

Scope & Epistemologies of Political Science

POS 6716

Tu 11:45-2:45, Anderson 216

Fall 2023

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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, race, and justice.

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 and on the Canvas course page.

Evaluation

1. Participation (20%)

The quality of a graduate seminar is largely determined 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 for some reason you will be unable to attend or prepare for class on a given day, email me beforehand.

As part of your seminar participation, send me one question about the readings by Tuesday at noon. This can be a clarifying question or one you'd like us to consider in class. I will not share your questions but will use them to help guide our seminar discussions.

2. Epistemology Paper (35%)

This is a 10-12 page (2,500-3,000 words) paper due October 4 and to be submitted on Canvas. I will provide details on this during our first meeting.

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

There are two parts to this presentation. The first is a 6-7 page paper (1,500-1,750 words) that you will submit in advance of the session you are presenting. This paper will do three things: 1) summarize the readings briefly, including noting central lines of argument or conflict they pose

collectively, or significant oversights; 2) critically analyze the readings, examining un/convincing arguments, points of agreement or disagreement amongst them, 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 noon the Tuesday before our weekly 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 10-15 minutes. Introduce the readings by situating the readings in broader debates and highlight the main themes you elaborate in your paper. Briefly provide your critical assessment of the texts and pose 2-3 questions to frame our class discussion. Because your peers will have read these materials, do not simply summarize the assigned readings or read your paper.

4. Literature Review (25%)

This is an 8-10 page (2,000-2,500 words) literature review, due December 13, engaging your choice of weeks' readings beginning October 11. Choose the week whose readings most interest you (not the week of your presentation). Your paper should engage all readings in addition to outside readings that you identify as relevant to the argument(s) you pursue in your review. Submit this paper on Canvas.

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/). 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/. 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

Week 1, August 23

Introduction

- Weber, “Science as a Vocation”
- Keohane, “Political Science as a Vocation”
- Wolin, “Political Theory as a Vocation”
- Kofman, “Bruno Latour, the Post-Truth Philosopher, Mounts a Defense of Science”

Week 2, August 30

Purposes of Political Science? Part I

- Hempel, “Laws and Their Role in Scientific Explanation”
- Lakatos, “Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes”
- King, Keohane & Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry* (1.1, 2.2, 2.6, 3.1-2)
- Almond and Genco, “Clouds, Clocks, and the Study of Politics”
- Bond, “The Scientification of the Study of Politics”
- Grimmer, “We Are All Social Scientists Now”

Week 3, September 6

Purposes of Political Science? Part II

- King, Keohane & Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry* (2.1.1-3)
- Yanow, “Thinking Interpretively”
- Flyvbjerg, *Making Social Science Matter* (chs. 3, 4)
- Taylor, “Interpretation and the Sciences of Man”
- Bevir & Kedar, “Concept Formation in Political Science”

Week 4, September 13

Scientific Inquiry & the Place of Values

- Weber, “The ‘Objectivity’ of Knowledge in Social Science and Social Policy”
- Easton, “New Revolution in Political Science”
- Taylor, “Neutrality in Political Science”
- Flyvbjerg, *Making Social Science Matter* (ch. 5)
- Hay, “Political Ontology”

Week 5, September 20

Knowledge & Power

- Harding, *Is Science Multicultural* (chs. 1, 8)
- Foucault, “Two Lectures” and “Truth and Power”
- Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”
- Shapiro, Smith & Masoud, *Problems and Methods in the Study of Politics* (essays by Norton, Piven, Reed)

Week 6, September 27

Disciplinary Debates

- Monroe, *Perestroika!* (Introduction, chs. 1, 2, 14)
- Gunnell, “Pluralism and the Fate of Perestroika” and responses
- Shapiro, Smith & Masoud, *Problems and Methods in the Study of Politics* (Introduction, essays by Ferejohn, Wedeen, Connolly, roundtable discussion w/ Dahl et al.)

Week 7, October 4

No Class (work on epistemology paper)

October 4 – Epistemology Paper Due

Week 8, October 11**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”
- Wolin, “Fugitive Democracy”

Week 9, October 18**Equality**

- Anderson, “What is the Point of Equality?”
- Kolodny, “Rule Over None II”
- Rosanvallon, *Society of Equals* (Introduction, chs. 1, 2, 4)
- Gilens & Page, “Testing Theories of American Politics”

Week 10, October 25**Political Economy**

- Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (Block’s Introduction, chs. 3-7, 10-15, 17-21, Foreword)
- Ruggie, “International Regimes, Transactions, and Change”
- Hayek, “The Use of Knowledge in Society”

Week 11, November 1**No Class****Week 11, November 8****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”

Week 12, November 15**Power, Part II**

- Lukes, *Power: A Radical View, 2nd Edition* (Introduction, ch. 3)
- 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”

Week 13, November 22**No Class (Thanksgiving)****Week 14, November 29****Race**

- Mill, *Racial Contract* and “White Ignorance”
- Weaver, Prowse, and Piston, “Too Much Knowledge, Too Little Power”
- Review readings from week 5

Week 15, December 6**Thinking Otherwise**

- Euben, *Enemy in the Mirror*

December 13 – Literature Review Due