GREAT IDEAS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE
POLITICAL SCIENCE 496Z

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed specifically for juniors who intend to complete honors degrees in political science. As such, it has three main aims: to provide students with some history and background about the discipline of political science and its development, to introduce students to the major fields in the discipline and their main concerns, and to help students to map significant divides in the discipline over epistemology and method. Students will complete three writing assignments in the course, finishing by producing a polished version of a research proposal that could lead into an honors thesis (although this is not required!).

While this course is demanding, we will encounter some of the major issues that have concerned scholars of politics and power over the years. Students will also have the chance to meet several faculty members in the department and hear more about their research. By the end of the term, you should know a lot more about what political science is about and what political scientists do. You should also be ready to think about developing your own research and writing projects that engage with the great ideas and debates in the field.

REQUIREMENTS

*Is this class right for me?* This course will involve significant reading and writing requirements. You will be expected to complete all of the reading and to attend all of the class sessions. If you try to get by through either doing the reading or coming to class sessions, you are likely to be unhappy with your final grades. The course demands a lot, but delivers a lot in return, in proportion to the effort you put into it. That being said, *effort alone* will not get you an A. Only outstanding performances on the various assignments will get you into the A range for this course. Of course, effort is not irrelevant in establishing outstanding performance!

Students will be expected to attend class and participate in class discussions. Constructive, informed, respectful participation that contributes directly to conversations about the course material will raise borderline grades; lack of participation or consistently disruptive participation may result in lower grades. Class participation and attendance will constitute 15% of your grade. The baseline grade for class participation is a B, so a student who does not miss class but never participates in discussions can expect to get a B for this component of the course. You will be expected to keep up with the reading throughout the term. You will not be able to do well on the assignments without both attending classes and doing the reading.

Students will also be expected to complete three writing assignments in stages. The first is to complete journal entries on ten weeks’ worth of the course readings. The second is to write an analytical literature review of at least five sources on a focused topic within political science. The final writing assignment is to write a research proposal. Ideally the latter two assignments will fit together to produce a
prospectus that you can use to begin your honors thesis. Detailed guidelines for all of these assignments will be distributed as they approach. You will write the research proposal in two drafts, both of which will be graded. The final draft will be due at the end of the term.

The allocation of weight for your various obligations is as follows:

- Journal entries (collected twice): 10%
- Final journal: 25%
- Literature review: 15%
- Draft research proposal: 5%
- Attendance and participation: 15%
- Final research proposal: 30%

POLICIES

**Students with disabilities.** If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to meet with the professor soon. Please request that Disabilities Resource Center send a letter verifying your disability.

**Extensions for papers.** Extensions for papers will only be permitted under compelling circumstances and if the extension is requested in advance. Any student who does not turn in her or his paper on time and has not contacted the professor in advance will lose a half grade per day for every day the paper is late unless the student can provide a University-approved excuse.

**Class attendance.** You will be expected to attend class. Each student is permitted to miss two days of class per term with no questions asked and no penalties or reductions in his or her class participation grade. Any classes missed beyond those two will be taken into account in determining your class participation grade, regardless of the reason.

**Regrading of materials.** You may request regrading of materials. If you wish to make such a request, contact the professor for a copy of the regrading policy. You will be asked to provide a written explanation of why you wish to have the assignment regraded.

**Plagiarism or cheating.** This one’s simple: don’t do it. Don’t even think about doing it. Plagiarism is the use of someone else’s words or ideas without giving the original author credit by citing him or her. If you use someone else’s language directly, you must use quotation marks. If you rely on another person’s ideas in creating your argument, you must provide a citation even if you are not using that person’s words. If you have any questions about plagiarism, please contact me before you submit the assignment for grading. If you plagiarize or cheat in this class, the BEST outcome you can hope to achieve is a failing grade from me, in addition to any mandatory university sanctions. Plagiarism or cheating, even if unintentional, will result in a failing grade for the assignment at the very minimum.

MATERIALS

The main materials for the course are contained in an edited volume, a book, and a package of additional readings taken from various sources. The edited volume is Ira Katznelson and Helen Milner, *Political Science: State of the Discipline* and the book is David Ricci’s *The Tragedy of Political Science*. I recommend the purchase of Katznelson and Milner and Ricci and have ordered copies of them. If you are interested in qualitative research, I also highly recommend picking up a copy of Yanow and Schwartz-Shea’s *Interpretation and Method*, which is also available for purchase.

Students will be responsible for reading additional materials that you will select in consultation with me or possibly another faculty member. For each session in the individual fields, additional recommended readings may be suggested, and students concentrating in these fields should follow up on these suggestions.
Both books will be available for purchase at Mary Jane’s and the other materials will be available on the course’s Blackboard site. You will need access to Blackboard to get copies of the syllabus and course assignments.

SYLLABUS

Introduction: What is Politics? What is Political Science?
August 26 Introduction to the course

- Ira Katznelson and Helen Milner, “American Political Science: The Discipline’s State and the State of the Discipline” (K+M)

August 28 [APSA – class will not meet]
- Continue reading Katznelson and Milner

September 2
- Rogers Smith, “Still Blowing in the Wind”
- Ian Shapiro, “Problems, Methods, and Theories in the Study of Political Science”

September 4 (Guest: Michael Malbin)
- Wesley Joe, Michael Malbin, Clyde Wilcox, Peter Brusoe, and Jamie Pimlott, “Do Small Donors Improve Representation? Some Answers from Recent Gubernatorial and State Legislative Elections”
- Michael Malbin, “Participation Beyond Voting: Strengthening Democracy through Small Donors and Volunteers”
- [RECOMMENDED] Michael Malbin, “Rethinking the Campaign Finance Agenda”

History of the Discipline
September 9
- David Ricci, The Tragedy of Political Science

September 11
- Ricci, The Tragedy of Political Science

September 16
- John Gunnell, “The Founding of the American Political Science Association”
- Michael Parenti, “Patricians, Professionals, and Political Science”

September 18
- Sue Tolleson-Rinehart and Susan Carroll, “Far from Ideal”

JOURNAL ENTRIES DUE TODAY

Studying Politics: The Fields
September 23 Comparative Politics
- David Laitin, “Comparative Politics” (K+M 630-59)
• Barbara Geddes, “The Great Transformation in the Study of Politics in Developing Countries” (K+M 342-70)

September 25 Comparative Politics: The Problem of Identity
• Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities (selections)
• Anthony Marx, Making Race and Nation (selections)

September 30 NO CLASS

October 2 Comparative Politics: Conflict and Terror
• Victor Asal and Karl Rethemeyer, “The Nature of the Beast: Organizational Structures and the Lethality of Terrorist Attacks”

October 7 International Relations: Assessing the Causes of Conflict
• Stephen Walt, “The Enduring Relevance of the Realist Tradition” (K+M 197-234)

October 9 NO CLASS

October 14 International Relations: International Political Economy
• Jeffry Frieden and Lisa Martin, “International Political Economy: Global and Domestic Interactions” (K+M 118-146)

October 16
• Selections from MARK BASKIN
JOURNAL ENTRIES DUE

October 21 Legislative Politics
• Selections from SALLY FRIEDMAN

October 23
• Gerald Gamm and John Huber, “Legislatures as Political Institutions” (K+M 313-341)

October 28 Political Theory: Liberalism and Radical Democracy
• Jeremy Waldron, “Justice” (K+M 266-285)
• Romand Coles, “Pluralization and Radical Democracy: Recent Developments in Critical Theory and Postmodernism” (K+M 286-312)

October 30 Contemporary Political Theory
• Selections from MORT SCHOOLMAN
LITERATURE REVIEWS DUE

November 4
• Selections from PETER BREINER

November 6 American Politics: Political Development and America as a Case
• Karen Orren and Stephen Skowronek, “The Study of American Political Development” (K+M 722-54)
• Joseph Lowndes, Julie Novkov, and Dorian Warren, “Race and American Political Development”

LITERATURE REVIEW DUE

November 11  Identity and Politics: The Antebellum Era
• Selections from DAVID ERICSON

November 13
• Selections from JOSE CRUZ

November 18
• Alethia Jones, “Immigration and Institutional Change: The Origins of US Postal Savings Banks”

November 20  Law and Courts: How are Decisions Made?
• Jeffrey Segal and Harold Spaeth, “The Influence of Stare Decisis on the Votes of United States Supreme Court Justices
• Julie Novkov, “Law and Political Ideologies”
• Scott Barclay and Susan Silbey, “Understanding Regime Change”

Method and Epistemology
November 25  The Debate
• Gabriel Almond, “Separate Tables: Schools and Sects in Political Science”
• Timothy Pachirat, “We Call it a Grain of Sand”

DRAFT RESEARCH PROPOSALS DUE

November 27  NO CLASS

December 2  Rational Choice and Game Theory
• Barry Weingast, “Rational-Choice Institutionalism” (K+M 660-92)
• Robert Powell, “Game Theory, International Relations Theory, and the Hobbesian Stylization” (K+M 755-83)

December 4  Interpretation and Narrative
• Dvora Yanow, “Neither Rigorous nor Objective?”
• Mark Bevir, “How Narratives Explain”

FINAL JOURNALS DUE

FINAL RESEARCH PROPOSALS DUE WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 17