

Course 5 – Political Challenges

Course Organiser: Jan Bierman

	28 July, Professor Robert G. Patman, Politics Programme, University of Otago Punching Below its Weight: New Zealand and Trump's Iran War Confronted with US-Israeli strikes on Iran on 28 February, the National-led coalition responded with a continuation of a 'softly-softly' approach that has characterised New Zealand's approach to the second Trump administration. This saddled New Zealand with an ambiguous policy towards a conflict in Iran that predictably had significant global political and economic repercussions.
	4 August, Shamubeel Eaquad, Chief Economist at Simplicity Finding Common Ground New Zealand is changing fast and our social cohesion is fraying. These two forces, when they collide, will make it impossible to make the changes that will make future generations prosperous. What can be done?
	11 August, Dr Thérèse Arseneau, Adjunct Senior Fellow in Political Science, University of Canterbury Election 2026: Trends and Challenges This year's general election, the eleventh under MMP, is shaping up to be close and unpredictable. This talk explores how MMP works in practice and how it has influenced past election outcomes and the governments formed. Using insights from recent elections this presentation looks at what current polling might signal, the challenges and complexities of 'winning' in an MMP system, and what to watch for as we approach the 2026 election.
	18 August, Dr Graeme Smart, Principal Scientist for Natural Hazards and Hydrodynamics, Earth Sciences NZ/Consultant Achieving resilience for and against extreme weather events



What defines extreme weather? What produces resilience? And why does our ability to withstand severe weather diminish with each new extreme event? In an illustrated presentation we show the situation in a global context, we discuss how appreciating the problem is part of the solution, and how government, science and community must all play a role in building a more resilient future.



25 August, Dr Rosemary Banks, Victoria University of Wellington, former NZ Ambassador

Navigating New Zealand's way in a changed and changing world

Changes in New Zealand's geostrategic environment are accelerating as a new global power balance is being contested. We are challenged as a country and as a society to understand and adapt to this new context, Distance is no longer a protection from threats to our values and our way of life.