

**DPI-205: Responsibility and Representation:
Meeting the Demands of Political Life**

Michael Ignatieff

Mondays and Wednesdays 8:45-10:00 AM

Classroom: L-230

Course Description:

This is a course for students considering a career in politics and seeking to prepare themselves for its characteristic dilemmas: staying truthful versus saying what it takes to win; balancing partisanship with civility; doing what your constituents want versus what you think is right; managing the pressures of money and influence; being loyal to party versus being loyal to yourself and your people; maintaining the distinction between enemies and adversaries; knowing the difference between an honorable compromise and a rotten one; knowing when to fight and when to make a deal; when to shoulder responsibility alone and when to force it on to others; learning the difference between gut instinct and good judgment.

It is not a course in how to win elections and it is not a course on American politics. Instead, it focuses on the inner demands of political life in 21st century democracies and seeks to prepare students for the exercise of judgment, responsibility and choice.

Biography:

Michael Ignatieff, Edward R. Murrow Professor of Practice at the Kennedy School, holds a PhD in history from Harvard and is a former Member of the Canadian Parliament and Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada. He is the author of fifteen books, including *The Needs of Strangers* (1984), *Blood and Belonging* (1993), *The Warrior's Honor* (1998), and *Fire and Ashes: Success and Failure in Politics* (2013).

**General Office Hours (by appointment)
Monday & Wednesday 2:00-4:00 PM
Taubman 240, Shorenstein Center**

Students are encouraged to use office hours to discuss memos, assignments, presentations, paper topics, as well as any other matter, including their future professional development.

Please arrange all appointments via email:
brandon_ward@hks.harvard.edu

Admission:

Cross-registrants from other schools and programs, undergraduates, and auditors will require the instructor's permission to participate in the course. Priority goes to HKS students.

Grading:

The Academic Council, with the support of the Dean, has issued recommendations on grading policy including the following suggested curve: A (10-15%), A- (20-25%), B+ (30-40%), B (20-25%), and B- or below (5-10%). Grading will follow this HKS grading curve.

Evaluation and Assignments:

- 1. Assignment 1 (10%):** *All* students will complete a 500 word memo, due at the end of the first week of class, articulating why, exactly, they might consider a political career and the chief obstacle they will have to overcome when they return to their home country to seek office. The due date is **Friday, January 29 by 5 PM via the Canvas course page.**
- 2. Class Presentations (20%):** Classes marked with a * are available as student presentation sessions. Information on how to sign-up for a group presentation will be distributed via the Canvas course page. The objective is *not* to rehash the reading material, but to widen the frame of discussion, to focus on a key leadership dilemma in public life and to take the class into new and

challenging areas. A meeting between the instructor and the group is mandatory before each session. The group can be as small as 2 or as large as 4.

3. **Assignment 2 (20%):** Students who do *not* do a group class presentation will write a 1500 word policy memo. **Due Friday, March 11 by 5 PM via the Canvas course page.**
4. **Assignment 3 (40%):** *All* students will complete a 3000 word policy analysis paper. **Due Friday, April 29 by 5 PM via the Canvas course page.**
5. **Class Participation (30%):** The class combines lecture and discussion. Come to class prepared. You are expected to read approximately 40 pages for each class. Be ready for questions and challenges. Your participation in class and on the course page will be assessed and will figure in your final grade.

Deadlines and Extensions:

All assignments should be submitted via the Canvas course page as Word documents. No PDFs or printouts please. Deadline extensions must be requested from the instructor. Late papers will be penalized.

Plagiarism:

Students are expected to do all their assignments themselves and to footnote ideas, quotations, facts, data and other material that they take from any other source. Failure to do so is theft and constitutes an act of professional dishonesty. If plagiarism is proven, students may be asked to withdraw or face expulsion. Please avoid any possibility of penalty by consulting with the instructor in advance to clarify the guidelines you need to follow.

Readings:

The readings will balance the classics — Edmund Burke, James Madison, Niccolo Machiavelli, John Stuart Mill, Max Weber, Isaiah Berlin — with case studies designed to test student responses to challenges, both

ethical and practical, that face those seeking and holding public office in democratic societies around the world. Readings are available on-line via the DPI-205 Canvas course page. If students experience any difficulty accessing material, they should contact the instructor immediately.

Syllabus:

1. Monday January 25: Why do you want it?

Why do you want to be a politician? What obstacles will you have to overcome if you return home to seek public office?

No assigned reading. A 500 word memo — identifying the single reason why you might seek office in your own country and the biggest single obstacle that stands in your way if you do — is due Friday, January 29 by 5 PM via the Canvas course page.

2. Wednesday January 27: Responsibility and Vocation

What is an ‘ethics of responsibility’ and to whom is it owed?

H.H. Gerth and C.W. Mills (eds.), “Politics as a Vocation” *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (Oxford, New York, 1958).

3. Monday February 1: Representation

What does it mean to represent ‘the people?’ How does a leader reconcile his judgment with those he serves?

Hannah Pitkin, “Political Representation” in The Concept of Representation (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1967), ps. 209-240.

John Stuart Mill, “Considerations on Representative Government” (1861), ch. 5, http://www.constitution.org/jsm/rep_gov.htm

4. Wednesday February 3: Representation and Political Courage

What price should you be prepared to pay for defying those you represent?

John F. Kennedy, *Profiles in Courage* (New York: Harper, 1955, 2003), Introduction, ps. 1-19.

Edmund Burke, "Letter to the Electors of Bristol," 1774, excerpts.
<http://www.econlib.org/library/LFBooks/Burke/brkSWv4c1.html>

5. Monday February 8: Standing in Politics

**How do candidates establish their standing with voters?
What narratives work? Which ones fail?**

Michael Ignatieff, *Fire and Ashes* (HUP, 2013), ch. 7, ps. 115-134.

Drew Westen, *The Political Brain* (Public Affairs, New York, 2007), "Winning States of Mind", ch. 1.

Marshall Ganz, "What is Public Narrative?" (HKS: 2008).

***6. Wednesday February 10: Saving Your Standing**

Barack Obama, "Towards a More Perfect Union," Speech, Philadelphia Constitution Hall, March 2008.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zrp-v2tHaDo>

John F. Kennedy, "Speech on the Religious Issue," Houston, September, 1960.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_SsVpkh5yvE

February 15: No Class – Holiday (President's Day)

7. Wednesday February 17: Standing and Silencing

Some voices are heard. Others get silenced. Who decides?

Thomas E. Patterson, Chapter 2 in "Informing the News: The Need for Knowledge-Based Journalism," pgs. 33-59.

Jason Stanley, "The Ways of Silencing", *New York Times*, June 25, 2011.

8. Monday February 22: Language in Politics

Is it possible to call a spade a spade in politics? Is it even desirable?

Harry Frankfurt, On Bullshit (Princeton University Press, 2005).

George Orwell, "Politics and the English Language" (1946).

***9. Wednesday February 24: Mistakes with Language**

In the language game that is politics, why are mistakes so costly?

Steven Poole, Unspeak (New York Grove, 2006), Introduction, pgs. 1-13.

"Gore and the Embellishment Issue: Press Coverage of the Gore Campaign," KSG Case C15-02-1679.0, 2003.

10. Monday February 29: Corruption

Why is corruption prevalent in so many democracies? What can a leader do to fight it?

Mark E. Warren, "What Does Corruption Mean in a Democracy?" *American Journal of Political Science*, 48, 2, 2004, ps. 328-343.

Michael Pinto-Duschinsky, "Financing Politics: A Global View," *Journal of Democracy*, 13, 4, Oct. 2002, ps. 69-85.

***11. Wednesday March 2: Corruption**

Kenneth Winston, "The Prison Master's Dilemma," *Ethics in Public Life: Good Practitioners in a Rising Asia* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), ps. 61-93.

12. Monday March 7: Getting Your Hands Dirty

When do noble ends justify ignoble means in politics?

Michael Walzer, "Political Action: The Problem of Dirty Hands," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 1973.

***13. Wednesday March 9: Dirty Hands Continued**

'Kill lists' and the question of Presidential responsibility.

Jo Becker and Scott Shane, "Secret 'Kill List' Proves a Test of Obama's Principles and Will," *New York Times*, May 29, 2012.

Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince* (1513), Excerpts (Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis, 1994).

****Second Assignment Due by 5 PM on Friday March 11****

March 12-20: Spring Break- No Classes

***14. Monday March 21: Compromises: Honorable and Rotten**

When is a political deal a reasonable compromise and when is it a sell-out? When should a politician split the difference and when should he or she hold out for a principle?

Avishai Margalit, *On Compromise* (Princeton University Press, 2010), ch. 6, ps. 147-173.

15. Wednesday March 23: Enemies and Adversaries

**How does a leader distinguish an enemy from an adversary?
How does he find common ground with adversaries?**

Arthur Applbaum, Ethics for Adversaries: the Morality of Roles in Public and Professional Life (Princeton, 1999), “Lessons from Legislative Ethics.”

Carl Schmitt, The Concept of the Political (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), Sections 2 and 3 “Friend and Enemy.”

16. Monday March 28: Partisanship and the Limits of Loyalty

**How do you reconcile party loyalty and personal judgment?
When does partisanship go too far?**

James Madison, *The Federalist Papers*, No. 10
<http://www.constitution.org/fed/federa10.htm>

Michael Ignatieff, *Fire and Ashes* (HUP, 2013), ch. 8, ps. 137-162.

17. Wednesday March 30: Parties and the Disengaged Voter

Political parties are losing influence and voters are ever more disengaged. Can parties be revived? Can voters be re-energized?

Peter Mair, Ruling the Void: The Hollowing of Western Democracy (London, Verso, 2013), chs. 1-3.

*18. Monday April 4: Leaders and Followers

What do political leaders owe their staff? What do staff owe their leaders?

George Packer, *The Unwinding: An Inner History of the New America* (FSG, New York, 2013), ps. 26-34; 62-68; 109-119; 163-171.

***19. Wednesday April 6: When Is Resignation a Matter of Honor?**

**Cyrus Vance resigned in 1980; Colin Powell did not in 2003.
Who was right?**

Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices* (Simon and Schuster, New York, 1983),
ps. 399-411.

Colin Powell and Tony Koltz, *It Worked For Me* (Harper Collins,
New York, 2012), ch. 35: 'February 5, 2003: The United Nations.'

***20. Monday April 11: Exemplary Outsiders: Margaret Thatcher
and Angela Merkel**

**What is distinctive about women's rise to power and their
exercise of leadership?**

Charles Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: The Authorized Biography*, Vol.
1 (Knopf, New York, 2013), Preface and ch. 23.

George Packer, "The Quiet German," *The New Yorker*, Dec. 1, 2014.

***21. Wednesday April 13: Exemplary Rebels: Vaclav Havel and
Nelson Mandela**

How do rebels make the transition to power?

Michael Ignatieff, "The Hero Europe Needed" *The Atlantic*, March
2015.

Vaclav Havel, "New Year's Address" (1990), in Open Letters:
Selected Writings, 1965-1990 (New York, Knopf, 1991), ps. 390-
396.

Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, Ch. 59-62 Robbin Island,
Ch. 100-114 "Freedom."

***22. Monday April 18: Exemplary Intellectuals: Mario Vargas Llosa**

Mario Vargas Llosa, Nobel prize winning novelist, ran for the Presidency of Peru in 1990 and lost. How do we explain his failure?

Mario Vargas Llosa, *A Fish In Water: A Memoir* (FSG, New York, 1994), ch. 2 “The Plaza San Martin” and ch. 18 “The Dirty War.”

***23. Wednesday April 20: Exemplary Actors: Tony Blair**

Tony Blair dominated British politics for a decade. How do we explain his dominance?

Tony Blair, *A Journey: My Political Life* (Knopf, New York, 2010), ch. 1 and ch. 14.

24. Monday April 25: Judgment in Politics

What ‘sense of reality’ must political leaders have? What is good judgment in politics?

Isaiah Berlin, “On Political Judgment,” *New York Review of Books*, 43, 15, October 1996.

25. Wednesday April 27: Politics as a Vocation

Michael Ignatieff, *Fire and Ashes* (HUP, 2013), ch. 10, ps. 177-183.

****Final Assignment Due by 5 PM on Friday April 29****

26. Monday May 2: Evaluation and Summing Up

Course Evaluation, Lessons Learned and Conclusion

No reading assignment.