

Political Science 191
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Senior Seminar in Political Science

The mission statement of the Department of Politics and International Relations says:

"The Department of Politics and International Relations seeks to induct students into the community of liberally educated individuals who are capable of understanding government and politics in terms of the theories, concepts, and tools of sophisticated political analysis which characterize the discipline of political science. The liberal-arts dimension of our mission stems from our belief that all people are embedded in a political environment which acts upon them in ways they must understand if they are to function effectively as active participants in a democratic society.

Our goal, therefore, is not to train professional political scientists, but rather to produce the liberally educated citizen who is fluent in the language of politics and political analysis and thereby has a foundation for both citizenship in a democratic society and successful training in a job, in a graduate school, or in a professional school. Such a person has the capacity to recognize and evaluate assumptions, implications, and causal relationships pertaining to government and politics and, by extension, to other realms of human experience."

In this seminar, we will attempt to draw together the multiple experiences you have had in a variety of political science (and other) classes and see how the concepts and ideas that we focus on in this discipline help us to understand the world around us. We will focus on two main ideas, globalization and democracy, and see how our political practices reflect the ideas and assumptions we have about those concepts and how the way we think about and implement these concepts, in turn, has an impact on the lives that we live.

Often, a senior capstone class will involve some kind of long research paper where a student shows off the research and analytical skills they have acquired. That will not be our focus here. Rather, given the mission of the department, our focus will be on the "real world" of politics and how sophisticated political analysis can help us better understand that world. We will, therefore, spend a lot of time writing about and discussing "current events" but not just by way of description. Rather we will analyze these events through the tools of sophisticated political analysis. In doing so, hopefully, we will come to a better understanding of both those tools and the world in which we are living.

If you want more information about the Department of Politics and International Relations, please see the department's [home page](#).

Readings:

All students should read The New York Times. Through a program on campus, the Times is available on weekdays in all of the dormitories as well as other buildings on campus including Meredith, Aliber and Olmsted. Please pick up the Times everyday, Monday through Friday. My experience is that students who claim they will "read it on the web," do not do so as regularly as those who pick up a paper copy. As you will note below, we will be applying the political concepts discussed in the readings to news of the day (sometimes in a general sense, but other times in relationship to specific articles in the Times) and you will be writing short papers and leading discussions relating the news of the day to the analysis of political science so it is essential that you become a regular reader of the news.

In addition, there are four books available for purchase at the bookstore. They are:

Lane, Ruth, *Political Science in Theory and Practice: The Politics Model*.

Paul, T.V., G. John Ikenberry, and John A. Hall, *The Nation-State in Question*

Reynolds, Andrew, *The Architecture of Democracy: Constitutional Design, Conflict Management and Democracy*.

Thompson, Dennis, *Just Elections: Creating a Fair Electoral Process in the United States*.

Requirements:

1. Preparation for and participation in class discussions. This is a seminar class. Discussion, not lecture, will be our main classroom activity. There will be ten class sessions when responsibility for running the class will fall to groups of four to six students and, thus you will each take two turns in the groups running the discussion. Fulfilling that responsibility as well as participating in the discussions that occur in classes where I am running the discussion will be factored into this portion of your grade. If you are not in class, I will assume you are not prepared. This will count for 20% of your grade.

2. You will write three (4 to 8 page) analytical papers which will discuss some aspects of the readings in relationship to current events. The first of these papers will deal with issues raised in the Lane book on the study of politics, the second with issues raised in the Paul book on the role of the nation-state in a globalized world, and the third will deal with issues raised in the

Reynolds book on the nature of democracy.. The specific assignments (or choice of assignments) will be posted one to two weeks before the essays are due. The first of these essays will be worth 10% of your grade. The second and third will each be worth 15% of your grade.

Please note that on all of these assignments I expect the work you hand in to be your own. Plagerism or academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. If you have any questions about this, see me or consult the discussion of [academic dishonesty](#), on the web site of the Department of Politics and International Relations.

3. There will be ten classes where the primary focus of the class will be a discussion of current affairs as described in the New York Times in relationship to the issues raised in the readings. These are the classes where you will be running the discussion. On these days you will hand in a one to two page response paper which will relate some specific article in the New York Times to the articles we have been reading for class. You are not responsible for handing in a paper on the two days you are in the group leading the class discussion. (Those students will need to prepare for a broader discussion of these issues). In addition, there will be one such day when one of your analytical essays is due so no-one will need to hand in a New York Times paper. Thus, there will be a total of seven such papers that you will hand in. I will count the highest six grades. Each is worth 2.5% of your grade for a total of 15%. **Please note that I will not accept late papers for these assignments.** There is more detail about these assignments at the end of the syllabus.

4. A final exam 25% of your grade. Half of the final will be a take home question on the Schier book. The other half will be in-class essay questions.

Assignments:

August 23: Introduction. No readings due.

August 25: The Politics Model: Lane, chapters 1,2.

August 30: Modeling to Study Politics, Lane, chapters 3,4.

September 1: No class. I will be out of town.

September 6: Making the Model Work, Lane, chapters 5,6.

September 8: Essay #1: Studying elections with the politics model. Due in class.

September 13: Globalization: An Introduction. Paul, chapter 1; Hand out group assignments for the semester.

September 15: National Identity: Paul, chapters 2,3.

September 20: Group 1: Applications from the NY Times – with Paul, chapters 1,2,3.

September 22: State Security and Control: Paul, chapters 4,5,6.

September 27: Group 2: Applications from the NY Times – with Paul, 4,5,6.

September 30: States, Markets and Labor: Paul, chapters 7, 10, 11.

October 4: No class. Rosh Hashanah.

October 6: Group 3: Applications from the NY Times – with Paul 7, 10, 11.

October 11: States in a Neo-Liberal World: Taxes and Other Issues; Paul, chapters 8, 9, 12.

October 13: No class. Yom Kippur.

October 18: Mid-Semester Break.

October 20: Group 4: Applications from the NY Times with Paul 8. 9. 12. **Essay #2: The Role of the State in a Globalized World. Due in class**

October 25: The Nature of Democracy Today: Introduction: Reynolds, chapter 1.

October 27: No class. I will be out of town.

November 1: Consociational Democracy and Power Sharing; Reynolds, chapters 2,3.

November 3: Group 5: Applications from the New York Times – with Reynolds, chapters 1, 2, 3.

November 8: Presidents vs. Parliaments; Reynolds, chapters 4, 5.

November 10: Group 6: Applications from the New York Times – with Reynolds, chapters 4, 5.

November 15: Federal vs Unitary Structures; Reynolds, chapters 6, 7.

November 17: Group 7: Applications from the New York Times – with Reynolds, chapters 6, 7.

November 22: Electoral Systems; Reynolds, chapters 8,9.

November 24: No class. Thanksgiving. Enjoy your Turkey (or a Vegetarian alternative!)

November 29: **Essay #3: The Nature of Democracy in the Contemporary World. Due in class.**

December 1: American Democracy: An Introduction; Thompson, Introduction and chapter 1.

Group 8: Applications from the New York Times – with Thompson chapter 1.

December 6: American Democracy: How Voters Decide: Thompson, chapter 2.

Group 9: Applications from the New York Times – with Thompson chapter 2.

December 8: American Democracy: Popular Sovereignty; Thompson, chapter 3.

Group 10: Applications from the New York Times – with Thompson chapter 3.

Final Exam – Wednesday, December 14, 12:00-1:50. One-half of the final will be a take-home essay on the Thompson book. The other half will be in-class essay questions.

Class and Group Responsibilities

This is a seminar class. I expect you to be prepared for class, having done the reading and thought about the material. While there will be times when I have to talk about things to put them in perspective, especially in the early weeks of the class, most of the time I hope to rely on discussion to examine the material. If there are things in the reading that are not clear, you should bring questions to class. If there are points you find particularly interesting, illuminating or just plain wrong, be prepared to raise them in class. You should be reading the New York Times every day, thinking about how the articles in the paper may relate to the topics discussed in the readings.

The groups in charge of class discussions should come prepared to lead a discussion of how the issues raised in articles in the Times relate to what we are reading. That relationship can work in many different ways. Articles might illustrate the points made in the reading. Articles might call into question the conclusions of authors we read. The readings may also shed light on the articles. That is, knowing something about the topics discussed in the readings may help us fill in the gaps in newspaper accounts. They may provide context and theory which helps us explain or understand the events being reported. They may provide a deeper understanding of the events in the world. Our discussions might look at any or all of these relationships. Others in the class will have written a one to two page response essay discussing some specific article in these terms. The group can ask others about their papers, but they should also bring topics and articles of their own. In addition, the group prepare to lead discussion in a broader sense by looking at a series of events or articles as opposed to a single article. You can run the class anyway you would like. You can begin with a summary of the major points you want to discuss or begin with a specific article or specific topic. You can break the class down into smaller groups or run the discussion with the entire class. I am available for advice in that regard, but in the end, the choice is entirely up to the group.

I will assign you to groups (randomly) and hand out the assignments on September 13. If you know that you are not going to be able to be present for a class you are supposed to be in charge of for some legitimate excused absence, you can try to arrange a trade of dates with some other person in the class. I must be notified at least 48 hours in advance of the class of the switch in groups.