

Course Form for PKU Summer School International 2026

Course Title	Title in English: Principles of Politics
	Title in Chinese: 政治学原理
Teacher	Xiao Ma
First day of classes	July 6
Last day of classes	July 17
Course Credit	3 credits
Course Description	
Objective:	
<p><i>Principles of Politics</i> is an introductory course in political science. The course is designed around the questions of what politics is and how to understand real-world political life. It focuses on teaching the basic concepts, methods, and theories for analyzing political systems, and, through case studies and classroom discussions, aims to develop students' comprehensive abilities in political analysis.</p>	
Pre-requisites /Target audience	
No pre-requisite course required. Students at any stage who are interested in politics and political science are welcome.	
Proceeding of the Course	
None.	
Assignments (essay or other forms)	
1. one essay assignment (1000 words)	
Evaluation Details	
1. essay assignment 20% 2. attendance and in-class discussion 30% 3. in-class exam 50%	
Text Books and Reading Materials	
See suggested readings for every lecture (listed below)	

Academic Integrity (If necessary)	
CLASS SCHEDULE (Subject to adjustment)	
Session 1: <i>Course Introduction</i>	Date: July 6
【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)	
What is political science Several “misconceptions” about political science What problems political science seeks to address The practical significance of political science Course requirements	
【Questions】	
What questions do political scientists care about? What is the relationship between everyday politics and political science as an academic discipline?	
【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】	
Lasswell, Harold D., 1936, Politics: Who Gets What, When, How, McGraw-Hill Book Company Olson, Mancur, 1982, The Rise and Decline of Nations: Economic Growth, Stagflation, and Social Rigidities, Yale University Press Machiavelli, Niccolò, 1532, The Prince, Antonio Blado d'Asola (Rome)	
【Assignments for this session (if any)】	
N/A	
Session 2: <i>Political Science as A Social Science</i>	Date: July 7
【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)	
Empirical and normative social science What is empirical social science Probabilistic and deterministic theories Causality Correlation and causation How to identify causal relationships Reflections on the scientific nature of political science	
【Questions】	
What is scientific social science theory? How do we differentiate causal relationship from a correlation?	

【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】

King, Gary; Keohane, Robert O.; Verba, Sidney, 1994, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*, Princeton University Press
Marsh, David; Stoker, Gerry, 1995, *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, Macmillan Press (later Palgrave Macmillan editions)

【Assignments for this session (if any)】

Essay assignment of 1000-word using the analytical framework taught in today's class.
Detailed requirements will be introduced during the class.

Session 3: *Human and State*

Date: July 8

【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)

Different assumptions of human nature
The concept of public goods
The functions and origins of the state
How to allocate public interests

【Questions】

How does human nature lead to the creation of public goods?

What is a state?

Why does state form in the first place?

【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】

Olson, Mancur, 1965, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*, Harvard University Press
Locke, John, 1689, *Two Treatises of Government*, Awnsham Churchill (London)
Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, 1762, *The Social Contract*, Marc-Michel Rey (Amsterdam)
Plato, c. 380 BCE, *The Republic*

【Assignments for this session (if any)】

N/A

Session 4: *National Identity and Nationalism*

Date: July 9

【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)

Human identity
Politics and identity
The state and nationalism

【Questions】

Is national identity primordial or constructed?

Is nationalism a good thing or bad thing?

【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】

Anderson, Benedict, 1983, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso

【Assignments for this session (if any)】

N/A

Session 5: *Political Values and Ideologies*

Date: July 10

【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)

Political values and ideology

Liberalism and conservatism

Factors influencing individual values

Other important ideologies: classical and contemporary

【Questions】

How does liberalism differ from conservatism in social and economic dimensions?

What determines people's ideological preferences?

【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】

Mill, John Stuart, 1859, *On Liberty*, John W. Parker and Son

Huntington, Samuel P., 1996, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Simon & Schuster

【Assignments for this session (if any)】

N/A

Session 6: *State Capacity*

Date: July 13

【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)

The definition of state capacity

The measurement of state capacity

The determinants of state capacity

【Questions】

Why are some states strong, i.e., able to achieve their intended policy goals, while others are weak?

【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】

Migdal, Joel S., 1988, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World*, Cambridge University Press

Levi, Margaret, 1988, *Of Rule and Revenue*, University of California Press

【Assignments for this session (if any)】

N/A

Session 7: *Political Institutions*

Date: July 14

【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)

What are institutions?

Why do institutions exist?

Institutions and behavior

The resilience of institutions

Several dimensions of governmental institutions

Institutions and economic growth

【Questions】

How do institutions, both formal and informal, shape our daily behavior and the levels of development in different societies?

【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】

North, Douglass C., 1990, Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance, Cambridge University Press

Lijphart, Arend, 1999, Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries, Yale University Press

Acemoglu, Daron; Robinson, James A., 2012, Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty, Crown Business

【Assignments for this session (if any)】

N/A

Session 8: *Political Development*

Date: July 15

【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)

Political development and democratic transition

The three waves of democratization

Different theoretical explanations of political transition

【Questions】

Why do some countries become democratic while others remain authoritarian?

【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】

Huntington, Samuel P., 1968, Political Order in Changing Societies, Yale University Press

Lipset, Seymour Martin, 1960, Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics, Doubleday

【Assignments for this session (if any)】

N/A

Session 9: *Introductions to the Basics of International Politics*

Date: July 16

【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)

What does international politics focus on?

The realist paradigm

The liberal paradigm

Domestic politics and international politics

【Questions】

How do realists and liberals think differently about the issue of peace and war?

【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】

Mearsheimer, John J., 2001, The Tragedy of Great Power Politics, W. W. Norton & Company

Nye, Joseph S., Jr., 2004, Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics, Public Affairs

Allison, Graham, 2017, Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap?, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

【Assignments for this session (if any)】

N/A

Session 10: *in-class exam*

Date: July 17

【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)

The students are invited to take an in-class exam consists of 5 essay questions that relate to the content of the course. Students are allowed to bring their notes to the exam. The exam accounts for 50% of the final grade.

【Questions】

N/A

【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】

N/A

【Assignments for this session (if any)】

N/A

A CV of 250-300 words and a high-resolution personal photo should also be provided

Xiao Ma is an Associate Professor of Political Science at Peking University, and a faculty associate at Peking University Research Center for Contemporary China. His

primary research and teaching interests lie in comparative political institutions, political economy of development, and Chinese politics. Professor Ma's research addresses the questions of power-sharing among political elites both *with* and *without* the constraints of formal political institutions and how elite interactions, in turn, shape policy outcomes. His first book, [Localized Bargaining](#) (Oxford University Press, 2022), examines how intergovernmental bargaining, particularly those by local governments, shape China's high-speed railway program, one of the largest infrastructure projects in human history. His work has appeared in outlets such as *Comparative Political Studies*, *Political Communication*, *Security Studies*, *Studies in Comparative and International Development*, *World Development*, and *China Quarterly*.

