

Date: July 2025

Syllabus - Teaching Program for the Course

**Introduction to Politics**

**Dr. David Leitner |** **Political Studies**7110080| Introduction to Politics

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| **Course Type:** | Class and Exercise |
| **Scope of credits:** | 3 |
| **Year of study:** | 2025-2026 |
| **Semester:** | Fall |
| **Day & Time:** | Monday 12:00 – 15:00 |
| **Reception Time:** | By Request After Class |
| **Lecturer Email:** | [David.Leitner@biu.ac.il](mailto:David.Leitner@biu.ac.il) |
| **Moodle Site:** |  |

**Course description and learning goals**

**Course Abstract**

This course introduces the foundational theories and structures of politics. Students will explore political ideologies, institutions, and processes while critically engaging with current national and global events. The course provides grounding for further academic exploration and practical engagement with political systems.

**Learning objectives**

By the end of this course, students will be able to demonstrate a working knowledge of key political science concepts, apply analytical tools to contemporary and historical issues, and engage critically with diverse ideological perspectives. The course is designed to develop not only foundational knowledge, but also academic skills and thoughtful value-based reflection.

**Knowledge**

* Learners will define and describe key political concepts, ideologies, and structures.
* Learners will explain the relationship between political theory and political institutions.
* Learners will write an academic essay using political science methods and theory.

**Skills**

* Learners will analyze current events using comparative political frameworks.
* Learners will evaluate differing ideological approaches to political challenges.
* Learners will formulate and defend a political science research question.

**Values (if applicable)**

* Learners will develop a critical perspective on political narratives.
* Learners will appreciate the complexity of political decision-making and ideological diversity.
* Learners will engage in thoughtful discussion grounded in empirical and theoretical insight.

**Active learning –** **lessons plan:(**[**expand**](#_למידה_פעילה)**)**

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| Lesson No. | Topic | Active learning | Required reading | Assessment |
| **Lesson No.** | **Topic** | **Active Learning** | **Required Reading** | **Assessment** |
| 1 | What is Politics? | Discussion of political definitions | Shively Ch. 1; OpenStax §1.1–1.3 | Participation |
| 2 | Concepts & Research Methods | Research design activity | P&C Appendix; Pérez (2025) | Workshop write-up |
| 3 | Ideas in Politics & Participation | Ideology reflection | P&C Ch 2 & 8; OpenStax §4.1, 4.3 | Workshop |
| 4 | Understanding Ideologies & Power | Debate on ideology | P&C Ch 2; Balkin (1995) | Workshop |
| 5 | Interest Groups | Roleplay lobbying scenario | P&C Ch 12; Dür (2019); Whittlestone (2024) | Written reflection |
| 6 | Classical Ideologies | Ideological position mapping | P&C Ch 2; OpenStax; Van de Haar (2023); Schnellenbach (2021) | Workshop |
| 7 | Democracies & Authoritarianism | Case analysis | P&C Ch 7; Democracy Report; Markowski & Kotnarowski (2025) | Workshop |
| 8 | Fascism/Nationalism, Feminism/Environmentalism | Small group presentations | P&C Ch 2 & 13; Wimmer et al.; UN Women; Brulle (2015) | Peer feedback |
| 9 | Beyond Ideology: Ethnicity & Political Mobilization | Discussion circles | P&C Ch 9; Cederman (2024) | Workshop |
| 10 | Globalization and Governance | Model UN or scenario analysis | P&C Ch 14; Held & Young (2013) | Workshop |
| 11 | International Politics | Case study simulation | P&C Ch 18; Park (2014) | Workshop |
| 12 | International Politics (continued) | Peer review of essay outlines | Continuation of Ch 18 | Essay feedback |
| 13 | Review | Guided peer Q&A | Review of all materials | Final prep |

(In a course that lasts a whole year, the additional sessions should be added)

\* There may be changes in the syllabus depending on learning progress and effectiveness

**Final grade**

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| Description of the learning product | Weight in the final score |
| Workshop Participation + Reports (Formative Assessment) | 30% |
| Independent research paper | 35% |
| Final Exam | 35% |

**Course** requirements

* Weekly Reading (Textbook + Articles)
* Moodle Video Viewing (Required)
* One national + one international news source weekly
* Workshop writeups
* Research essay (up to 10 pages excl. title/ToC/appendices)
* Final exam

**Paper Requirements**

* Essay topic must be approved by email before end of Channukah.
* Final paper must be submitted in both hard copy and Word doc format.
* Plagiarism = automatic course failure and possible ethics referral.
* Use of APA 6th Edition required.
* Attendance has no direct grade weight but impacts participation ability.

**Bibliography: Up-to-date** **reading, viewing, and listening content items**

**Required Reading**

**Textbooks**

* Shively, W. Phillips, & Schultz, David. *Power & Choice: An Introduction to Political Science*, 17th ed. Bloomsbury, 2026.  
  <https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/power--choice-9798765156506/>
* OpenStax. *Introduction to Political Science*. OpenStax, 2023.  
  <https://openstax.org/blog/introduction-to-political-science-free-online-textbook-from-openstax>

**Articles and Supplemental Readings**

* Pérez, Orlando J. “Empirical Political Theory: A Template for a Research Design and a Qualified Defense.” *Political Studies Review*, vol. 23, 2025.  
  <https://standinggroups.ecpr.eu/nptmethods/wp-content/uploads/sites/58/2024/02/5-ECPR-Newsletter-March-2024.pdf>
* Balkin, Jack M. “Ideology as Cultural Software.” *Cardozo Law Review*, vol. 16, 1995. Intro & §1.  
  <https://openyls.law.yale.edu/bitstream/handle/20.500.13051/2041/Ideology_as_Cultural_Software.pdf>
* Dür, Andreas. “How Interest Groups Influence Public Opinion: Arguments Matter More Than the Sources.” *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 58, 2019.  
  <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6487962/>
* Whittlestone, Rachel. “Interest-Group Resources, Access, and Influence: An Empirical Review.” *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 2024.  
  <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6487962/>
* Van de Haar, Edwin. “Human Nature and World Affairs.” *Classical Liberalism*, IEA, 2023, pp. 1–28.  
  <https://iea.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Haar-Classical-Liberalism-04-2.pdf>
* Schnellenbach, Jan. “Revisiting the Tension Between Classical Liberalism and the Welfare State.” *Schmollers Jahrbuch*, vol. 139, no. 2–4, 2021.  
  <https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/292563/1/schm.139.2-4.365.pdf>
* V-Dem Institute. *Democracy Report 2024*, Executive Summary, 30 pp.
* Markowski, Radoslaw, and Michał Kotnarowski. “Alternatives to Liberal Democracies…” *Politics and Governance*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2025. Cogitatio Press.
* Wimmer, Andreas, et al. “The Consequences of Nationalism: A Scholarly Exchange.” *Nations and Nationalism*, 2023.  
  Available via White Rose Research Online.
* UN Women. *Intersectionality Resource Guide and Toolkit*, 2022, pp. 1–40.
* Brulle, Robert J. “Politics & the Environment.” *Human Ecology Review*, vol. 22, 2015.
* Cederman, Lars-Erik. “Nationalism and the Transformation of the State.” *Nations and Nationalism*, 2024. ETH Research Collection.
* Held, David, and Kevin Young. “Global Governance in Crisis? Fragmentation, Risk and World Order.” *International Politics*, vol. 50, 2013.  
  Available on ResearchGate.
* Park, Susan. “Socialisation and the Liberal Order.” *International Politics*, vol. 51, no. 3, 2014, pp. 334–349.  
  <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/262574837_Socialisation_and_the_liberal_order>