

PIA3130: U.S. POLITICS AND FOREIGN POLICY

Effective Term

Semester B 2025/26

Part I Course Overview

Course Title

U.S. Politics and Foreign Policy

Subject Code

PIA - Public and International Affairs

Course Number

3130

Academic Unit

Public and International Affairs (PIA)

College/School

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CH)

Course Duration

One Semester

Credit Units

3

Level

B1, B2, B3, B4 - Bachelor's Degree

Medium of Instruction

English

Medium of Assessment

English

Prerequisites

Nil

Precursors

Nil

Equivalent Courses

AIS4130 U.S. Politics and Foreign Policy, PIA4130 U.S. Politics and Foreign Policy

Exclusive Courses

Nil

Part II Course Details

Abstract

This course introduces students to major political issues and institutions of U.S. politics and analyses the global impact of the U.S.'s foreign policy. It will examine the character of U.S. politics and, in particular, how it has become increasingly

polarized. Students in the course will explore the civil rights and countercultural movements of the 1960s (with the Democratic Party moving to the political left) as well as the resurgence of the religious right and economic neo-liberalism in the 1970s and 1980s (leading the Republicans to become more conservative). Such political and party divisions, in turn, reflect deep social cleavages along class, racial, gender, generational, regional, and religious lines. The course will also explore how the U.S. as a 'lonely' superpower confronts rising powers in a multipolar world. Particular focus will be put on U.S.-Chinese relations. Theories of social cleavages, political parties and movements, key political institutions (such as the presidency, the legislature and the judiciary), and international relations will be applied by students to engage in problem solving exercises of issues facing the U.S, the nature of its foreign policy and its relations with China.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

CILOs		Weighting (if app.)	DEC-A1	DEC-A2	DEC-A3
1	Identify and critically evaluate key issues in U.S. politics and society	20	x	x	x
2	Explain political behaviour, institutional processes, social developments, and policy outcomes using relevant theories and models.	20	x	x	x
3	Appraise and critique arguments about political processes and social change in the U.S.	20	x	x	x
4	Discover and innovate by demonstrating an ability to apply factual and theoretical knowledge to a problem-based activity.	20	x	x	x
5	Analyse and synthesise information and communicate it effectively.	20	x	x	x

A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to real-life problems.

A3: Accomplishments

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

LTAs		Brief Description	CILO No.	Hours/week (if applicable)
1	CILO 1-3, 5	Class lectures will be given about each topic with class discussions held about the lecture as well as the required readings for that week.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	

2	CILO 1-5	Each student will be assigned to a small discussion group on a particular week's topic in order to discuss it through a question and answer format about these additional readings, general course required readings and the course lectures to date.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	
3	CILO 1-5	There will be a final quiz covering the course lectures, required readings and discussions at the end of the course.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	

Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)

ATs		CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks ("- for nil entry)	Allow Use of GenAI?
1	Attendance and participation in class discussions	1, 2, 3, 5	10	nil	Yes
2	Small group discussions	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	40	nil	No
3	Quiz	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	50	nil	No

Continuous Assessment (%)

100

Examination (%)

0

Assessment Rubrics (AR)**Assessment Task**

Attendance and participation in class discussions

Criterion

Students are expected to attend all lectures and class discussions. Marks will be based on the quality contributions to class discussions of the lectures and the weekly required readings.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Excellent participation in class discussions indicating outstanding understanding of the lectures and required readings.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Good participation in class discussions indicating strong understanding of the lectures and required readings.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Adequate participation in class discussions indicating some understanding of the lectures and required readings.

Marginal (D)

Weak participation in class discussions indicating limited understanding of the lectures and required readings.

Failure (F)

Lack of participation in class discussions.

Assessment Task

Small group discussions

Criterion

Each student will be assigned to a small discussion group covering a particular week's topic. Students will answer questions and discuss key issues about that subject based on additional readings assigned to them in addition to the general required readings and information provided through the lectures. Students will be assessed on their knowledge of the required readings and the lectures and their ability to apply this knowledge in order to answer questions asked of them in these small group discussions.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Excellent knowledge of the readings and lectures and outstanding ability to use this information to answer questions posed to them.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Good knowledge of the readings and lectures and strong ability to use this information to answer questions posed to them.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Fair knowledge of the readings and lectures and average ability to use this information to answer questions posed to them.

Marginal (D)

Marginal knowledge of the readings and lectures and limited ability to use this information to answer questions posed to them.

Failure (F)

Inadequate knowledge of the readings and lectures and little ability to use this information to answer questions posed to them.

Assessment Task

Quiz

Criterion

Assessing students' ability to demonstrate knowledge of the topics covered in class and a capacity to critically reflect on them.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Excellent knowledge of the topics covered in class and outstanding capacity to critically reflect on them.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Good knowledge of the topics covered in class and strong capacity to critically reflect on them.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Adequate knowledge of the topics covered in class and average capacity to critically reflect on them.

Marginal (D)

Limited knowledge of the topics covered in class and marginal capacity to critically reflect on them.

Failure (F)

Inadequate knowledge of the topics covered in class and little capacity to critically reflect on them.

Part III Other Information

Keyword Syllabus

U.S. politics, foreign policy, international relations, comparative politics, social cleavages, race, class, gender, religion, region, political parties, the presidency, Congress, the Supreme Court, the judiciary, interest groups, social policy.

Reading List

Compulsory Readings

Title	
1	Abramowitz, A. 2018. <i>The Great Alignment: Race, Party Transformation, and the Rise of Donald Trump</i> . Yale University Press.
2	Allison, G. 2017. <i>Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides' s Trap?</i> New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
3	Bartels, L. M., 2008. <i>Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age</i> . Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
4	Chhabra, T. 2021. <i>The China Challenge, Democracy, and U.S. Grand Strategy</i> . Foreign Policy at Brookings: https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/FP_20190311_us_grand_strategy_chhabra.pdf
5	Cox, M. & Stokes, D. 2018. <i>US Foreign Policy, Third Edition</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press.
6	Davidson, J. W. 2015. <i>A Little History of the United States</i> . Yale University Press.
7	Graham, M. & Svobik, M. 2020. Democracy in America? Partisanship, Polarization, and the Robustness of Support for Democracy in the United States. <i>American Political Science Review</i> 114, 2, 392–409.
8	Huntington, S. P., 1999. The Lonely Superpower. <i>Foreign Affairs</i> , 78(2), pp. 35-49.
9	Levitsky, S. & Ziblatt, D. 2018. <i>How Democracies Die</i> . New York: Crown.
10	McGhee, H. 2021. <i>The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together</i> . New York: One World
11	Menza, J. & Brooks, C., 1999. <i>Social Cleavages and Political Change: Voter Alignment and U.S. Party Coalitions</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press.
12	Skowronek, S., 2008. <i>Presidential leadership in political time: Reprise and reappraisal</i> . Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas.
13	Zakaria, F. 2008. <i>The Post-American World</i> . New York: Norton.
14	Zhao, M. 2019 Is a New Cold War Inevitable? Chinese Perspectives on US–China Strategic Competition. <i>The Chinese Journal of International Politics</i> , Volume 12, Issue 3, Autumn 2019, Pages 371–394, https://doi.org/10.1093/cjip/poz010

Additional Readings

Title	
1	Huntington, S. P., 1983. <i>American Politics: The Promise of Disharmony</i> . Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University.
2	Lim, E., 2014. <i>The Lovers' Quarrel: The Two Foundings and American Political Development</i> Oxford: Oxford University Press.
3	Skowronek, S. 1982. <i>Building a New American State: The Expansion of National Administrative Capacities, 1877-1990</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.