

**San José State University**  
**Department of Political Science**  
**POLS 190 section 2, Senior Seminar, Spring 2022**

**“Reading for Justice”**

**Course and Contact Information**

**Instructor:** Kenneth B. Peter  
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**Office Hours:** Monday and Wednesday 12-1:00  
And by appointment  
**Class Days/Time:** Monday and Wednesday 9:00-10:15  
**Classroom:** Clark 303A

**Canvas learning management system**

Course materials can be found on the Canvas learning management system course website. You can learn how to access this site at this web address: <http://www.sjsu.edu/at/ec/canvas/>

**Course Description**

*Catalog description:*

*4 unit(s)*

Culminating experience for the political science major. Seminar class with significant participation required. Specific course topics vary each semester.

**Grading:** Graded

**Professor’s course description:**

As graduating political science majors, presumably you would like to use your degree “to make the world a better place.” You recognize that the world is filled with injustice, and that if you are not part of the solution then you are part of the problem.

But what is the problem? What if many of our political problems are linked to a world of post-literacy? Is it an accident that the world’s great democratic revolutions occurred after a century in which literacy had spread widely and the cost of printed materials has plummeted? And is it a coincidence that authoritarianism, extremism, and terrorism are on the rise in a period when technology has replaced the reading of books with the reading of blips and pieces of online information? Neuroscientists call this “post literacy” and note that the way we read and what we read had produced physical changes in the human brain. And those changes may be very unhealthy for democracy, which depends upon informed citizens who can think critically for themselves.

What will you do for the rest of your lives with a political science degree? Many different things, but this course wants to prepare you to do one thing in particular: read about current issues in politics. The hypothesis this course is based upon is that qualities such as human empathy, critical thinking, skillful argumentation, persuasion, and moderation are all based in part on reading, and they are also essential for democracy and to achieve greater justice. This course will give you practice in reading about some of the latest controversies and issues in politics, in the hope that it will start a life-long passion for “Reading for Justice.”

### Program Learning Outcomes (PLO)

- **Breadth** Students should possess a broad knowledge of the theory and methods of the various branches of the discipline.
- **Application and Disciplinary Methods** Students should be able to formulate research questions, engage in systematic literature searches using primary and secondary sources, evaluate research studies, and critically analyze and interpret influential political texts. Students should be able to apply these techniques to identify, understand, and analyze domestic and international political issues and organizations.
- **Communication Skills** Students should master basic competencies in oral and written communication skills and be able to apply these skills in the context of political science. This means communicating effectively about politics and/or public administration, public policy, and law.
- **Citizenship** Students should acquire an understanding of the role of the citizen in local, state, national, and global contexts and appreciate the importance of lifelong participation in political processes.

### Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. CLO 1 Understand several theories of justice.
2. CLO 2 Practice applying theories of justice to contemporary controversies in politics.
3. CLO 3 Gain practice in the skill required to read about justice and politics.

## Required Texts/Readings

Sandel, Michael. *Justice, A Reader*. ISBN 9780195335125

Wilkinson and Pickett, *The Spirit Level*. ISBN 9781608191703

Putnam, *The Upswing*. ISBN 9781982129156

Smith and Freeman, *There's a Revolution Outside, My Love*. ISBN 9780593314692

Allison, *Destined for War*. ISBN 9780544935273

## **Assignments and Grading Policy—1000 points**

***The due dates for these assignments are posted in Canvas; The Critical Book Review is due at the time of the final Exam.***

### **Critical Book Review in Stages**

You will prepare and write a critical book review in stages

#### **Book Proposal. (50 points)**

Select three book titles which meet the following requirements, any of which you would like to read and review. Submit a 2 page proposal in which you write one paragraph on each of the three book titles explaining why you would like to review that book. Also submit a proper bibliography of the three books.

The three books in your proposal must meet the following criteria:

- 1) The books should normally be academic texts presenting theories, analysis, or evidence about current issues in political science. Sometimes I might approve a particularly relevant text written about contemporary issues in politics that are not strictly academic.
- 2) The books should have been published within the last 10 and preferably 5 years (exceptions by approval.)
- 3) The books must speak to issues of justice, very broadly defined.
- 4) You may rank your choices, but be aware that I may pick any of the three you propose. Do not propose a text that you would be uncomfortable talking about in seminar and writing about in your review paper.

#### **Book Reading Selections (50 points)**

You will select a series of quotations, graphs, illustrations, or whatever else you find in your text to distribute in advance to the seminar to be part of their reading. These materials should be no more than 3 pages in length but should be the most exciting or interesting materials you can find in your book. Your goal is to entice the rest of the class that this is a book that they should want to read.

#### **Seminar Presentation (100 points)**

You will prepare a presentation of your book to be delivered in the seminar on an appointed day.

- 1) You will prepare a five minute powerpoint overview of your text which you will present to the class to begin your presentation. This presentation should be no longer than 5 minutes in length (strictly enforced) and should speak to the materials you distributed.
- 2) Following your powerpoint presentation, you will answer questions about your chosen book for 15 minutes from me and the class. Be prepared to discuss how the book addresses issues of justice from the standpoint of the various theories of justice that we have studied.

#### **Critical Book Review (200 points)**

At the time of the final exam you will submit a 5-7 page critical book review, according to a format which will be distributed. Your review will

- 1) Offer a concise and clear summary of all the key points made in the book.
- 2) Evaluate the quality of the theories/analysis/evidence used in the book.
- 3) Situate the book in terms of the various theories of justice which the seminar has studied.

## **Quizzes 300 pts**

There will be a quiz on each major unit covered in the course prior to the student presentations. every week on the material covered that week. The specific days will not be announced in advance, but there will be several quizzes based on the Justice Anthology and one quiz on each of the other four assigned books. This will be approximately 7 quizzes. The lowest quiz score (or a missing quiz) will be dropped and the remainder used for determining the overall quiz grade.

Each quiz will ask you to write a thoughtful response to a quotation drawn from readings that were assigned in the course. Each quiz will be evaluated on a 100 percentage basis but all the quizzes collectively will count for 300 points in the course.

## **Participation 300 pts**

Participation in the seminar is mandatory and graded. I will take account of both quantity and quality of oral participation in determining the grade. Quality participation shows the following characteristics:

- 1) The student is collegial and supportive of other students, offering encouragement and respect even when disagreeing.
- 2) The student's comments often cite the day's readings, whether to ask questions about it, to express agreement or disagreement with it, or to analyze it in a helpful way.
- 3) The student is consistent; this means staying up with the reading and being engaged with it in discussion on a regular basis.
- 4) Students will be asked to provide some feedback to other students' oral presentations. The quality of this feedback will figure into the participation grade.
- 5) Student should aim for a "happy medium." Regular, high quality comments are to be preferred over a) consistent silence or b) dominating a conversation with constant talk. If you are not sure how you are doing, ask me privately and I will provide feedback.

## **Penalties for missed or later assignments.**

It is the student's responsibility to make arrangements for any planned absences which will interfere with assignments, and to contact Prof. Peter at the first available opportunity concerning emergencies which cause a missed assignment.

- a. Quizzes. A single missed quiz is not normally made up since the grade for the lowest quiz is simply discarded anyway. Only if a student has written documentation that an SJSU sanctioned activity or a medical excuse has interfered with two or more quiz dates will a make-up be authorized.
- b. Final Critical Book Review. This paper cannot be late since there is insufficient time to grade late papers prior to the registrar's deadline for course grades. A paper that is not turned in on time will result in a failing grade for the course. Alternatively, if verifiable illness or family emergency interferes, contact Professor Peter about an Incomplete for the course.
- c. Book proposals, reading selections, and seminar presentations are important for the functioning of the whole seminar. You have a responsibility to be on time so that your fellow

students will have access to the materials. Being late with these assignments may result in deductions up to 50% of the points, depending upon how disruptive the effect on the class.

## **POLS 190H Assignment**

You are eligible to enroll in POLS 190H as a one unit accompanying course to this seminar if you have a 3.5 GPA in Political Science and a 3.3 GPA overall. Successfully completing this extra “Honors” unit will earn you “Honors in Political Science” which will be placed on your transcript and on your diploma.

For the additional 1 unit, you will need to write a major research paper instead of a book review, although it will follow much the same format. Consult with me for details and for an add code.

## **Calculation of Final Grade**

The final grade is determined using the cumulative percentage of the assigned 400 points, plus whatever extra credit is earned. The letter grades assigned are the standard conversion as follows:

98-100 A plus  
93-97 A  
90-92 A minus  
88-89 B plus  
83-87 B  
80-82 B minus  
78-79 C plus  
73-77 C  
70-72 C minus  
68-69 D plus  
63-67 D  
60-62 D minus  
0-59 F

## **Incompletes**

Sometimes students need alternatives to finishing the course. I will be happy to issue an incomplete if 1) a student has made arrangements for making up the course by coming to me before the last day of class and negotiated an incomplete contract, 2) the student has completed 2/3 of the assignments and does not need to further attend the course to complete it, and 3) the student offers evidence of extenuating circumstances. My own experience is that students who do not finish the work for an incomplete within a few weeks never do so, and after one year the incompletes automatically become “Fs” if not finished. So be warned that this option is quite risky

## **Academic Renewal**

An alternative for students who do not qualify for the incomplete (for example, if you have done less than 2/3 of the assignments or you need to attend a lot of lectures) is to accept a failing grade but to retake the course under academic renewal. You are limited to a certain number of courses over your

college career, but this can be an excellent option in certain situations—particularly if the reasons for failing were related to life circumstances that are likely to change in a future semester.

## **Dropping the course and Failing Grades**

I will cooperate with any student wishing to drop the course for any reason. However, the University has adopted strict rules against dropping a course after a short period at the beginning of the semester. I personally disagree with the policy but have no control over it.

I am required to issue “WU”s (Withdrawal Unauthorized) to students who do not drop the course but who stop coming to class and doing the assignments. Since I do not formally take attendance, I determine whether a student has stopped attending by looking at assignments. I give “WU”s to those students who “disappear” without doing any graded assignments in the last half of the course. A WU counts as an “F,” so be sure to officially withdraw from the course (early!) and don’t assume (falsely!) that you will be removed from the roster by me or by the University.

## **Classroom Protocol**

Courtesy.

Proper classroom etiquette includes:

- arriving on time and staying for the period.
- refraining from distracting other students during the lecture,
- listening attentively until the professor dismisses the class,
- treating the opinions of other students with respect,

The professor reserves the right to deduct from the overall grade for particularly egregious examples of poor classroom etiquette, and to reward students for outstanding displays of collegiality.

## **Reading.**

This is a reading course. Students should read each scheduled assignment prior to coming to class. Most students find they need to reread part or all of the material after the lecture, since the lecture helps them to further understand it, but reading it prior to the lecture helps students to be able to ask questions and even to listen intelligently. You will find that this kind of reading often needs to be done twice—you must refer back to the texts repeatedly while fulfilling the assignments.

Time commitment. Federal law requires that you be informed that success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend six hours per week in addition to the lectures for reading, writing, and studying. In this case, federal law is right. Students surveyed upon completing this course really do report that it takes them that long to do the reading and keep up with the work. Do not take this course if you cannot afford to make that significant time commitment.

## **University Policies (Required)**

Per University Policy S16-9 (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant information to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. is available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs’ [Syllabus Information web](#)

[page](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>” Make sure to review these university policies and resources with students.

### **Academic integrity**

Your commitment, as a student, to learning is evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University. The [University Academic Integrity Policy S07-2](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S07-2.pdf) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S07-2.pdf> requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. The [Student Conduct and Ethical Development website](http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/) is available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/>.

In particular, here are a few issues that have come up in courses like this one before:

*Plagiarism* is a topic that can be confusing to uninformed students. For papers that you write outside of class, you should credit every source you consult by listing it in a bibliography, whether you quote the source or not. Any source you paraphrase, précis, quote or summarize must be directly credited with a footnote of some sort to prove that you are not attempting to take credit for someone else's work—note that this is not only direct quotes. In this course some footnoting shortcuts will be offered to make your job easier, but the basic principle of always giving credit to the sources you consult never changes. Note in particular that use of online sources qualifies in the same way as consultation with any other source—internet materials must be fully cited if you have consulted them. I suggest you take the excellent tutorial on plagiarism available at our Library's website:

<http://tutorials.sjlibrary.org/tutorial/plagiarism/>

*“Recycling”* papers from other courses, even if they are your own original work, is not acceptable. If you have written a paper on a similar topic I am willing to consult with you to find ways to adjust course requirements to incorporate, expand, and build on your previous work. Papers submitted to this class are expected not only to be original to you the author, but original to this particular class.

*Collaboration.* Students may collaborate in their studies and are encouraged to do so. However, no collaboration during in-class exams or quizzes will be allowed. In their studies, collaborating students should not go so far that they memorized answers cloned from a single model.



# Course Schedule and Daily Study Guide

Lecture	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
		Abbreviations:
1	W Jan 26	<b>Introduction to the Seminar</b>  Reading: None  Discussion Questions:
2	M Jan 31	<b>Virtue Ethics: Aristotle</b>  Reading: Sandel Chapter 10
3	W Feb 2	<b>Utilitarianism: Bentham and Mill</b>  Reading: Sandel Chapter 2
4	M Feb 7	<b>Deontology: Kant</b>  Reading: Sandel Chapter 6
5	W Feb 9	<b>Property Rights: Locke</b>  Reading: Sandel Chapter 4
6	M Feb 14	<b>Libertarianism</b>  Reading: Sandel Chapter 3
7	W Feb 16	<b>Rawls: Justice as Fairness</b>  Reading Sandel Chapter 7
8	M Feb 21	<b>Rawls: Distributive Justice</b>  Reading: Sandel Chapter 8
9	W Feb 23	<b>Theories of Justice Applied: Ability, Disability, and Discrimination</b>

		Reading: Sandel Chapter 11
10	M Feb 28	<b>Theories of Justice Applied: Affirmative Action</b>  Reading: Sandel Chapter 9
11	W Mar 2	<b>Theories of Justice Applied: Markets and Morals</b>  Reading: Sandel Chapter 5
12	M Mar 7	<b>The Spirit Level</b>  Reading: Wilkinson and Pickett, <i>The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger</i> .  Chapters 1-3.
13	W Mar 9	<b>The Spirit Level</b>  Reading: Wilkinson and Pickett, <i>The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger</i> .  Chapters 4-6.
14	M Mar 14	<b>The Spirit Level</b>  Reading: Wilkinson and Pickett, <i>The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger</i> .  Chapters 7-9.
15	W Mar 16	<b>Letters from a Crisis</b>  Reading: Smith and Freman, eds., <i>There's a Revolution Outside, My Love</i> .  Preface, pages 1-89. Read one letter in particular depth and be prepared to discuss it in class.
16	M Mar 21	<b>Letters from a Crisis</b>  Reading: Smith and Freman, eds., <i>There's a Revolution Outside, My Love</i> .

		Preface, pages 90-181. Read one letter in particular depth and be prepared to discuss it in class.
17	W Mar 23	<p><b>Letters from a Crisis</b></p> <p>Reading: Smith and Freman, eds., <i>There's a Revolution Outside, My Love.</i></p> <p>Preface, pages 182-279. Read one letter in particular depth and be prepared to discuss it in class.</p> <p><b>SPRING BREAK</b></p>
18	M Apr 4	<p><b>The Upswing</b></p> <p>Reading: Robert D. Putnam, <i>The Upswing: How America Came Together a Century Ago and How We Can Do It Again.</i></p> <p>Chapters 1-3.</p>
19	W Apr 6	<p><b>The Upswing</b></p> <p>Reading: Robert D. Putnam, <i>The Upswing: How America Came Together a Century Ago and How We Can Do It Again.</i></p> <p>Chapters 4-6.</p>
20	M Apr 11	<p><b>The Upswing</b></p> <p>Reading: Robert D. Putnam, <i>The Upswing: How America Came Together a Century Ago and How We Can Do It Again.</i></p> <p>Chapters 7-9.</p>
21	W Apr 13	<p><b>Destined for War</b></p> <p>Reading: Graham Allison, <i>Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap.</i></p> <p>Chapters 1-4.</p>

22	M Apr 18	<p><b>Destined for War</b></p> <p>Reading: Graham Allison, <i>Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap</i></p> <p>Chapters 5-7.</p>
23	W Apr 20	<p><b>Destined for War</b></p> <p>Reading: Graham Allison, <i>Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap</i></p> <p>Chapters 8-10.</p>
24	M Apr 25	<p><b>Student Presentations 1-3</b></p> <p>Reading: TBA</p>
25	W Apr 27	<p><b>Student Presentations 4-6</b></p> <p>Reading: TBA</p>
26	M May 2	<p><b>Student Presentations 7-9</b></p> <p>Reading: TBA</p>
27	W May 4	<p><b>Student Presentations 10-12</b></p> <p>Reading: TBA</p>
28	M May 9	<p><b>Student Presentations 13-15</b></p> <p>Reading: TBA</p>
29	W May 11	<p><b>Student Presentations 16-18</b></p> <p>Reading: TBA</p>
30	W May 16	<p><b>Course Conclusion.</b></p>

**FINAL EXAM – Submit your Final Critical Book Review by:**

**Friday, May 20**

**0715-9:30**