

COURSE SYLLABUS



Introduction to Politics I

Course code: POS 101/2
Term and year: Fall 2026
Day and time: Wednesdays and Fridays 9:30-10:45
Instructor: A. Ebru Akcasu, Ph.D.
Instructor contact: ebru.akcasu@aauni.edu
Consultation hours: Fridays, 14:30-15:00, Faculty Lounge (4.10)

Credits US/ECTS	3/6	Level	Introductory
Length	15 weeks	Pre-requisite	None
Contact hours	42 hours	Course type	Bachelor Required

1. Course Description

This course introduces students to key concepts in the study of politics, beginning with foundational understandings of modern states and ideologies. Students will examine different models of state structures and their political aspirations through a comparative approach, with an emphasis on historical context and key theorists. Special attention is given to distinguishing different approaches to governance, such as democracy and authoritarianism, alongside diverse methods of representation and division of power. Beyond this, the course explores how state structures can perpetuate or challenge social inequalities, and how various political systems respond to demands for social justice, economic equity, and human rights. The role of the media in shaping public opinion and its potential to uphold or undermine democratic principles is a recurring theme.

2. Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Understand the basic concepts, structures, and theories used in comparative politics
- Be familiar with the ways governments operate, are elected, and formed in democratic and autocratic systems
- Be familiar with the role of media and political movements and interest groups in the realm of politics, campaigns, and policy formation
- Critically apply the theoretical concepts to various data sets within case studies and present their views in an oral presentation or a written essay.

3. Reading Material

Required Materials

- Huxley, Aldous. Brave New World. [Edition unavailable]. 2024. Reprint, Original Classic Editions, 2024. <https://www.perlego.com/book/4247487..>
- Weekly seminar readings, found by you, will be made available in your mylearning.

Recommended Materials

- Joyce, Peter. Politics: A Complete Introduction: Teach Yourself. [Edition unavailable]. 2015. Reprint, Teach Yourself, 2015. <https://www.perlego.com/book/3179682>.
- Genna, Gaspare, and Taeko Hiroi. Exploring Politics. 1st ed. 2022. Reprint, CQ Press, 2022. <https://www.perlego.com/book/4792648>.

4. Teaching methodology

The course is divided into four components: lectures, seminars, debates, and presentations. Students are expected to have read and analyzed the weekly readings beforehand and be ready to discuss and debate.

5. Course Schedule

Date	Class Agenda
Week 1 Sep. 2 & 4	Topic: Unpacking Politics Description: Introduction(s), syllabus overview, expectations, key concepts. Key terms in the study of politics – ‘legitimacy’, ‘power’, ‘authority’, ‘government’, ‘state’ and ‘democracy’. Reading: Brave New World, Ch. 1-2 Assignment/deadlines: Sign up to your media and culminating experience presentations, and seminar week.
Week 2 Sep. 9 & 11	Topic: From Ancient Times to Modern Debates Description: Comparison between ancient and modern states and their dynamics with subjects and citizens; sovereignty, political communities and organizations. Reading: Brave New World, Ch. 3-4; Seminar Reading Week 2. Assignments/deadlines: Ongoing: media presentations, seminar reading discovery, culminating experience projects.
Week 3 Sep. 16 & 18	Topic: Political Systems and Institutions (9/18 by Radka Havlova) Description: Comparative overview of the organization and exercise and division of political power across different regime types. Reading: Brave New World, Ch. 5-6; Seminar Reading Week 3. Assignments/deadlines: Ongoing: media presentations, seminar reading discovery, culminating experience projects.
Week 4 Sep. 23 & 25	Topic: Media, Pressure Groups, and Politics Description: Examination of media and interest group intermediaries between citizens and those who are in power. Reading: Brave New World, Ch. 7-8; Seminar Reading Week 4 Assignments/deadlines: Ongoing: media presentations, seminar reading discovery, culminating experience projects.

Week 5 Sep. 30 & Oct. 2	Topic: Media Presentations (X6); Fascism (10/2 by Jakub Drabik) Description: Media presentations due. Readings: Brave New World, Ch. 9-10 Assignments: Ongoing: media presentations, seminar reading discovery, culminating experience projects; reflection papers.
Week 6 Oct. 7 & 9	Topic: When States Fail (10/9 by Radka Havlova) Description: Causes and consequences of state fragility and collapse, and their historical contextualization. Reading: Brave New World, Ch. 11-12; Seminar Reading Week 6 Assignments/deadlines: Ongoing: seminar reading discovery, culminating experience projects
Week 7 Oct. 14 & 16	Topic: Political Violence and Social Movements Description: Causes and consequences of civil unrest and rebellion, and the relationship between organized political action and change. Reading: Brave New World. Ch. 13-15; Seminar Reading Week 7 Assignments/deadlines: Ongoing: seminar reading discovery, culminating experience projects.
Week 8 Oct. 21 & 23	Topic: Midterm Exam Week Description: Split across both days.
Break	No class – Enjoy your break! Relax and reset.
Week 9 Nov. 4 & 6	Topic: AI (11/4 by Zach Stuck); Elections and Party Systems (11/6 by Clément Steuer) Reading: Brave New World. Ch. 16-18. Assignments/deadlines: Reflection paper.
Week 10 Nov. 11 & 13	Topic: The Economy of Politics Description: Relationships between political systems and economic structures, markets, taxes. Reading: Seminar Reading Week 10 Assignments/deadlines: Ongoing: seminar reading discovery, culminating experience projects.
Week 11 Nov. 18 & 20	Topic: Politics at a Crossroads: Students' Choice Description: Contemporary challenges in political life, both at domestic and international levels Reading: Seminar Reading Week 11 Assignments/deadlines: Ongoing: seminar reading discovery, culminating experience projects.

Week 12 Nov. 25 & 27	Topic: Politics at a Crossroads: Students' Choice Description: Contemporary challenges in political life, both at domestic and international levels. Reading: Seminar Reading Week 12 Assignments/deadlines: Culminating experience projects.
Week 13 Dec. 2 & 4	Topic: Culminating Experience Presentations
Week 14 Dec. 9 & 11	Topic: Culminating Experience Presentations

6. Course Requirements and Assessment (with estimated workloads)

Assignment	Workload (hours)	Weight in Final Grade	Evaluated Specific Outcomes	Course Learning	Evaluated Institutional Learning Outcomes*
Class Participation	42	20%	Demonstrating punctuality and preparedness for participation and critical engagement.		1, 2, 3
Signups	1	5%	Demonstrating punctuality and preparedness for participation and critical engagement.		1, 2, 3
Media Presentations	10	15%	Demonstrating intellectual engagement, critical thinking and contextualization of the assignment topic within broader course themes.		1, 2, 3
Mid-Term Exam	30	30%	Ability to demonstrate knowledge of historical factors, actors, concepts, that have shaped how we understand and relate to politics. The essay section should be legible and well structured, demonstrate critical thinking and provide examples from both the lectures and the readings.		1, 2

Reflections	4	15%	Ability to critically approach sources and contextualize them; demonstration of research and analytical skills.	1, 2
Culminating experience project.	10	15%	Ability to critically approach sources and contextualize them; demonstration of research and analytical skills; effective written communication.	3
TOTAL	150	100%		

*1 = Critical Thinking; 2 = Effective Communication; 3 = Effective and Responsible Action

7. Detailed description of the assignments

Assignment 1: Participation

All students are required to come to class having read the required readings in advance. Students are expected to actively take part in class discussions and contribute to the exchange of scholarly ideas with their peers.

Assignment 2: Signups

Students are expected to sign up for their seminar dates, media groups, and culminating experience profiles by the end of the first week of term.

Due: By midnight on 9 September 2026, CET.

Assignment 3: Media Presentations

Students will present on a politically relevant media item and explain how it connects with at least one course topic and theme. This is a group project. Presentations should last 15 minutes and will be partially peer-evaluated.

Due: In class on 30 September 2026.

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Content selection	15%
Connection to course topic and themes	25%
Analysis and insight	20%
Clarity and organization	15%
Delivery and engagement	10%
Self and peer evaluation	15%

Assignment 4: Mid-term Exam

The midterm will consist of multiple-choice, identification, short-answer, and essay questions, covering material from the first half of the course. The essay section should demonstrate critical thinking and the ability to contextualize the topic within a broader framework and engage with the readings.

Exam date: In class on 21 and 23 October 2026

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Multiple choice and identification	25%
Short answer	30%
Essay	45%

Assignment 5: Reflections

Students are expected to write reflection papers that react to guest lectures, experiential learning, the reading material and other prompts.

Due: Ongoing.

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Depth of reflection	35%
Application to real-world	25%
Critical thinking	25%
Clarity, structure, mechanics	15%

Assignment 6: Culminating Experience

Each student will research and explore a citizen's political profile and, per week, a political theme from their perspective. The themes should be inspired by class content. The students will present on their discoveries and experiences at the end of the term. The presentations should last about 15 minutes and are partially peer evaluated.

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Content accuracy	15%
Connection to course topic and themes	25%
Analysis, dept, and insight	20%
Clarity and organization	15%
Delivery and engagement	10%
Peer evaluation	15%

Due: 2, 4, 9, 11 December 2026, in class. Note that these are four separate entries.

8. General Requirements and School Policies

General requirements

All coursework is governed by AAU's academic rules. Students are expected to be familiar with the academic rules in the Academic Codex and Student Handbook and to maintain the highest standards of honesty and academic integrity in their work. Please see the AAU intranet for a [summary of key policies](#) regarding coursework.

Course-specific requirements

There are no special requirements for this course.

9. Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage*	Description
A	95–100	Excellent performance. The student has shown originality and displayed an exceptional grasp of the material and a deep analytical understanding of the subject.
A–	90–94	
B+	87–89	Good performance. The student has mastered the material, understands the subject well and has shown some originality of thought and/or considerable effort.
B	83–86	
B–	80–82	Fair performance. The student has acquired an acceptable understanding of the material and essential subject matter of the course, but has not succeeded in translating this understanding into consistently creative or original work.
C+	77–79	
C	73–76	
C–	70–72	Poor. The student has shown some understanding of the material and subject matter covered during the course. The student's work, however, has not shown enough effort or understanding to
D+	65–69	
D	60–64	allow for a passing grade in School Required Courses. It does qualify as a passing mark for the General College Courses and Electives.
F	0–59	Fail. The student has not succeeded in mastering the subject matter covered in the course.

* Decimals should be rounded to the nearest whole number.

Prepared by: Dr A. Ebru Akcasu

Date: 8 August 2026

Approved by: Dr Silviya Lechner

Date: 10 August 2026