be driven by disproportionate change among specific age groups, which become more influential through generational turnover. The concept of generational turnover enables us to examine more systematically the sources of dealignment and its prospects for the future. In so doing, we will touch upon the distinction between dealignment and realignment and discuss how these concepts help us understand the dynamics of party competition in advanced democracies.
Reading:

How People become Partisans?


Voter Learning and Electoral Change


Dealignment (or maybe not?)


Realignment (or maybe not?)


Realignment vs Dealignment

13. What are the causes of populism and radicalism in advanced democracies?

Why this topic?

The rise of populism in advanced industrial societies is, in large part, a reaction to the inability of traditional parties to respond adequately in the eyes of the electorate to a series of phenomena such as economic and cultural globalization, immigration, the decline of ideologies and class politics, and the exposure of elite corruption. In Western Europe the phenomenon is also directly connected to the speed and direction of European integration. One of the important issues to be analyzed is how far the different cases in Europe are comparable, and should be seen as manifestations of the same underlying phenomena; also how far European populisms can be compared to their American counterpart.

More generally, the question of populism opens up a discussion of the current ‘political malaise’ in advanced industrial societies, manifested in steadily falling turnouts across Western Europe, declining party memberships, and ever-greater numbers of citizens in surveys citing a lack of interest and distrust in politics and politicians. This perception has in turn affected electoral behaviour as increasing numbers of de-aligned and disillusioned voters either simply do not bother participating or become available and open to new, and sometimes more radical, alternatives.

This topic seeks to understand the underlying social and cultural sources of these phenomena, and to establish how far populist claims that politics has become more convoluted, distant and irrelevant to people’s lives can be defended. The aim is also to assess how far populist politics represents a serious challenge to established political institutions, and whether populism marks the emergence of a new dimension of politics which transcends the classic Left-Right divide.

Reading

Populism

- *Albertazzi, Daniele and McDonnell, Duncan (eds), Twenty-First Century Populism. The Spectre of Western European Democracy, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2008


**Radicalism**


Political Analysis

Content and Structure

The Political Analysis component of the syllabus develops students’ abilities to assess and critically evaluate assertions, theories, arguments and opinions expressed in the empirical elements of an undergraduate degree course in Politics. Knowledge and understanding of empirical politics is largely contingent upon the confirmation or refutation of claims based on empirical evidence. Tools of research design and statistical analysis are essential in allowing researchers to test their claims quantitatively against empirical evidence. Basic concepts of statistics, especially randomness and averaging, provide the foundations for measuring concepts, designing studies, estimating quantities of interest and testing theories and conjectures.

The Political Analysis component introduces these scientific techniques through an 8-week course. Throughout, it uses as a running example Arend Lijphart’s claim that consensus democracies are a “kinder, gentler” form of democracy (2012, Ch. 16), taking students through the steps that lead from defining a research question to preliminary statistical analysis. The objective is to learn how statistical methods help us address questions of theoretical and/or policy interest. By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- critically read and evaluate statements about causal relationships based on data-analysis;
- summarise quantitative information and assess the level of uncertainty accompanying these summary estimates;
- understand the main difficulties in analysing causal relationships: lack of internal validity, unreliability of measurement, spurious causality, endogeneity, and selection effects.

Statistics are understood through practice! The Political Analysis component therefore includes four-weeks of laboratory practice through which students are introduced to the use of a powerful statistical software (R, via the specific environment RStudio). Here the concepts and tools studied in the lectures are combined with data from Arend Lijphart’s (2012) book to assess his claims about the superiority of consensus democracies.

Educational Aims

This course aims to give students:

- an understanding of research methods, using topics and examples from comparative politics, especially relating to Arend Lijphart’s theory about the nature and effects of consensus and majoritarian democracies.
- familiarity with statistical software through the use of RStudio, a widely-used open source package, well-adapted to data management, statistical analyses and data visualisation.

Data

Laboratory sessions (taking place in weeks 2, 4, 6, and 8) will use the Lijphart (2012) dataset to explore important research questions in political science relating to institutional design.

The four lab sessions are designed to systematically develop students’ comfort with statistical programming and data analysis, such that by the last session they should be comfortable replicating and extending results from Lijphart (2012) in their essay.

Readings

The main content for Political Analysis is found in these two texts:

The following textbooks provide useful background perspective:


Lectures

Week 1: Introduction and Research Design
Researchers in political science and other social science disciplines define research questions, offer hypotheses in response to those questions, and test those hypotheses with data analysis. We will consider where research questions come from, how questions can be categorized, and how different types of research questions correspond to different research designs. For questions about the effect of one thing on another (i.e. causal questions), often we would like to run a randomized experiment. We will discuss randomized experiments and how researchers proceed to answer causal questions in the (very common) situation where we cannot run a randomized experiment. We will primarily make reference to Lijphart's Patterns of Democracy as an example of an attempt to answer a causal question when an experiment is impossible.

Readings:
- AL Ch. 1-5 **
- KW Ch 1-4**
- BG, pp. 27-89
- PS Ch.1-4
- Campbell, Donald T. & Julian C. Stanley. 1963. Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Research, pp.1-33, see:

Week 2: Concepts and Measurement
If we hope to use data analysis to assess theoretical claims, we need to define the concepts that make up our theories and develop a way of measuring something that corresponds to those concepts. In the second lecture we will discuss the difficulty of operationalising and measuring political science concepts. Our discussion will highlight important strategies for critically assessing empirical research, including critiques of concept validity and measurement issues such as validity, reliability, and precision. We will illustrate issues of conceptualization and measurement starting from Arend Lijphart's operationalisation of consensus and majoritarian democracies. Concluding, we will scrutinize the concepts and measurements of “democracy” and “war”.

Readings:
- AL, Ch 7-8**
- KW, Ch. 5**
- PS, Ch.5

**Week 3: Descriptive Statistics and Visualization**

One important function of data analysis is to summarize complex information in an efficient way. In this lecture, we will discuss both statistical measures (such as mean and standard deviation) and common visualization techniques (such as scatterplots and histograms) that researchers use to communicate about data. Moreover, we will critically think about data visualization in news and policy reports.

**Readings:**
- AL, Ch 14**
- KW, Ch. 6**
- PS, Ch 8
- AF, Ch. 3

**Week 4: Case Selection**

Empirical researchers hoping to test a theory must choose the cases they will use in their analysis. Will the data analysis encompass all countries, or a subset? If a survey will be used, how will the respondents be selected? Should a study of interstate war include cases in which no war took place? Should the analysis examine a small number of cases in depth, or a larger number of cases in a more superficial way?

**Readings:**
- AL, Ch 4-5**
- BG, Ch. 3**
- PS, Ch.7

**Week 5: Bivariate Relationships** [Andrew Eggers]

How can we summarize the relationship between two variables? We will consider a variety of approaches (including scatterplots, the comparison of means, correlations, smoothed averages, and finally bivariate regression) as a way of characterizing bivariate relationships in Lijphart’s data and other examples.

**Readings:**
- AL, Ch 15-16**
- KW, Ch. 8-9**
- PS, Ch. 9
- AF, Ch. 3 & 7
**Week 6: Multivariate Relationships**

We now move beyond two variables to characterize the relationship among many variables. The most important application is multivariate regression, which is often used to describe the relationship between two variables “controlling for” other variables. We will apply multivariate regression to Lijphart’s data and other examples. The goal is to develop an intuitive understanding of what it means to say that a study “controls for” something, and to better understand how multivariate regression studies can be interpreted and critiqued.

**Readings:**

- AL, Ch 15-16**
- KW, Ch 10**
- PS, Ch.9
- AF, Ch. 10

**Week 7: Inference**

Data analysis typically includes measures of uncertainty: margins of error, standard errors, p-values. Using the idea of repeated sampling, we will help students develop an intuitive understanding of what these measures of uncertainty mean. Without this understanding, it is difficult to speak confidently and fluently about statistical results.

**Readings:**

- KW, Ch. 7**
- PS, Ch.10
- AF, Ch 2 & 4

**Week 8: Synthesis and review**

The previous lectures have introduced many of the most common tools of data analysis in social science. In this lecture we will apply what we have learned to several required readings from Part B of Politics Prelims. The goal is to illustrate how the concepts we have studied can be applied in any setting where one is asked to evaluate quantitative evidence – certainly as a student sitting for prelims exams at Oxford, but also as a civil servant or business analyst making a judgment about a program’s effectiveness or as a citizen assessing claims that appear in the media.

**Readings:**

To be announced, from among the required readings in Part B.

**Lab Sessions**

Lab sessions will be held in weeks 2, 4, 6, and 8 in the Oxford Q-Step Centre Lab in the Social Science Library (Manor Road Building). You will be contacting about signing up for lab sessions. It is important that you attend these sessions, but also very important that you arrive prepared: the labs build directly on the material in the lectures and required readings, and we will assume you have attended lectures and understood the required reading.

The computers in the lab have the necessary software installed. It is a good idea to download RStudio for your own use here:

[https://www.rstudio.com/ide/download/](https://www.rstudio.com/ide/download/)

Having the software downloaded to your own laptop will be useful for working on the essay for this course. Alternatively, you can work on your essay by using the computers in the lab outside of class hours.
In the lab sessions you will receive worksheets and revision materials that you should find useful; these materials include interactive tutorials. If you want additional resources to help you learn, there are many available. Here are a few we recommend:

- Nice interactive tutorial: http://tryr.codeschool.com
- Quick R (http://www.statmethods.net)
- Screencasts about R and RStudio by Marco Steenbergen and Christian Müller (http://polmeth.ch)

In the lab sessions we will be using a version of Lijphart’s dataset that is available under Q-Step on the Politics WebLearn page: https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/site/socsci:politics:students:undergraduat:reading_list

**Assessment**

The Political Analysis section of first year work is assessed via a single tutorial essay of 2000 words to be submitted in Trinity Term. In this essay students provide an empirical answer to one of possible three questions using Lijphart’s data (which students will have used extensively in the laboratory sessions). The questions are:

1. Does consensus democracy reduce social inequality?
2. Does consensus democracy improve economic outcomes?
3. Does consensus democracy improve the quality of government?

A memo with detailed instructions for the essay will be available on the Q-Step WebLearn site.

The essay must be submitted online via WebLearn by noon on Tuesday of Week 2 of Trinity (2 May 2017).