

## Scope & Epistemologies of Political Science

POS 6716

Tu 3-6p.m., Matherly Hall 15

Fall 2024

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Office Hours: T/Th 5-6 p.m.

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Anderson 304

### Description

This course introduces incoming doctoral students to key epistemological debates relevant to the discipline of political science and surveys substantive themes central to the field. If political scientists aim to produce knowledge, then it is important to investigate what qualifies as knowledge and how different understandings of knowledge suggest different ways of producing it. We will consider the relation between the natural and social sciences, the place of values in inquiry, and diverse epistemological approaches as expressed in the study of politics. The latter portion of the course looks selectively at various ways to study key themes in the discipline, including democracy, power, and violence.

### Required Texts

Readings are provided on the course's Canvas page or through the library's course reserves. Any readings that are not posted are generally available online or by searching UF's library website (log in to UF's VPN for gated materials).

Course material and details in this syllabus are subject to change. I will announce any such changes in class.

### Evaluation

#### 1. Participation (20%)

The quality of a graduate seminar is determined largely by the diligence and thoroughness with which you read and reflect critically upon the assigned texts, as well as your full and respectful engagement in class. As such, you are expected to attend all class meetings, arrive on time, and be prepared to discuss assigned readings actively and thoughtfully. If you will be unable to attend or prepare for class on a given day, email me beforehand.

#### 2. Take-Home Exam (30%)

This take-home, open-book exam will require you to answer three questions related to the first portion of our course. The exam will be available October 13 and due October 16.

#### 3. Presentation (20%: 10% written, 10% oral)

There are two parts to this presentation. The first is a 1,500-1,750 word paper that you will submit in advance of the session you are presenting. This paper will do three things: 1) summarize the readings briefly with attention to overarching themes and points of interest; 2) critically analyze the readings, examining un/convincing arguments, points of agreement or disagreement, your own stance relative to them, and why the readings seem significant to you; 3) pose 1-2 questions or problems that the texts raise for you and/or leave unaddressed and why

these questions or problems are important to consider. Email this written portion to all seminar participants by 3pm the Tuesday before our Wednesday meeting and submit it on Canvas. *All seminar participants should read these presentation papers before class and be prepared to discuss them.*

The second part is an in-class, oral presentation of 10-12 minutes. Introduce the readings by situating them in broader debates and highlight the main themes you elaborate in your paper. Briefly provide your critical assessment of the texts and pose your questions to open our class discussion. *Do not* merely summarize the assigned readings or read your paper.

#### 4. Response Papers (30%; 15% each)

You will write two 750-1,000 word papers responding to your choice of week's readings (not including the week of your presentation). Your paper should summarize the week's readings, evaluate and discuss key assumptions and oversights, and pose 2-3 questions about the texts for class discussion. Submit your paper on Canvas by 3pm on the Tuesday before our Wednesday meeting.

#### **Grading Policy**

I expect assignments to be submitted on time, and late papers will be penalized a 1/2 letter grade for each day late. Any requests for accommodations should be made in advance of an assignment's deadline.

Requirements for class attendance and assignments are consistent with those provided in the [Graduate Catalog](#). Excused absences must be consistent with university policies and require appropriate documentation.

The following cutoffs will be used for grades:

A	94–100%	A-	90–94%
B+	87–90%	B	84–87%
B-	80–84%	C+	77–80%
C	74–77%	C-	70–74%
D+	67–70%	D	64–67%
D-	60–64%	E	< 60%

#### **Accommodations**

Students requesting academic accommodations should first connect with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)). by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, you will receive an accommodation letter to share with me. If you need accommodation, please follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

#### **Course Evaluation**

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via [ufl.bluera.com/ufl/](http://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/). Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students here.

**Academic Integrity**

All students are required to abide by the University of Florida's Academic Honesty Guidelines, which may be viewed at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/procedures/honestybrochure.php>. Most obviously, this means cheating on exams and plagiarism on papers is completely unacceptable. Examples of plagiarism include but are not limited to: submitting entire papers written by others, submitting portions of papers written by others, copying text without quotations and proper citation, or paraphrasing text without proper attribution in a footnote. In addition to harming your professional career, academic dishonesty will destroy your ability to learn from this class. Consequences for academic punishment can range up to automatically failing the course. If you have any questions about whether something counts as academic dishonesty, please contact me. I am happy to clarify these rules further.

## Schedule

- August 28                    Introduction
- Weber, “Science as a Vocation”
  - Keohane, “Political Science as a Vocation”
  - Kofman, “Bruno Latour, the Post-Truth Philosopher, Mounts a Defense of Science”
  - Harrison & Lockett, “Experts, Knowledge and Criticality in the Age of ‘Alternative Facts’”
- September 4                No Class (APSA)
- September 11              Political Science, Past and Present
- Almond, “Political Theory and Political Science”
  - Easton, “Political Science in the US: Past and Present” and “New Revolution in Political Science”
  - Wolin, “Political Theory as Vocation”
  - Shapiro, Smith & Masoud, *Problems and Methods in the Study of Politics* (Introduction, essays by Ferejohn, Wedeen, roundtable discussion w/ Dahl et al.)
  - Monroe, *Perestroika!* (Introduction, chs. 1, 2, 14)
  - Gunnell, “Pluralism and the Fate of Perestroika” and responses
- September 18              Purposes of Political Science? Part I
- Hempel, “Laws and Their Role in Scientific Explanation”
  - Kincaid, “Defending Laws in the Social Sciences”
  - King, Keohane & Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry* (1.1, 2.2, 2.6, 3.1-2)
  - Johnson, “Consequences of Positivism”
  - Bond, “The Scientification of the Study of Politics”
  - Almond and Genco, “Clouds, Clocks, and the Study of Politics”
- September 25              Knowledge and Progress
- Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*
  - Lakatos, “Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes”
  - Kitchin, “Big Data, New Epistemologies and Paradigm Shifts”
- October 2                    Scientific Inquiry, Values, & Power
- Weber, “The ‘Objectivity’ of Knowledge in Social Science and Social Policy”
  - Taylor, “Neutrality in Political Science”
  - Flyvbjerg, *Making Social Science Matter* (ch. 5)
  - Foucault, “Two Lectures” and “Truth and Power”
- October 9                    Purposes of Political Science? Part II
- Yanow, “Thinking Interpretively”
  - Taylor, “Interpretation and the Sciences of Man”
  - Flyvbjerg, *Making Social Science Matter* (chs. 3, 4)
  - Bevir & Kedar, “Concept Formation in Political Science”
  - Schwartz, “Participation and Multisubjective Understanding”

- Saleh, “Philosophical Pitfalls”

October 16                    Take-Home Exam Due (3p.m.)

October 23                    Democracy

- Anderson, “Democracy: Instrumental vs. Non-Instrumental Value”
- Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (chs. 21-23)
- Dahl, *Polyarchy* (chs. 1, 2)
- Habermas, “Constitutional Democracy”
- Pateman, “Participatory Democracy Revisited”
- Sanders, “Democratic Politics and Survey Research”

October 30                    Power, Part I

- Lukes, ed., *Power* (read the essays by Russell, Weber, and Aron)
- Dahl, “The Concept of Power”
- Bachrach and Baratz, “Two Faces of Power”

November 6                    Power, Part II

- Isaac, “Beyond the Three Faces of Power: A Realist Critique”
- Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (chs. 1-3)
- Foucault, “The Subject and Power”

November 13                    Violence

- Tilly, “War-making and State-making as Organized Crime”
- Galtung, “Violence, Peace and Peace Research” and “Cultural Violence”
- Straus, “Retreating from the Brink”
- Dotson, “Tracking Epistemic Violence, Tracking Practices of Silencing”
- Stephan and Chenoweth, “Why Civil Resistance Works”
- Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (“Concerning Violence”)

November 20                    Comparative Political Thought

- Euben, *Enemy in the Mirror*

November 27                    No Class

December 4                    Race & Epistemology

- Harding, *Is Science Multicultural* (chs. 1, 8)
- Mill, *Racial Contract* and “White Ignorance”
- Cohen and Luttig, “Reconceptualizing Political Knowledge”