

Department of Political Science Spring 2015 Graduate Course Descriptions

RPOS 501 Field Seminar in Political Theory. P. Breiner
(9944)

This seminar provides an overview of some fundamental questions and fundamental texts in political theory, both past and present. It also addresses some of the major debates about how political theory should be studied, including problems of methodology in interpreting political theory. I have structured the course so that it will alternate between three dimensions of political theory: in-depth textual examination of certain key thinkers in political theory (specifically, Plato, Machiavelli, Rousseau, Rawls, and Hannah Arendt); textual commentary on these thinkers; and contemporary work that uses these thinkers as a point of departure but presses the problems they raise in new directions. We will close the course with debates about how political theory should be studied. The course is not only directed to political theorists but any graduate student in political science who would like to engage with some of the core arguments in political theory that inform inquiry in political science. Indeed, one of the points of the course is to show how political theories often assume different kinds of political science as their background.

RPOS 513 Field Seminar in Public Policy P. Strach
(9945)

This course introduces students to public policy and the policy process in the United States and in comparative context. In it, we focus on important *theories* of how policymaking works from pressures on legislators to make policy, adapt policy, implement it, and the effect it has on citizens' individual lives. We take a broad overview of the classics as well as look at new directions in contemporary policy research. This course is recommended for students who are interested American or comparative politics broadly or policy students looking for theoretical background.

RPOS 517 Empirical Data Analysis J. Karreth
(4868)

Assuming little to no participant familiarity with quantitative methods--and even some trepidation toward statistics--this course provides an introduction to basic statistical methods for the social sciences. Upon successful completion, course participants will be better consumers of statistical methods, have acquired competence and understanding of introductory statistics and be able to apply these methods to social science problems of interest to them. The course also prepares participants for taking more advanced and specialized quantitative methods courses. Special emphasis is placed on applied data analysis. Participants will work with a variety of hands-on exercises to prepare them to conduct their own research projects, from data collection and management to presenting research findings. Excerpt of topics covered: overview of quantitative approaches to empirical social science and causal inference; univariate statistics; hypothesis testing; bivariate and multiple regression; assumptions underlying the linear regression model; and extensions of linear regression, including generalized linear models. No prior knowledge in statistics is required or expected.

RPOS 521 Field Seminar in American Political System S. Friedman
(3514)

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 540 Urban Policy in the United States A. Tiwari
(8815)

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 544 American Political Development B. Miroff
(9953)

This seminar in American Political Development examines one of the fastest-growing approaches to the study of American Politics, the historical approach. Popularly known as APD, American Political Development as a field sweeps across the entire terrain of American politics rather than concentrating on only a single area. In the seminar, we will consider APD scholarship on American institutions, political culture, political economy, race and gender, and public policy. Readings will be substantial but writing assignments will be modest.

RPOS 550 Seminar in Comparative Political Systems M. Weiss
(4414)

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 551 Democratization M. Weiss
(10524)

The course is designed to provide both a conceptual understanding of democratic theories and empirical knowledge of experiences of democratic transition and consolidation. It will investigate different forms of democracy, focusing particularly on new- or late-democratizing countries of East and Southeast Asia. The course begins by looking at the various models of democracy, and the tension between institutional and societal-based theories of democratic change. The course will then apply these theories to specific cases, examining the role of formal democratic institutions, the processes of democratic consolidation, and the relationship between democracy and development.

RPOS 554/R Political Violence, Insurgency, and Terrorism B. Nussbaum
(8997, 8998)

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 571/R International Political Economy G. Nowell
(7197, 7253)

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 582/R Global Security R. Kuo
(8734, 8735)

This course surveys the basic concepts and policy issues of international security. We will explore such issues as war initiation, alliances, the creation of international order, and nuclear weapons. We will also examine how issues like trade, democracy, and psychology affect these subjects. The course will blend theory and policy, providing students with a comprehensive "toolkit" to analyze critical security challenges and develop compelling research questions and policy recommendations.

RPOS 603/R Contemporary Political Theory M. Schoolman
(5328, 5329)

"The Politics of Aesthetics." This course will take up a variety of aesthetic theories and examples of works of art that have been analyzed in light of various aesthetic theories. Readings will include works by Friedrich Schiller, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Walter Benjamin, Gilles Deleuze, and Jacques Ranciere. Our work will be guided by an interest in how aesthetic theory can serve as the basis for interpreting and determining the politics of various art forms, including literature, poetry, painting, and popular culture, especially film.

RPOS 604 Inequality and Public Policy J. Dodge
(6229)

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 605 Migration & Membership R. Koslowski
(9958)

Surveys dilemmas faced by local, national and international policymaking bodies addressing population movement. Attention on the political and policy dimensions, including debates about national identity, immigration policy, political rights of immigrants, and integration (assimilation) policies. U.S., international and comparative contexts examined.

RPOS 612 Preparing for the Professoriate B. Franchini
(7498)

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 618 Qualitative Methods J. Novkov
(9959)

This course examines qualitative research and how it fits in the broader discipline of political science. It covers the contributions and limitations of qualitative research; the nuts and bolts of conducting qualitative research; and how to analyze the results. Prerequisites: Pos 516, Pos 517 or equivalent.

RPOS 619 Methods in Spatial Analysis M. Ingram
(10671)

Spatial analysis is a method for examining phenomena of interest while explicitly accounting for the geographic interdependence of units of analysis. Why should you be interested in interdependence? Many research agendas treat units (people, locations, countries, states, counties, etc.) as independent or unrelated to each other. Sometimes this assumption is tenable, and sometimes it is untenable. Where this is assumption is less realistic, spatial analysis lends itself to examining the phenomenon of interest while explicitly accounting for the geographic relations among units. Further, notions of diffusion, spread, or contagion inhere in many existing theories, but are rarely examined empirically with appropriate methods. Again, spatial analysis lends itself to the study of diffusion and similar processes by explicitly accounting for

organizations (like rating agencies or the International Monetary Fund) on national public finance. It seeks to answer questions like ‘Why do different countries spend and tax so differently?’ ‘Why do some countries get dangerously indebted?’ ‘How do others keep their budgets in balance?’ The course relies primarily on lectures and class discussion. The last classes are set aside for projects analyzing the significant problems of several countries in the wake of the global economic and financial crisis.

RPOS 798	READINGS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE Arranged (Permission of Instructor)	All Faculty
RPOS 897	INDEPENDENT RESEARCH POS Arranged (Permission of Instructor) LOAD CREDIT ONLY	All Faculty
RPOS 899	DOCTORAL DISSERTATION Arranged (Permission of Instructor) LOAD CREDIT ONLY, ABD STATUS ONLY	All Faculty