POLS 427-627: Ethics and Public Affairs

2018 Autumn Semester

Thursday, 11:30-2:20
Room: LIB 5-121

Professor

Dr. Michael Murphy
Office: Admin. 3075
(Tel) 960-6683
murphym@unbc.ca
Office hours: Thursday 9:30-10:30am; Friday 9:30-10:30am

OVERVIEW

This course explores the ethical conduct of public officials, and the ethical foundations of domestic and foreign policy making in contemporary democratic states. Special emphasis is placed on the tension that frequently arises between moral idealism and political realism in the conduct of public affairs.

STRUCTURE

We will meet every Thursday for approximately three hours, divided by a 15-20 minute break. The course will be run primarily as a seminar, with an emphasis on discussion and debate led by the instructor. Please be aware that regular attendance and active participation in seminars is essential, and will count for a substantial portion of your final grade.

READINGS

An essential part of your seminar preparation is the completion of the assigned readings. The readings are important as a means of preparing yourself both for class discussions and for the successful completion of the final exam.

Texts

Students are not required to purchase any texts for the course. All readings have been placed on 3 hour reserve at the library. Please inform me immediately if you are having difficulty accessing any of the reserve material.

EVALUATION

This course is designed to improve your skills in writing, debating and critical analysis. Students will therefore be assessed in each of these areas. A specific breakdown of the course work is as follows:

Research Essay (40%)

You are free to choose your own essay topic, but all topics require my approval. Please consult with me on a topic no later than Thursday, September 27. Essays approved after this date will be assessed a 5% penalty. Essays must be approximately 3,500 words in length, and must be typed, double-spaced, using regular margins (one inch), and fonts no smaller than 12pt. Proper references (footnotes or endnotes) and a bibliography are essential – please consult Lester Faigley, Roger Graves, and Heather Graves, The Brief Penguin Handbook, or a political science Journal (e.g. Canadian Journal of Political Science) for guidance. Completed essays are due no later than 4:00 pm on Friday, October 26.

*Important* To guard against the possibility of lost or missing papers, students are required to keep backup copies of their work (digital and/or hard copy). Late essays will face a penalty of 5% per day. Papers that are late by more than one week without an extension will not be graded. Extensions will be granted for medical and emergency reasons only—no exceptions. Cases of suspected plagiarism will be pursued, and, if confirmed, will be handled in accordance with the
UNBC Policy on Academic Offences (see sections 45-47 of the Undergraduate Calendar, and sections 24-26 of the Graduate Calendar).

**Essays will be assessed on the basis of the following criteria:**
- Style (grammar, spelling, clarity of expression, organization)
- Critical analysis: students are expected to accurately *describe* the arguments under consideration, and to subject these arguments to critical *evaluation*
- Research: students should consult between 12-15 published sources. These should primarily be made up of academic books and journal articles. Some of these materials may be obtained on the Internet, but only if they are from reputable, peer-reviewed sources (if in doubt, please consult with me)
- Proper references and a bibliography. I will accept any of the styles used in current Political Science journals (e.g. the *Australian Journal of Political Science* or the *Canadian Journal of Political Science*) or in Lester Faigley, Roger Graves, and Heather Graves, *The Brief Penguin Handbook.*

**Participation (20%)**
The grade for participation will be calculated on the basis of the following criteria:
- Regular participation in class discussions
- Participation in the structured class exercises
- The quality of your preparation for seminars, including a demonstrated familiarity with the assigned readings

**Final Exam (40%)**
The final exam will be comprised of longer essay questions. Students will be given plenty of options from which to choose.

**POLS 627 OPTION**
- Students enrolled in POLS627 are required to submit a research essay of approximately 5,000 words in length.
- Students enrolled in POLS627 also have the option of substituting a second 5,000 word essay for the final exam. Students are required to consult with me on a suitable topic no later than Thursday, November 1. Completed essays are due no later than 4:00 pm on the day of the final exam (TBA). There will be no extensions on the second essay, and late papers will not be accepted, except in cases of medical emergency – absolutely no exceptions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Dates</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essay Topics Approved by Instructor</td>
<td>September 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topics for Second Essay Approved by Instructor (POLS 627 only)</td>
<td>November 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Essay Due</td>
<td>October 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Research Essay Due (POLS 627 only)</td>
<td>Day of Final Exam (TBA)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** “If there are students in this course who, because of a disability, may have a need for special academic accommodations, please come and discuss this with me, or contact staff at the Access Resource Centre (arc@unbc.ca) located in the Teaching and Learning Centre, Room 10-1048 on the main campus. Students can also call the ARC at (250) 960-5682. Regional students can call the Centre toll-free at 1(888) 960-5682.”
LECTURES AND READINGS

Week One (September 6): Course Overview

No Readings


PART ONE: FOUNDATIONS

Week Two (September 13): Ethics and Politics. An Uneasy Mix?

Readings


Week Three (September 20): Ethical Theory

Readings


PART TWO: ETHICAL CONDUCT

Week Four (September 27): Ethics of Leadership

Readings


**Essay Topics Due Thursday, September 27**

Week Five (October 4): Drawing the Line Between Public and Private

Readings


Optional

Week Six (October 11): Legislators and Public Officials

Readings

Optional

Week Seven (October 18): Ethics of Citizenship

Readings

Optional

Week Eight (October 25): Partisanship and Political Corruption

Readings

Optional
PART THREE: ETHICS AND DOMESTIC POLICY (Governing Life and Death)

Week Nine (November 1): Public Health Resources—Who Gets What, and Why?

Readings

**Topics for Second Essay Due (POLS 627 only) Thursday, November 1**

Week Ten (November 8): Governing Assisted Suicide

Readings

PART FOUR: ETHICS AND INTERNATIONAL POLICY

Week Eleven (November 15): International Affairs: Competing Schools of Thought

Readings

Week Twelve (November 22): Humanitarian Intervention

Readings
Week Thirteen (November 29): Class Exercise – Humanitarian Intervention in Syria?

Readings

Media and Other Sources:
- Florida State University, College of Law, Research Centre: International Responses to Syrian Conflict, Military Intervention, and Chemical Weapons: Arguments For and Against: http://guides.law.fsu.edu/syria/reactions