SCOPE AND METHODS OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

The question of what constitutes the political has been approached in numerous ways, from situating it within universal or transcendent domains, to social movements and revolutions, to the affective and material worlds that shape our everyday lives. This course provides an introductory overview of the discipline of political science, and considers how social scientists and theorists working within the field have attempted to open up definitions and explanations of the political to critically reflect upon how research questions and concerns are constructed and applied.

The course is divided into three interrelated components. The first provides an overview of the subfields within political science (IR, Comparative, Indigenous, American, and Theory), touching on select debates and turns in political inquiry. The second component will focus on problem-oriented research agendas, trans/interdisciplinary methods, and critical approaches to thinking about and engaging how the political is produced, however the concepts discussed will be useful to students interested in other research methods as well. They include but are not limited to mediation, causation, case studies, complexity, predictability, materiality and ecology. The purpose of the course is to help students situate themselves within the discipline, and to develop an attention to some of the methodological and ethical issues that may arise when conducting research and explaining political life. The third part of the course will incorporate presentations by faculty members within the Department on their current research agendas. By the end of the semester, students will be better prepared to begin their dissertation proposals, and be conversant in fields that extend beyond their own research interests.

Friday 9:30am to 12:00 pm // Saunders 624

Office Hours: Thursday 10am to 12pm, Saunders 608
Email: nsgrove@hawaii.edu
Readings

There are no required books for this course. All readings are available online, or will be made available for download via MediaFire. I will email students links to the readings well in advance of the dates we are scheduled to discuss them. If for any reason you are unable to access course documents, please contact me.

Assignments

Reading Presentation

Each student will present on one of the assigned readings. Presentations will be scheduled the first week of class, and presentations will begin the second week. Presentations should be approximately 20 minutes long. You should be able to contextualize your reading in the themes highlighted for that week.

Journal Presentation

Students will pick a journal they’d like to publish in, read two articles, and prepare a 10 minute presentation (5 minutes for each article) outlining the main points of the article and why they think these particular articles were chosen for publication. Students will present their findings over a period of four weeks. The schedule for these presentations will be distributed the first week of class, and presentations will begin in Week 4.

Seminar Paper

Seminar papers should be between 20-25 pages. The paper should be an attempt to locate a topic relevant to your own research agenda within a particular area of the field, as well as a preliminary engagement with the methods and/or approaches you find most suitable to your particular research question. The hope is that the paper will function as a first draft of your dissertation proposal. All students are required to submit a single double-spaced page paper proposal in class and meet with me before beginning writing. Papers are due one week after the end of the final class.
READING SCHEDULE

Week 1 – What is Politics?
Themes: the political; politicization


Max Weber – “Politics as a Vocation.”

Week 2 - Behavioralism and Its Critics
Themes: behavioralism; classical realism; neorealism


Week 3 - Social Science in a Complex World
Themes: complexity; transdisciplinarity / interdisciplinarity; predictive analysis


Recommended:

Week 4 – International Relations
Themes: postcolonialism; security studies; gender; visuality

*Journal presentations*


Recommended:

Ferguson and Turnbull, *Oh, Say Can You See? The Semiotics of the Military in Hawai‘i*.

**Week 5 – Comparative Politics**
*Themes: comparative politics and the Cold War; stability and order; scholarship on race in the social sciences; area studies*

*Journal presentations*

Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, Chs. 1 and 5


Recommended:

**Week 6 - Indigenous Politics**
*Themes: indigenous governance; Hawaiian sovereignty*

*Journal presentations*


**Week 7 – American Politics**
*Themes: democracy; quantitative analysis; public policy*

*Journal presentations*

Week 8 – Political Theory
Themes: applied political theory; aesthetics; agency; assemblages

Robert Gooding-Williams, “Look a Negro!” Ch. 11 in *Reading Rodney King, Reading Urban Uprising*.


Recommended:
William Connolly, *The Terms of Political Discourse*

Week 9 - Faculty Presentations, Readings TBD
Week 10 - Faculty Presentations, Readings TBD
Week 11 - Faculty Presentations, Readings TBD
Week 12 - Faculty Presentations, Readings TBD
Week 13 - Faculty Presentations, Readings TBD
Week 14 - Faculty Presentations, Readings TBD
Week 15 - Faculty Presentations, Readings TBD