THE DISCIPLINE OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
POLITICAL SCIENCE 514

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed specifically for entering graduate students in political science. As such, it has two main aims: to provide students with some history and background about the discipline of political science and its development, and to introduce students to the major fields in the discipline and their main concerns. You’ll also get the opportunity to meet many of the political science faculty.

While this course is demanding, we will encounter some of the major issues that have concerned scholars of politics and power over the years. 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 major debates in the subfields.

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 15% 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.

Students will also be expected to complete three graded essay assignments and one ungraded assignment. The ungraded assignment is to locate and review a paper of interest presented at the 2007 annual meeting of the American Political Science Association. The first graded assignment is to write a short essay identifying and arguing for what you see as the golden age of political science. The second is to write a short essay on what you see as the strengths and weaknesses of political science as a discipline of scholarly inquiry, and how you would change or reinforce its development, particularly in your area of special intellectual concern. The third 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. Specific guidelines will be distributed for each of these assignments.

The allocation of weight for your various obligations is as follows:
APSA paper project  ungraded
First essay  25%
Second essay  25%
Third essay  25%
Class facilitation/presentation  10%
Attendance and participation  15%

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 WebCT site. You will need access to WebCT to get copies of the syllabus and course assignments. I have also ordered copies of Monroe, Perestroika! at 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 30    NO CLASS: APSA (see assignment on WebCT)

September 6   From the Theory of the State to Behaviorism
Overall history of the discipline.

    Rogers M. Smith, “Still Blowing in the Wind: The American Quest for A Democratic Scientific Political Science”
    John Dryzek, “Revolutions Without Enemies: Key Transformations in Political Science.”
    John G. Gunnell, “Imagining the American Polity: Political Science and the Discourse of Democracy.” (Article Length Précis of Book)

September 13  NO CLASS

A further examination of the basic tenets of behavioralism, the principal criticisms of the behavioral approach, and the discipline's image of the post-behavioral era.

    David Easton, “The New Revolution in Political Science”
    Gabriel Almond, “Separate Tables: Schools and Sects in Political Science”
APSA PAPER ASSIGNMENT DUE IN CLASS

September 27  Political Science and Political Theory
The emergence of political theory as distinct interdisciplinary field of study and its relationship to empirical theory in mainstream political science.

    Sheldon Wolin, “The Vocation of Political Theory”

October 4     Rational Choice and the Search for Methodological Unity
The appropriation of economic theory as the basis of achieving methodological identity in political science.

    William Riker, “Political Theory and the Art of Heresthetics”
October 11  The New Institutionalism: Back to the Future
The return to history and institutional studies as a reaction to the growing hegemony of rational choice analysis.

James March and Johan P. Olsen, “The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors in Political Life”
Paul Pierson and Theda Skocpol, “Historical Institutionalism in Contemporary Political Science”

October 18 Perestroika: Methodological and Professional Pluralism
The most recent opposition to trends toward the dominance of singular methodological and professional identities.

Kristen Renwick Monroe, Perestroika!: The Raucous Rebellion in Political Science

II. Substantive debates in the subfields. Each subfield will focus upon one significant substantive controversy relevant to the field of political science. The selected controversies largely align with the methodological debates from Part I of the course.

October 25 Comparative Politics: Identity and Politics
In political science the issue of identity, its sources, and political impacts have been a primary concern. A primary area of focus in comparative politics has been the analysis of the sources of nationalist identity and the impact nationalism has had on politics. The selections for this week present the three main approaches for thinking about how nationalism develops. In class we will discuss how the different suggested approaches imply different conclusions about the causes and solutions for a variety of process from ethnic conflict to democratization.

Ernest Gellner, Nations and Nationalism (excerpts)
Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities (excerpts)
Crawford Young, “The Dialectics of Cultural Pluralism: Concept and Reality”
Anthony Smith, National Identity (excerpts)

FIRST ESSAY DUE

November 1 International Relations: Debating Realism across the Decades
This week addresses the evolution of the sub-field of international relations. We will examine the assumptions and predictions of one of the most important schools of thought in the subfield: realism. Realism assumes international relations is a struggle for power and survival. Realists tend to advocate policies such as military spending and alliances to preserve security in a dangerous anarchic world. We will examine how the great debates in political science explored during the first weeks of this course influenced the interpretation and empirical testing of realism.

David Baldwin, “Power and International Relations”
Stanley Hoffmann, “An American Social Science: International Relations”
John Vasquez, “Coloring it Morgenthau: New Evidence for an Old Thesis on Quantitative International Politics”
Brian Schmidt, The Political Discourse of Anarchy: a Disciplinary History of International Relations (excerpts)
Steve Smith, “The Discipline of International Relations: Still an American Social Science”

November 8  American Politics: Power and Pluralism in American Politics
Since the founding, when Madison emphasized the dispersion of power in the new constitutional system and the anti-federalists responded that a national elite would emerge instead, American politics has featured a debate over power and pluralism. In contemporary political science, the nature of power and the arguments between pluralists and their critics have been central. The issues range from decision-making to state-society relations to the shaping of political values and consciousness.

Robert Dahl, Who Governs? (excerpts)
Theodore Lowi, The End of Liberalism (excerpts)
John Gaventa, Power and Powerlessness (excerpts)
Charles Lindblom, “The Market as Prison”

November 15  Public Law: Attitudinalism versus New Historical Institutionalism
Since the emergence of legal realism in the early twentieth century, scholars have debated the relationship between law and politics. What factors drive and constrain the process of judicial decision making? Should we look more closely at outcomes or process to understand legal change? Can we usefully distinguish between law and politics? And what kinds of evidence are the most useful in answering these questions?

Saul Brenner and Marc Steir, “Retesting Segal and Spaeth’s Stare Decisis Model”
Jeffrey Segal and Harold Spaeth, “The Influence of Stare Decisis on the Votes of United States Supreme Court Justices”
Jeffrey Segal and Harold Spaeth, “Norms, Dragons, and Stare Decisis: A Response”
Howard Gillman, “The Court as an Idea, not a Building (or a Game): Interpretive Institutionalism and the Analysis of Supreme Court Decision-Making”
Pamela Brandwein, “The Civil Rights Cases and the Lost Language of State Neglect”

SECOND ESSAY DUE

November 29  Political Theory: Democracy and Citizenship
A recurrent issue in political theory has been the debate over whether we should promote universality, the common good, and political equality in political communities or plurality, differences, and resistances to common citizenship.

Brian Barry, “The Public Interest”
Robert Dahl, “Procedural Democracy”
Sheldon Wolin, “Fugitive Democracy”
Iris Young, “Polity and Group Difference: A Critique of Universal Citizenship”
William Connolly, Identity and Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox (excerpts)
Will Kymlicka, “The Politics of Multiculturalism” and “Justice and Minority Rights”

December 6  Public Policy: The Relationship between Policy and Politics
Unlike many subfields in the discipline, public policy occupies both a place within political science and beside it as a field of study in its own right (as we see in public policy schools). Public policy scholars often look at questions about the nuts and bolts of public policy. Political scientists who are policy scholars generally look at public policy to ask questions more broadly about politics. This week, we will discuss how politics and political participation affect public policy outcomes as well as how public policy, in turn, affects politics and political participation.

Frank Baumgartner and Bryan D. Jones, Agendas and Instability in American Politics (excerpts)
John Kingdon, Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies (excerpts)
Suzanne Mettler, “Bringing the State Back in to Civic Engagement: Policy Feedback Effects of the GI Bill for World War II Veterans”
Paul Pierson, Politics in Time: History, Institutions, and Social Analysis (excerpts)

THIRD ESSAY DUE
APPENDIX
RECOMMENDED ADDITIONAL FIELD READINGS

AMERICAN POLITICS

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS


COMPARATIVE POLITICS


PUBLIC LAW


PUBLIC POLICY

