

Department of Political Science Spring 2014 Graduate Course Descriptions

RPOS 517 Empirical Data Analysis S. Friedman
(5144) T 2:45-5:35

Assuming little to no student familiarity—and even some trepidation—this course provides an overview of basic statistical methods for the social sciences. We begin at the beginning, examining simple but nonetheless critical univariate statistics. With a primary focus on OLS regression, we then spend the majority of the class studying techniques designed to test hypotheses involving an increasing number of independent variables. We also spend considerable time highlighting the importance of the assumptions on which these techniques are based, consider methods of statistical significance to generalize from samples to larger populations and provide an introduction to more advanced though increasingly popular techniques including probit and logit analysis. Throughout, the focus will be consumer friendly; we will critique social science articles based on statistical methods and, using STATA, we will get a lot of practice applying what we have learned to some interesting data sets. By the end of the course, students should thus become better consumers of statistical methods, demonstrate competence and understanding of introductory statistics and show some facility toward applying these methods to social science problems of interest to them.

RPOS 521 Field Seminar in American Political System S. Friedman
(3677) Th 5:45-8:35

The Field Seminar in the American Political System introduces graduate students to the basic methods, theories, and normative concerns of scholars in American politics. The seminar is organized in two parts. Part I explores theories of power applied to American politics, each encompassing a distinctive approach for studying power, unique assumptions about society, specific techniques for analyzing data, and normative implications for democratic theory and democracy. Part II consists of guest lectures by members of the Political Science department. This segment gives students a chance to sample the different styles, approaches, research interests, and normative concerns of professors in the department. The seminar requires weekly reaction papers, active class participation, and a major essay critically reviewing and synthesizing the literature in a chosen area pre-approved by the instructor.

RPOS 526/R Federalism & Separation of Powers J. Novkov
(9689, 9690) T/Th 1:15-2:35

This is the graduate version of Constitutional Law, designed for graduate students who are interested in understanding more about how the Constitution works as a structure for government, with particular emphasis on thinking about how to teach these topics to undergraduates. It is offered as a two-credit or four-credit option. We will focus on how to teach about how the federal courts, and in particular the Supreme Court, interact within our system of government. The undergraduate course as I teach it is organized historically. As the undergraduates discuss constitutional structure and interpretation and move through the major periods in American constitutional development from the founding through the present, we will think about the advantages and disadvantages of organizing the course this way.

Pos 532/R The Chief Executive B. Miroff
(9685, 9686) W 5:45-8:35

The increasing importance of the chief executive in American governments at all levels. The roles, responsibilities, and powers of chief executives are analyzed and the centrality of the executive in the political process is stressed.

RPOS 540 Urban Policy in the United States C. Scally
(9780) M 7:15-10:15

Characteristics of political behavior that are peculiar to, or more strongly pronounced in, urban settings including factions and bossism, city-town-county tensions, politics of planning, zoning, and other decisions, ward and precinct organization activity, and voting behavior. Cities in the Capital District are used for laboratory work.

RPOS 550 Seminar in Comparative Political Systems C. Chen
(4635) M 2:45-5:35

The objective of this seminar is to provide a critical survey of the field of comparative politics, exposing the student to different methodological approaches and to substantive areas of research. The first half of the course traces the intellectual history of the field with a focus on the bifurcation between theories that emphasize the “universal” (the homogenizing effects of specific processes or variables) and the “particular” (the persistence of distinctive historical legacies and trajectories). It then examines the recent debates between rational-choice, cultural, and structuralist scholars, and discusses the major methodological issues in comparative politics, considering the trade-offs between varieties of formal, quantitative, and qualitative methods. In the second half of the course, the focus shifts to substantive areas of research in the field of comparative politics, including the complex relations among nationalism, nation-states and societies; the origins, consolidation, and patterns of democratic governance; the dynamics behind revolutions and other forms of “contentious politics”; the political economy of development and the emergence of varieties of capitalism; and the relationship between international/global economy and domestic politics and policies. Overall, the course is designed to introduce important issues and debates that comparativists have regularly engaged in, and to provide a broad intellectual map of an extremely heterogeneous field so that the relationships between different kinds of problematiques and approaches can be better understood.

RPOS 554/R Political Violence, Insurgency, and Terrorism K. Deloughery
(10000, 10001) Th 5:45-8:45

This course examines the relationships among, and differences between the following activities in the international political system: political violence, insurgency, and terrorism. The course will include a consideration of the causes of these activities, their effects on national and international politics, and an evaluation of governmental responses to them.

RPOS 565 Feminist Theory T. Shanks
(9691) T 5:45-8:35

The entry of women into the political sphere produces a challenge to the core concepts of political thought. Feminist political thought thus provides an important vantage point from which to think critically about the nature and limitations of key political concepts such as rights, equality, identity, and agency as well as the nature of politics itself. Feminist politics and theory

pose deep challenges to some of the major commitments of modern political thought, particularly to those of liberalism, e.g. freedom as free choice and equality as formal and gender-neutral. But feminism is not as unified as its challenge to liberalism might suggest. It continually faces questions with regard to its boundaries, agendas, and even the subjects of feminism itself – what is a woman? How does the category of gender illuminate or eclipse power relations involving other categories of difference, such as those of culture, race, class, and sexual orientation? This course will explore the variety of feminisms emerging out of women’s struggles for political inclusion (liberal, Marxist and radical feminisms) as well as more recent feminist theoretical challenges to the category of woman, identity politics, and rights-centered political discourse.

RPOS 571/R International Political Economy G. Nowell
(7660, 7758) Th 5:45-8:35

This seminar will deal in international financial crises from the nineteenth century to the present. Attention will be given to banking, central bank behavior, trade and trade deficits, as well as economic recovery programs. This is a politics class, not an economics class, but some economic theory will be presented. There are no pre-requisites.

RPOS 578/R International Development Policy M. Baskin
(10217, 10218) W 5:45-8:35

This course introduces the main principles of economic, political and social development, and provides students with an appreciation for the problems and constraints that developing countries face. It presents economic and institutional frameworks that facilitate the analysis of these problems and the generation of relevant policy recommendations as well as country- and issue-specific contexts within which students can apply the knowledge they acquire during the course. The course will take an inter-disciplinary approach that will blend insights from the disciplines of economics, political science, public administration and anthropology in order to generate fresh thinking on important policy issues facing governments in developing and developed countries. Aside from readings, presentations and class discussions, students will work together to address important issues. Students will complete a number of short reviews of literature, an assessment and a policy memo in the class.

RPOS 582/R Global Security R. Koslowski
(9687, 9688) M 5:45-8:35

This graduate course introduces students to the basic concepts of the subfield of international security and considers the contemporary challenges posed by the potential use of weapons of mass destruction by non-state actors in a globalizing world. We review the evolution of national security politics of the United States after WWII and the development of nuclear deterrence within the context of the Cold War with the Soviet Union as the basis for the development of deterrence theory as the dominant conceptual framework of international security of the latter half of the 20th Century. The course will then consider alternative approaches such as human security and societal security that developed as the changing circumstances of the post-cold war world called into question certain postulates of international relations theories associated with the nuclear superpower conflict. The course then analyses in detail emerging transnational threats such as international terrorism, transnational organized crime, the challenges of the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, the tensions between economic globalization and the imperatives of homeland security.

RPOS 603/R Contemporary Political Theory P. Breiner
(5650, 5651) W 5:45-8:35

This seminar will focus on theories of political equality and citizenship and whether we should study the concepts analytically or in the contexts in which political equality and citizenship are fought out. The course will tend to favor the latter direction, focusing on the tensions between citizenship and the market in the struggle over the welfare state and beyond, the tensions between general theories of political equality and theories based on pluralism (eg Robert Dahl vs Michael Walzer), the tensions between citizenship as protest vs citizenship as participating in deliberation, and the tension between national and cosmopolitan citizenship. The underlying principle of the course is that political equality as equal citizenship is expansive prompting its proponents to extend it into constantly new areas whether in the economy, in civil society, in the provision of social rights, and transnational membership while proponents of inequality in those areas tend to resist this process. And this expansive nature of equal citizenship leads to the fact that the meaning of citizenship and political equality is constantly contested. This course should be of interest not just to students in political theory but also those students in other subfields dealing with matters of democracy, political equality, and citizenship.

RPOS 604 Inequality and Public Policy J. Dodge
(6578) M 5:45-8:50

This course addresses the formulation and implementation of public policies that seek to end inequalities based on gender, race, class, sexual identity and/or other categories of marginalization. Theoretical and case study readings focus on the challenges, paradoxes and successes of a variety of social change initiatives. Prerequisite: Wss 525 (Feminist Thought and Public Policy) recommended.

RPOS 612 Preparing for the Professoriate B. Franchini
(8037) Th 1:15-3:15

Students will develop a working knowledge of the American system of higher education, an understanding of what it means to be a professional academic, and the processes common to tenure-track academic positions. This course will be taught in conjunction with the Institute for Teaching, Learning and Academic Leadership. Topics include: Transitioning from Student to Professional, Understanding Institution Types, The Academic Job Market, What Successful New Faculty Know, Understanding the Tenure Process, Balancing Faculty Commitments of Research, Teaching and Service, Movements in Institutional Change to Improve Learning, Department and Institutional Assessment. Prerequisites: Admission to a terminal degree program; CAS 601, PAD 590 or POS 611; and permission of instructor.

RPOS 696 Research & Writing Seminar II M. Schoolman
(5622) T 6:00-8:00

This course is the second half of a year-long research and writing seminar – POS 695 & POS 696 – in which students concentrate on further developing a paper that is eligible for submission to an academic journal and presentation at a professional conference. Students in POS 695 have been developing a paper for publication and presentation and will continue to refine their work in POS 696 with the supervision of a faculty mentor who has agreed to serve as their faculty mentor. The work that students will develop and revise for publication and presentation at the conclusion of

POS 695 reached 25 or more pages and included substantial bibliographies. At the end of the spring semester all students in POS 696 are required to present their research papers to the faculty of the Department of Political Science as a whole.

POS 697	SELECTED PROBLEMS - POS RESEARCH Arranged (Permission of Instructor)	All Faculty
POS 698	MASTERS ESSAY Arranged (Permission of Instructor)	All Faculty
POS 798	READINGS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE Arranged (Permission of Instructor)	All Faculty
POS 897	INDEPENDENT RESEARCH POS Arranged (Permission of Instructor) LOAD CREDIT ONLY	All Faculty
POS 899	DOCTORAL DISSERTATION Arranged (Permission of Instructor) LOAD CREDIT ONLY, ABD STATUS ONLY	All Faculty