

Spring 2021 Course Descriptions

POLS 1120 American National Government

Michael Rocca

This course is designed to introduce students to the institutions of American national government and the processes of American political life. We will be concerned with analyzing how well this political system operates in light of its democratic goals and what it actually accomplishes in terms of policy results. To fulfill these objectives, we will examine the constitutional basis of American government and the institutional structure of the Presidency, Congress, and Supreme Court which was built on that political foundation. Complementing this institutional focus will be an exploration of how U.S. citizens translate their political aspirations into governmental action. For example, what is the role of interest groups and political parties in representing the views of the citizenry? And how do elections and shifts in public opinion affect governmental decision-making?

POLS 1120 American National Government

Michael Hess

This course is an introduction and survey of the institutions and processes of American politics. We will examine the structures, goals, actions and impacts of American governments, as well as look at the basic questions that drive our political processes today. Through readings, online lectures and presentations, exams and individual and group participation, we will explore answers together. Political Science majors will find this course to be a building block to more advanced courses. Non-majors will gain a greater understanding of our various levels of government and the processes behind them.

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to understand the basic principles that drive politics in America. The course starts with the definition of politics, moves through the institutions of government, and finally focuses on those who are affected by and participate in the political process.

POLS 2110 Politics Around the World

Jami Nelson-Nunez

This course offers an introduction to the academic field of comparative and global politics. It covers the historical, core concerns of the field including the development of the modern state, state failure and civil war, democratization, authoritarian regimes, nationalism and multiculturalism, political parties and electoral systems, the formation of racial identities and hierarchies, the relationship between the state and the market, and challenges to economic and social development, including gender disadvantage. Readings and examples are drawn from all regions of the world.

POLS 2110 Comparative Politics

Samantha R. Cooney

This course offers an introduction to the academic field of comparative (global) politics. It covers the historical, core concerns of the field including the development of the modern state democratization, authoritarian regimes, nationalism and multiculturalism, political parties and electoral systems, racial formation and ethnic conflict, the relationship between the state, and the market, the politics of gender, and the political economy of development. Readings and examples are drawn from all regions of the world.

POLS 2120 International Relations**Yury Bosin**

This course will introduce students to the field of International Relations. The course will cover key definitions, central topics and debates, principles, concepts, theories, as well as practical policy issues essential for understanding global politics in the modern age. The students will become familiar with historical, geographical and demographic background of international processes and events. The course will help students develop critical thinking and analytical skills for further study of international politics.

POLS 2130 Political Ideas: Intro to Political Theory**Matthew Simpson**

This course investigates key questions concerning the nature and justification of political systems. What are the purposes of political institutions? What constitutional arrangements can best achieve those ends? What are the advantages and disadvantages of democracy as a form of government? What are the duties of citizenship? We will take up these questions by reading canonical and contemporary works in political theory with a special focus on theories concerning the foundations, strengths, and limitations of constitutional democracy.

POLS 2140 Introduction to Political Analysis**Wendy Hansen**

This course is an introduction to the scientific methods used by researchers to study a wide variety of social and political processes. The goal of this course is to help you develop basic skills for conducting research and to make you a more informed and savvy consumer of research findings reported in political science journals, but also newspapers, magazines, media, and other sources. We will begin with an overview of the basic principles of scientific inquiry and how to apply these principles to the study of political science questions. ***The balance of the course will focus on probability, statistics and data analysis techniques important to doing research.*** Students will learn how to design a research project, develop your own hypotheses, generate or collect data, test your hypotheses through data analysis, and explain your findings. You will learn basic statistical skills using STATA, a statistical software package widely used in political science and other disciplines. No prior math, computer or statistical skills are required, but a basic college or solid high school level math background will be useful.

POLS 2140 Introduction to Political Analysis**Alexis Adams**

Statistics and data are increasingly important to society, from economic forecasts that shape policy to decisions of whether or not a new drug should be approved by the FDA. This course aims to provide students with the tools to critically evaluate empirical research presented both in academic political science and in the news media. Additionally, students will learn basic statistical analysis techniques. No knowledge of statistics, computers or research methods assumed.

POLS 2150 Public Policy and Administration**Jerome Stermer**

The objective of this introductory course in public policy and public administration is to provide students with a basic understanding of the ways that government deals with problems affecting society. We will explore the political tools used to address public policy problems, as well as the political environment in which public policies are formed. Additionally, several specific public policy problems will be discussed during the semester. For each topic, we will try to understand the goals that the government and society seem to be seeking, alternative means for achieving those goals, the costs and benefits of the various

alternatives, and the impact of politics on those goals. We will primarily examine policymaking at the national level, but we will also look at some examples at the state and local level.

POLS 291/491 Internship

Michael Rocca

Internships place students with professionals working in political parties, government agencies, or other public organizations. Interns work closely with both the field supervisor in the public organization and with the faculty instructor. Internships allow students to observe how professionals and professional organizations operate on a daily basis and afford to students multiple opportunities to apply academic skills and knowledge while contributing to an organization's operation. Through an internship, students have the chance to learn through experiences, insofar as the workplace, office, or agency becomes a text for analysis and reflection. POLS 496: For DC interns only.

POLS 300 Politics, Policy, and Management in Local Government

Timothy Krebs

This course will focus on the politics and management of local government policy. While our main focus will be on the policy alternatives that cities face in the areas of public safety and police reform, environment and sustainability, and urban planning, we will also examine policy alternatives in the area of education reform. With each topic our main focus will be on the practical political and management challenges local governments face in trying to wrestle with these critical policy problems.

POLS 300 T: Constitution and How it Got That Way

Peter Kierst

The ideas underlying the Constitution of the United States are much discussed but little understood. Since each generation must take on itself the task of ratifying the Constitution, an accurate understanding of its premises is essential. As free people, you may accept or reject these ideas as you see fit. But to do either you must first understand them. That is the premise of the course.

POLS 300 T: European Nationalism

Lucio Lanucara

The course will examine current nationalisms and consider them in the light of the more generalized recent successes of nationalistic and populist movements in the Western World, including the United States. Analysis and in-class discussion will be aimed at these movements and at understanding what they can lead to in terms of domestic politics, EU integration, transatlantic cooperation, and international relations with Russia and other geopolitical competitors.

POLS 300 T: Congressional Processes

Ellen Grigsby

A course designed to provide analytical reading and writing assignments that address different aspects of your Fred Harris Washington, DC internship. The assignments are designed to help you analyze your personal experiences in relation to broader scholarly topics in political science and political theory.

POLS 303 Law in the Political Community**Peter Kierst**

This course examines a branch of government that has a great effect on your daily life but whose policy-making process is often misunderstood. The aim of the course is to introduce you to how the system is organized and why, how it is supposed to work, some basic principles of law and policy on which it operates, and some of the issues facing it. In sum, this course is intended to help you to better understand your legal system and its role in the larger political system.

public opinion assignments.

POLS 312 The American Presidency**Michael Rocca**

This course is designed to meet three goals. First, I hope to increase your understanding of the presidency as an institution. Over the course of the quarter we will review how institutional rules influence presidential politics. For instance, how do electoral rules affect presidential candidates' campaign strategies? How does our system of separation of powers influence presidents' policy decisions? The second goal of this course is to introduce you to important theoretical and empirical works in the US presidency. Each week we will discuss some of the most influential debates in presidential literature. For instance, are presidents single-minded reelection seekers or do other goals also drive their behavior? And which theories best explains how presidents make decisions? The third and final goal of the course is to train you to think like a political scientist. We will use our discussions and analysis of the US presidency to think deeply about important theories and approaches in the study of American politics. For example, what are institutions and what explains their emergence and consequences? What are the determinants and consequences of individual political behavior?

POLS 315 Constitutional Law: Powers**Peter Kierst**

This course examines the ways in which the Constitution allocates power between the branches of the general government, and between that government and those of the states. This allocation, both as originally framed and as it has evolved over the past 230 years, sheds significant light on the nature of American democracy, and the role of the Supreme Court in shaping that democracy. So this course is at once about political theory and practical politics. In fact, like the Constitution, it denies that those are different things. Particular emphasis will be laid on why the Framers allocated power as they did, how the allocation has shifted over time.

POLS 320 Comparative Political Institutions**Sergio Ascencio**

This course is intended as an introduction to the study of political institutions. We will focus on the origins, functioning, and political consequences of modern democratic institutions. The first part of the course will provide an overview of the role of institutions in solving a variety of problems in democratic governance, such as preference aggregation, collective action, resource allocation, and delegation. The rest of the course will emphasize both theoretical ideas and empirical research on political institutions and consider some of the core topics of inquiry in the comparative study of institutions. These include, among others, electoral systems and party systems, legislatures, parliamentary and presidential institutions, courts and judicial power, and federalism.

POLS 320 T: Politics of Water in Latin America**Jami Nelson-Nunez**

This course examines the politics of water in Latin America. The challenges of managing water pollution, governing increasingly scarce water resources and addressing the increased risk of natural disasters related to water are critical concerns at local and global scales. This course draws on different aspects of water governance and policy to examine core concepts in political science including state-building and government capacity; privatization and market reforms; government accountability and responsiveness; clientelism and distributive politics; and state-society relationships and collective action. It will focus on water-related issues within Latin America, and through the lens of water, students will learn about major shifts in the role of the state over time, influence from international actors, and the effects of democratic deficits on well-being and development. The course will center around water services, e.g. drinking water, sanitation and hygiene, but we will also examine water resources more generally, particularly around development paradigms and the implications of climate change. The course will culminate in student-led final projects that will deliver new material about water-related problems to the class.

POLS 320 Russia and Its Neighbors**Yury Bosin**

Almost three decades ago, the Soviet Union fell apart, leaving fifteen new sovereign states in its place. Russia has remained the largest and most influential country in the region, however, other post-Soviet states have increasingly become independent players in the new political landscape. This course will explore the changing political dynamics between Russia and its neighbors, and the rest of the world. Using comparative method, the course will cover key security, economic, social and cultural issues that have been driving domestic and international politics in the post-Soviet space. The course will combine lectures, discussions and activities to help students develop critical thinking and analytical skills for further study of the region and other related topics of international relations and comparative politics.

POLS 323 Politics of Global Development**Jami Nelson-Nunez**

While the Western world has achieved levels of wealth, well-being and technological innovation unimaginable a century ago, many countries throughout the world continue to struggle with astonishingly high rates of poverty. Since the end of World War II, many non-Western countries have experienced incredible economic growth while others have stagnated with very little change over decades. This class aims to explore this variation by examining different theories of change. We will investigate a wide array of current explanations for the variation in development across the world such as institutions, geography, culture, and the role of the West. It begins by examining the concept of development and questioning the ethical debates development raises. It then explores the evolution in thinking about how and why development occurs, both critiquing past theories and tracing how these theories have themselves shaped today's economic outcomes. The class will also examine the policy implications of various explanations to consider the opportunities each could provide in fostering greater economic and human development into the future..

POLS 340 T: Mediterranean Politics**Lucio Lanucara**

The course will cover the intricacies of politics in the Mediterranean region and examine both the historical contexts that have led to the modern situation and the current issues that are driving the geopolitical climate in the region. Discussion and writing projects will focus primarily on these themes, how they relate to one another, and what implications they have for the future of the region.

POLS 496 For Washington, DC Fred Harris Congressional Interns only**Michael Rocca****POLS 400/512 Global Trends in National Security****Deborah McFarlane**

Public policy, namely national security policies, increasingly will be affected by global geopolitical changes as well as national policymaking institutions. Many of these trends are changing our temporal assumptions, that is, the speed at which changes can occur. The purpose of this course is to examine some of these challenges and project their significance for the near future.

POLS 496 Research Sem: Race, Ethnicity, and US Campaigns and Elections**Gabriel Sanchez**

This is a graduate seminar for students interested in the role that race and ethnicity play in US elections, with an emphasis on the political behavior of racial and ethnic minorities. For example, we will explore how minority group identity influences the political behavior of racial and ethnic minorities and the methodological challenges conducting research in this area. More broadly, this class will examine the history and contemporary role of racial and ethnic minority groups in the U.S. political system. We will cover research on the African American, Latino, Asian American, and Native American populations. With the backdrop of the 2020 election for our course, we will focus largely on political relationships among and between minorities as they relate to political participation, party affiliation, and public opinion more generally.

POLS 512 Casual Inference in Comparative Politics**Sergio Ascencio**

This course surveys current research in political economy, broadly defined. Topics will include political accountability, distributive politics, ethnic conflict, discrimination, government corruption, electoral manipulation, and public good provision, among others. The main goal of the course is to prepare students to design and implement research projects that rigorously identify causal relationships. Course material will expose students to some of the most common solutions to problems of causal inference in social science. Techniques to be covered include instrumental variables, regression discontinuity, difference in differences, natural experiments, and field experiments. Students will be expected to (1) read and critique recent comparative politics research that use these techniques, with an emphasis on applications to substantive questions rather than methodological details, and (2) produce multiple research proposals that use these techniques and present them in class.

POLS 570 Pro Sem: Public Policy**Deborah McFarlane**

Within the study of public policy, there is a schism between those who want to influence policy and those who wish to understand it. This class focuses upon both theories of the policy process as well as the practice of policy analysis. While these two themes may appear discordant, both concerns are very much at the core of current developments in public policy subfield of political science. This course

emphasizes policy theories that have been developed within political science, but also examines interdisciplinary applications in policy analysis.