Foundation Scholarship Examinations 2020-21

Examination Papers set by Trinity College Dublin’s Political Science Department

Guidance for Students

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Introduction

The Foundation Scholarship examinations provided by the Political Science department have changed for 2020-21 due to the curriculum changes resulting from the Trinity Education Project (TEP). This is reflected in the fact that political science will offer five examinations this year, in place of the two examinations offered in 2016-17 through 2019-20.

The number and combination of papers that you should take depends on your programme plus the pathway that you are taking. There are mandatory papers for different programmes and pathways plus optional choices. The details can be found in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Credit Profile in Political Science in Senior Fresh</th>
<th>No. of SF credits taken in Political Science by end of Semester 1</th>
<th>Number of papers taken in Political Science</th>
<th>Paper 1</th>
<th>Paper 2</th>
<th>Paper 3</th>
<th>Paper 4</th>
<th>Paper 5</th>
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<tr>
<td>40 SF credits (20 by end Sem 1)</td>
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<td>20 SF credits (10 by end Sem 1)</td>
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Please note that the Political Science Department cannot provide you with any guidance on what examinations you should take beyond the information provided in this table.

Each examination is timed at two hours fifteen minutes. Please note that no special tutorials will be provided by academic staff relating to any of these examinations. Sample questions for each examination can be found below. Some “Frequently Asked Questions” are also answered on the Political Science Department’s website.

We wish all students good luck with the Foundation Scholarship examinations.
POLITICAL SCIENCE 1

The examination “Political Science 1” requires students to write an essay on a topic related to one of the broad areas of political science covered in Senior Fresh (SF) modules—international relations, comparative politics, or history of political thought—but addressing materials that are outside the Michaelmas Term SF module syllabi. The topics can be found below, along with an additional reading list covering each topic. Students will therefore focus on one of these topics in advance and write one essay on that topic in a two-and-a-quarter-hour examination. The exam will contain only one essay question for each of the three topics for which reading lists have been provided. Students may, at their discretion, prepare more than one topic in advance, but they will answer only one essay question in the examination. To repeat: students must answer one question for this examination—the international relations question, the comparative politics question, or the history of political thought question—and not more than one.

When writing essays for “Political Science 1”, students are expected to know relevant materials and concepts from the related SF modules, but they must demonstrate engagement with, and mastery of, the materials contained on these additional reading lists. Similarly, students may choose to do additional reading, beyond the materials contained in the provided reading lists, on these political science topics, but, again, students are expected primarily and above all to demonstrate engagement with and mastery of the materials contained on these reading lists. There is no requirement to do any additional outside readings and indeed these reading lists are already extensive and demanding. Indeed, given that these reading lists are extensive, students may wish to select and prioritize their readings from among the readings set out. If a student wishes to refer to additional readings outside these reading lists (or materials contained on module syllabuses), the student is recommended to provide a reference, indicating author, title, and year of publication if possible.

Reading lists for these topics this year are contained in this document, as well as sample questions. Students, however, are advised to prepare broadly for a variety of possible questions addressing this material.

Readings for these topics will be made available online—through the library, through the Blackboard pages of the relevant modules, or through other means.
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

William Phelan

Topic: The Politics of International Human Rights Agreements

The question will deal with various contributions to political science explanations of the development and effectiveness of international human rights agreements, with a particular focus on the readings below. It will not deal with strictly legal-doctrinal analysis of international human rights law of the sort sometimes produced by professional lawyers.

Readings:


**Sample questions:**

1. Why do states enter into demanding international human rights agreements?
2. What if anything is distinctive about international human rights politics compared to other issue-areas in international relations?
HISTORY OF POLITICAL THOUGHT

Peter Stone

**Topic: The Wisdom of the Multitude**

In Book 3 of the *Politics*, Aristotle suggests that a multitude may, by acting together, demonstrate greater collective wisdom than even a very wise person can demonstrate individually. This has led political theorists to the idea of *epistemic democracy*, which stresses that democracy may serve an important *epistemic* function, in generating sound decisions. The question will deal with the strengths and weaknesses of the case for thinking of democracy in epistemic terms.

**Readings:**


**Sample Question:** Can universal suffrage be justified in modern democracies in epistemic terms?
COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Lisa Keenan

Topic: Political representation

This year’s comparative politics question for the Political Science 1 paper will focus on the topic of political representation.

Issues to consider include the following:

- How do we define representation?
- What does it mean to be represented?
- When should the views of individuals be represented?
- Are there political institutions that foster greater representation?
- How can direct democracy complement representative democracy?

Readings:


**Sample Question:**

“Congruence between voters and policy makers is greater under proportional representation.” Discuss.
POLITICAL SCIENCE 2

The examination “Political Science 2” can only be taken by students not enrolled in any SF political science module. It requires students to answer two general questions about the nature of politics. There will be a total of five questions on the exam. None of the questions will require knowledge of any SF political science module.

A reading list for this examination, as well as sample questions, can be found below. Students, however, are advised to prepare broadly for a variety of possible questions addressing this material.

Students must answer two questions out of the five offered. All questions deal with the general nature of politics, with a particular focus on the question of how best to approach the study of politics.

Readings:

The following readings make good introductions to the topic:


After reading the introductory readings, students should proceed to the following:


**Sample questions:**

1. Harold Lasswell defined politics as “Who gets what, when, and how.” Is this an adequate definition of politics?
2. Is political science really a science?
The examination “Political Science 3” can only be taken by students enrolled in POU22011 (History of Political Thought A). It requires students to answer two questions relating to this module. There will be a total of five questions on the exam. There are no additional readings associated with this examination. A mastery of the materials taught in those lectures and contained on those syllabi (including of course any optional or additional reading suggestions) up to the end of the Michaelmas Term is sufficient preparation.

Students must answer two questions out of the five offered. All questions deal with material covered in POU22011 (History of Political Thought A).

Sample questions:

1. Why did Aristotle believe that some people were “slaves by nature?”
2. Examine the relationship between the Plato’s metaphysical theory of forms and his political elitism.
POLITICAL SCIENCE 4

The examination “Political Science 4” can only be taken by students enrolled in POU22031 (Comparative Politics A). It requires students to answer two questions relating to this module. There will be a total of five questions on the exam. There are no additional readings associated with this examination. A mastery of the materials taught in those lectures and contained on those syllabi (including of course any optional or additional reading suggestions) up to the end of the Michaelmas Term is sufficient preparation.

Students must answer two questions out of the five offered. All questions deal with material covered in POU22031 (Comparative Politics A).

Sample questions:

1. “Unelected judges have no right to overrule democratically elected politicians”. Discuss with reference to at least two countries.
2. Discuss the thesis that social class is no longer the dominant cleavage in European politics.
POLITICAL SCIENCE 5

The examination “Political Science 5” can only be taken by students enrolled in POU22021 (International Relations A). It requires students to answer two questions relating to this module. There will be a total of five questions on the exam. There are no additional readings associated with this examination. A mastery of the materials taught in those lectures and contained on those syllabi (including of course any optional or additional reading suggestions) up to the end of the Michaelmas Term is sufficient preparation.

Students must answer two questions out of the five offered. All questions deal with material covered in POU22021 (International Relations A).

Sample questions:

1. Is Keohane’s explanation of international cooperation the same as Axelrod’s explanation of cooperation between egoists? Answer drawing on readings and IR theory.
2. Under what circumstances do domestic lobby groups matter in international politics? Answer drawing on readings and IR theory.