Introduction to Politics

An Eloquentia Perfecta Seminar
PORU-1100
Fordham University
Fall 2011

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Course Overview

The events of 9/11 challenged long-held assumptions about global and domestic politics. Since then, many of us have wondered:

- How did it happen?
- What were the planners and hijackers thinking?
- What should the President do?
- What are our options in the Middle East?
- How do we stop suicide terrorism?
- How do we balance liberty and security?
- What is the future of Islam?

The aim of this course is to think about these questions alongside several of the most insightful historians, political scientists, and philosophers of our time. In this way, we learn how to study politics as well as what we should do to prevent another 9/11. As an Eloquentia Perfecta seminar, we also seek to cultivate excellence in oral and written communication through classroom discussion, research papers, and student presentations.

Texts

The 9/11 Commission Report (Norton or Barnes and Noble) 9780393326710
Sayyd Qutb, Milestones (The Mother Mosque Foundation) 0911119426
John Yoo, The Powers of War and Peace: The Constitution and Foreign Affairs after 9/11 (University of Chicago) 9780226960326
Olivier Roy, The Politics of Chaos in the Middle East (Columbia) 0231700334
Robert Pape, Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism (Random House) 0812973380
Philip Bobbitt, Terror and Consent: The Wars for the Twenty-First Century (Knopf) 9781400077014
Tariq Ramadan, Western Muslims and the Future of Islam (Oxford) 9780195183566
Course Requirements

(1-2) Students have a chance to write and present a research paper on one of the authors we discuss this semester. Early in the semester, I will assign students to a group. At the beginning of the class, students will turn in to me, and present to the class, a 10-12 page research paper evaluating the author’s contribution to preventing another 9/11.

Focus on one aspect of the author’s thinking and read at least scholarly 4 books or articles on that topic. For example, if you present on Sayyd Qutb, you can evaluate what he says in light of Osama bin Laden’s Messages to the World, the resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan, the Mumbai terrorist attacks, the role of women in the Islamic world, or his experience in the United States.

For assistance with the essay, I recommend that you contact Fordham’s online reference librarians and that you set an appointment with the Writing Center (x4032) to edit the first draft of your essay. I will meet with the presenting group at the end of class one week before their presentations. I have also placed an exemplary research paper (on “Pape and Palestinian Women Suicide Bombers”) on Course Documents in Blackboard.

You may rewrite this essay for up to a one-letter improvement a week after I turn it back to you. If you choose this option, please write a 1 page summary of the changes that you have made.

For class presentations, I recommend that you:
- Dress professionally
- Practice your talk beforehand, to yourself or with friends
- Speak from an outline
- Use Powerpoint (Please send me at least 10 minutes before class.)
- Engage the entire classroom
- Solicit questions
- Have fun!

(3) The midterm, on October 13, covers the proposals to prevent another 9/11 by the 9/11 Commission, Sayyd Qutb, and John Yoo. A week beforehand, I will distribute 6 essay questions, and on the day of the exam we will roll a die to determine 2 questions. Well-written essays should incorporate material from the lectures, readings, presentations, and your own thoughts. You may study in groups, but the exam is close-booked. The exam is 1 hour.

(4) The final, TBD, has the same format as the midterm, and is on Olivier Roy, Robert Pape, Philip Bobbitt, and Tariq Ramadan.

(5) Class participation. Students are expected to come to class on time prepared to discuss the readings. I employ the Socratic method in the classroom, which means that I will often
call on you even if your hands are down; be ready! We will break into groups regularly to debate the day’s topic and reconvene to report our results to the class. Students, in short, are expected to read, listen, observe, and think actively rather than passively.

Grade Distribution

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research paper</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research presentation</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>Final exam</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>10</td>
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Class Schedule

I. The 9/11 Commission Report

II. Sayyid Qutb on *Jihad*
5. September 15: *Milestones*, Chapter 4
7. September 22: Student Presentations

III. John Yoo on the President’s War Powers
8. September 26: Constitution; *The Powers of War and Peace*, Introduction, Chapter 1
11. October 6: Student Presentations
12. October 13: Midterm

IV. Olivier Roy on Middle East Politics
13. October 17: *The Politics of Chaos in the Middle East*, Introduction-II
15. October 24: Student Presentations

V. Robert Pape on Suicide Terrorism
16. October 27: *Dying to Win*, Introduction-Chapter 11
17. October 31: *Dying to Win*, Conclusion, Appendices
18. November 3: Student Presentations
VI. Philip Bobbit on Governance, Liberty, and Violence
19. November 7: *Terror and Consent*, Introduction, Chapter 1
22. November 17: Student Presentations

VII. Tariq Ramadan on Reforming Islam
23. November 21: *Western Muslims*, Intro, Chapters 1, 2
24. November 28: *Western Muslims*, Chapter 7
25. December 1: *Western Muslims*, Chapter 9; Paul Berman’s “Whose Afraid of Tariq Ramadan?” (*available online*)
26. December 5: Student Presentations

**Conclusion**
27. December 8: Barack Obama, “A New Beginning”

**Final Exam:** TBD