Course Description
What is the meaning of "politics?" What constitutes "politics," i.e. what is the stuff of politics? What is "Political Science?" What constitutes its domain or scope of study? Finally, what—if any—relationship exists between politics and the study of politics? What does it mean for a discipline to be "scientific?" Can the study of human activity and action actually be scientific? If not, what can the study of human activity and action be, i.e. what can it look like? These questions are not new questions. They have, however, largely become buried. The goal of this course is to unearth these questions and explore some possible answers with a particular focus upon power and power relations in the United States.

Required Texts
Mills, The Power Elite, ISBN 0195133544
Course Reader

Both the textbook and course readers can be purchased at Mary Jane's Books at 215 Western Ave, Albany, NY 12203 (the corner of Western Ave and Quail St). The texts may also be purchased online.

Grading
Participation 20%
Essay 1 10%
Essay 2 12.5%
Essay 3 12.5%
Essay 4 12.5%
Essay 5 20%
Essay 6 12.5%

Plagiarism
Plagiarism is defined in the Undergraduate Bulletin as “presenting as one’s own work the work of another person (for example, the words, ideas, information, data, evidence, organizing principles, or style of presentation of someone else). Plagiarism includes paraphrasing or summarizing without acknowledgment, submission of another student’s work as one’s own, the purchase of prepared research or completed papers or projects, and the unacknowledged use of research sources gathered by someone else. Failure to indicate accurately the extent and precise nature of one’s reliance on other sources is also a form of plagiarism. The student is responsible for understanding the legitimate use of sources, the appropriate ways of acknowledging academic, scholarly, or creative indebtedness, and the consequences for violating University regulations.
Examples of plagiarism include: failure to acknowledge the source(s) of even a few phrases, sentences, or paragraphs; failure to acknowledge a quotation or paraphrase of paragraph-length sections of a paper; failure to acknowledge the source(s) of a major idea or the source(s) for an ordering principle central to the paper’s or project’s structure; failure to acknowledge the source (quoted, paraphrased, or summarized) of major sections or passages in the paper or project; the unacknowledged use of several major ideas or extensive reliance on another person’s data, evidence, or critical method; submitting as one’s own work, work borrowed, stolen, or purchased from someone else.”

It goes without saying. **Do not plagiarize.** Students doing so will be referred to the Dean of Undergraduate Studies.

**Attendance (part of the participation grade)**
You are allowed **TWO** unexcused absences. Every absence beyond these two will result in a lowering of your grade unless you are able to provide documentation legitimizing your absence (e.g. a doctor’s note, or documentation from the University).

In terms of being on time, that is simply expected of all of you to avoid disruption of the class. You are allowed to be late **ONCE without** it negatively impacting your grade. Every time that you are late beyond this will result in a lowering of your grade.

**Important Miscellany**
The syllabus reflects a certain pacing and flow of the material with which we will be engaged. If that pacing and flow changes, so will the syllabus. **Changes will be made to the syllabus if and when necessary.**

**Schedule**
Monday, 8/25
Introduction

**Mainstream Political Science**
Wednesday, 8/27

Friday, 8/29

Monday, 9/1
Labor Day, NO CLASS

Wednesday, 9/3

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1 [http://www.albany.edu/writing/writers_info/plagiarism.html](http://www.albany.edu/writing/writers_info/plagiarism.html)
Friday, 9/5

Monday, 9/8
**Assignment #1** DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS
What is/are the goal(s) of American political science, based upon these readings?
How are these goal(s) to be reached?
What do you think about them? Are they “good?”

Bring to Class:

Wednesday, 9/10


Friday, 9/12

Monday, 9/15

Wednesday, 9/17

Friday, 9/19
**Assignment #2** DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS
Is political science—based on what we have read here—“cumulative?” In other words, is it engaging in a process of knowledge accumulation, culminating in a view of the entirety of politics? Or is accumulation in the way we are accustomed to thinking about it impossible?

Bring to class:
Leaving “Natural Science as the model for Social Science” Behind
Monday, 9/22

Wednesday, 9/24

Friday, 9/26

Monday, 9/29

Wednesday, 10/1

Friday, 10/3
**Assignment #3 DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS**
What is occurring when we speak of “interpretation?” Is this type of social science superior to a social science predicated upon an image of the natural sciences, rooted in prediction?

**Different Directions**
Monday, 10/6

Wednesday, 10/8

Friday, 10/10

Monday, 10/13

Wednesday, 10/15
Friday, 10/17

Monday, 10/20

Wednesday, 10/22
**Assignment #4 DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS**
Provide an overview of Mills’ critique of social science as it was generally being practiced in his time. Does this critique, as opposed to his praise of “classical” social study, resonate with you? In other words, does his depiction of “classical” study sound preferable to the social studies which he critiques?

Bring to class:

Friday, 10/24

Monday, 10/27

Wednesday, 10/29

Friday, 10/31

Monday, 11/3

Wednesday, 11/5

Friday, 11/7

Monday, 11/10

Wednesday, 11/12
Friday, 11/14  

Monday, 11/17  

Wednesday, 11/19  

Friday, 11/21  

Monday, 11/24  

Monday, 12/1  
**Assignment #5 DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS**  
Does C. Wright Mills’ *Power Elite* hold up today? In other words, assuming that he portrayed an accurate depiction of America in the 1950’s, what would a similar portrayal of America *today* look like? (Furnish concrete examples)  
Answer the following questions in separate sections:  
1) What would a contemporary “power elite” look like? In other words, what sectors of society and types of people would be in it? Would it be the same as Mills’, or would it be different? If so, how and why? If not, why not? (i.e. why would the elite remain steady over the past 60+ years?) (3 pages)  
2) What does the rest of contemporary “society”—those outside of the elite—look like? (3 pages)  
3) What are the consequences of your answers to question 1 and question 2?  
4) Are these consequences “good?” (questions 3 and 4 together should be 3 pages)

Bring to class:  

Wednesday, 12/3  
Flyvbjerg, Bent, *Making Social Science Matter*, pp.141-165. (Use 129-140 as a guide)

Friday, 12/5  

Monday, 12/8  
**CONCLUSION**

Final Essay TBA