THE DISCIPLINE OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
POLITICAL SCIENCE 514

Professor: Julie Novkov
E-mail: jnovkov@albany.edu
Office: Milne 106A Uptown Office: 16B Humanities
Office Phone: 442-5256 Uptown Office Hours: M 9:00 AM – 12 PM

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed specifically for entering graduate students 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, their main concerns, and their varied approaches to research, and to introduce students to professional life as political scientists. You’ll also get the opportunity to meet many of the political science faculty members.

While this course is demanding, we will encounter some of the major issues that have concerned scholars of politics and power over the years, and you will gain working knowledge about how academic labor is organized. By the end of the term, you should know a lot more about the subfields in political science and the variety of methods and epistemological frameworks that political scientists use. You should be ready to think about developing your own research and writing projects that engage with the major debates in the subfields. Finally, you should understand what to expect in graduate school, in the job search process, and in a professional career in political science.

REQUIREMENTS

The course will be conducted as a discussion seminar. You will be expected to complete all of the reading, attend all of the class sessions, 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 10% of your grade. You will be expected to keep up with the reading throughout the term. Each student will also be responsible for preparing a brief presentation and facilitating one class session.

In approximate terms, the first hour and fifteen minutes of each class will be devoted to joint discussion of the day’s reading and/or writing assignments by graduate students and participating faculty; during the final forty-five minutes of each class, faculty and graduate students will discuss a professional development theme relating to life as a grad student, publishing, teaching, and applying for grants and jobs. While many of these themes will be of primary interest to students planning academic careers, those pursuing non-academic careers will find most or all germane as well.

Students will also be expected to complete two scaffolded writing assignments. Students will be responsible for selecting and answering eight short reflection questions over the course of the term. A selection of questions will be provided weekly, and may be used as the basis for
presentations as well as reflection papers. The second assignment is to identify a research question in political science that you find interesting, explain the epistemological and methodological underpinnings of your question, and explain how your question might contribute to the discipline overall. You will present this proposal to the class at the end of the semester and two other students will discuss it. Specific guidelines will be distributed for the assignments.

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

- Draft reflection: 5%
- Research question draft: 5%
- Final research question: 30%
- Discussion of two students’ final research questions: 10%
- Class facilitation and presentation: 10%
- Final set of reflections: 30%
- Attendance and participation: 10%

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 course materials will be available in PDF format on the course’s Blackboard site. You will need access to Blackboard to get copies of the syllabus and course assignments. I have also
ordered copies of Gunnell, Ricci, and Monroe, *Perestroika!* at the bookstore and Mary Jane’s for you to purchase.

**SYLLABUS**

I. History of Political Science: From the Theory of the State to Post-Behavioralism
This part of the course will examine the major stages in the evolution of the discipline of political science in the United States, with special emphasis on transformations in both modes of research and conceptions of democracy as well as on perceptions of the practical relationship between political science and politics.

August 26  **Introduction to the Course**

September 2  NO CLASS – LABOR DAY

September 9  **Political Science as Civic Education I**

   John Gunnell, *Imagining the American Polity*

   *Professional development theme to be discussed:* Graduate studies in political science as a pursuit; APSA and the discipline; choosing advisors and forming committees; comprehensive examinations; the dissertation prospectus

September 16  **Political Science as Civic Education and Political Science at War with Itself**

   Continue discussing Gunnell

   David Ricci, *The Tragedy of Political Science*

September 23  **Political Science at War with Itself II**

   Complete discussion of Ricci

September 30  **Post-behavioralism and the Rational Choice Challenge**

   David Easton, “The New Revolution in Political Science”
   Gabriel Almond, “Separate Tables: Schools and Sects in Political Science”
   Barry Weingast, “Rational-Choice Institutionalism”
   Donald Green and Ian Shapiro, *Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory: A Critique of Applications in Political Science* (excerpts)

   *Professional development themes to be discussed:* Professional self-presentation; developing a CV and a webpage

October 7  **New Institutionalism and the Perestroika Debate**
Rogers Smith, “Still Blowing in the Wind”
Perestroika, “The Idea,” in Perestroika!
David Laitin, “The Perestroikan Challenge to Social Science,” in Perestroika!
Elizabeth Sanders, “Work that Counts,” in Perestroika!
Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, “Perestroika and its Other,” in Perestroika!

Professional development themes to be discussed: Conference papers; presenting talks and papers
SUBMIT AT LEAST ONE REFLECTION PAPER FOR REVIEW

October 14  Methodological and Professional Pluralism

Lloyd Rudolph, “Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom,” in Perestroika!
Rogers Smith, “Of Means and Meanings,” in Perestroika!
Peregrine Schwartz-Shea and Dvora Yanow, Interpretive Research Design

Professional development theme to be discussed: Developing your ideas and a research agenda

II. Substantive debates in the subfields. Each subfield group has provided some suggested readings that address particular controversial topics within different methodological and epistemological frameworks.

October 21  International Relations:

David Rousseau, “Motivations for Choice”
Colin Wight, “Philosophy of Social Science and International Relations Theory”
Hedley Bull, “International Relations Theory: The Case for a Classical Approach”
Herbert Butterfield, “The Scientific Versus Moralistic Approach to International Affairs”

Professional development theme to be discussed: The job market; the range of academic teaching positions

October 28  Comparative Politics: Conflict, Identity, and Politics

Clifford Bob, “Marketing Rebellion”
Victor Asal, Richard Legault, Ora Szekely, and Jonathan Wilkenfeld, “Contentious Choices”
Alexander Moytl, “Imagined Communities, Rational Choosers, Invented Ethnes”

Professional development theme to be discussed: Balancing work and personal life
November 4  **American Politics: Power and Pluralism in American Politics**

Susan Carroll, “Representing Women”
Michelle Swers, “Transforming the Agenda”
David Leal, “Latino Public Opinion: Does it Exist?”
José Cruz, “Pluralism and Ethnicity in New York City Politics”

*Professional development themes to be discussed:* Syllabus and course development, developing a teaching philosophy and teaching style

November 11  **Public Law: Redefining Law and Politics**

Jeffrey Segal, “Judicial Behavior”
Mark Graber, “Legal, Strategic, or Legal Strategy”
Julie Novkov, “Legal Archaeology”
Matthew Ingram, “Crafting Courts in New Democracies: Ideology and Judicial Council Reform in three Mexican States”

*Professional development theme to be discussed:* The tenure process

DRAFT RESEARCH QUESTION DUE

November 18  **Political Theory: Interpretation, Ideology, and History**

Charles Taylor, “Interpretation and the Sciences of Man”
Mort Schoolman, “Situating Receptivity: From Critique to Reflective Discourse”
Quentin Skinner, “Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas”
Peter Breiner, “Essay on Karl Mannheim”

*Professional development theme to be discussed:* Professional collaboration and co-authoring; coping with workload and stress

November 25  **Public Policy: The Relationship between Policy and Politics**

Frank Baumgartner and Bryan D. Jones, *Agendas and Instability in American Politics* (excerpts)
Suzanne Mettler, “Bringing the State Back in to Civic Engagement: Policy Feedback Effects of the GI Bill for World War II Veterans”

Professional development theme to be discussed: Grants

FINAL RESEARCH QUESTION DUE

December 2 Student Presentations

December 9 Student Presentations

December 18 FINAL REFLECTIONS DUE AT 5 PM