



The Public Role of Political Science

The Senior Honors Seminar

The University of Vermont
Fall 2009
MWF 1:55-2:45 PM
523 Old Mill

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Office hours: MW 12:00-1:00 and 3:00-4:00 (and by appointment)

Course Description

In a new book titled The Future of Political Science: 100 Perspectives (2009), noted Harvard scholar Joseph Nye joins an eclectic group of colleagues to implore those involved in the study of politics to “devote more attention to unanswered questions about how our work relates to the policy world in which we live” (p. 252). Given the tendency of academics to withdraw “behind the curtains of theory and modeling” on college campuses—even as battles over war, health care, and the economy rage elsewhere—there is, he says, a “question of relevance” that must be addressed.

For seniors on the verge of an undergraduate degree, and for political science majors, in particular, this seminar will provide you with an opportunity to add your voice to the growing chorus of those who seek a wider and more active public role for political science in the 21st century.

Required Reading

To maintain flexibility, there are no textbooks to purchase at the UVM bookstore. Instead, all reading assignments are available online at:

http://www.uvm.edu/~dguber/POLS293/Fall_2009/

Some files are in HTML format, while others are in .PDF, so be sure to install the Adobe Acrobat Reader on your computer before term begins.

Course Requirements

Our emphasis throughout the semester will be on critical thinking and the development of strong, analytical writing skills. Graded assignments are designed to evaluate your performance in these areas. Assignments are also designed to give you many opportunities, using different skills, to earn a strong grade.

- 1) Your attendance and active participation is *essential* to the effectiveness of this class. It will account for 25% of your final grade.

- 2) An additional 25% is reserved for a series of short (2-3 page) homework assignments, described below but subject to revision.
- 3) The remainder of your grade (50%) will be determined by a 10-15 page research project due at the end of term, and an accompanying oral presentation. Further detail on this assignment will be provided in due course.

Grading Standards

The grades I assign to written work are based on the following criteria:

92-100	A	Excellent (A range): Grades in the "A" range are reserved for work that is <i>superior</i> in quality. "A" papers are lively, interesting, and intellectually sophisticated. The writer develops a clear and creative thesis, and supports their argument with solid and persuasive evidence. The paper itself is polished and beautifully written, free of grammatical and typographical errors. Above all, "A" papers reflect originality. The writer's own voice and logic are present on the page.
90-91	A-	
88-89	B+	Good (B range): Grades in the "B" range reflect work that is <i>good to very good</i> in quality. The paper completes all of the requirements of the assignment at hand. It may have minor errors and flaws, but the foundation of the work is solid, clear, and reasonably well-organized. "B" papers address topics in a thoughtful way, but offer less insight and originality than "A" papers.
82-87	B	
80-81	B-	
78-79	C+	Fair (C range): A "C" paper represents work that is <i>satisfactory</i> . The writer offers a thesis, but it is usually too broad, or too vague. The paper tends to make assertions without offering specific examples or supporting evidence from class lectures, discussions, and reading assignments. The overall impression of the paper is that of a rough draft. More effort at revision is encouraged and spelling and grammatical errors often require correction.
72-77	C	
70-71	C-	
68-69	D+	Poor (D range): A "D" paper is an <i>unsatisfactory</i> paper. It is sloppy, incoherent and poorly written, marred by mechanical faults (e.g., errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling), and/or factual errors. The writer has difficulty developing an idea, and holding a paragraph together. The thesis of the paper—that is, what the paper is arguing—is usually absent or incomplete.
62-67	D	
60-61	D-	
≤ 59	F	Failing (F): A failing grade is given for work that is exceedingly <i>poor</i> , cannot be understood, or has little relevance to the course.
0		No Credit (0): A grade of "zero" is given for any work that is not completed.

Work produced by cheating, collaboration, plagiarism or any other violation of academic honesty is positively unacceptable and will be subject to the disciplinary actions described in the UVM student handbook.

Class Attendance

Class attendance accounts for 10% of your final grade in this class. It is recorded by your signature on the attendance sheets passed around in class each day. All students receive two “free” absences to use as they see fit (without need for excuse), but these absences are intended for illness and emergencies and should be saved for such. Once they are gone, they are gone. Ten points will be deducted from your attendance grade for *each* class you miss in addition, which means that if you miss class frequently it is possible for your score to fall into negative numbers.

You should also to be aware of the following:

- You are solely responsible for making sure you sign the attendance sheet before leaving class. If you do not, your name *cannot* be added at a later point.
- Any student involved in the forgery of signatures—either on the “giving” or “receiving” end—will receive an automatic zero for that entire portion of their grade, and will, in addition, be subject to the university’s policy on academic honesty.
- Beyond the two “free” absences described above, I do not grant excused absences unless the circumstances are exceptional, or you travel out of town as a member of an official UVM club or sports team. If you are a member of a sports team, please be sure to forward a copy of your schedule to me in writing as soon as it becomes available, so that attendance sheets can be marked accordingly on those days when your team travels out of town.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you have a physical or learning disability, please come by my office *within the first two weeks of class* so that we can confer with the ACCESS office to determine an appropriate accommodation for your needs. It is vital that you consult with me early in the semester. It may not be possible for me to provide an accommodation if I am informed of the request less than three days before an assignment is due.

Religious Holidays

Students have the right to practice the religion of their choice. Please submit your documented religious holiday schedule for the semester to me by the end of the second full week of classes. Students who miss work for the purpose of religious observance will be permitted either a make-up exam or a penalty-free extension.

Classroom Protocol

In coordination with the Department of Political Science, I have adopted the following protocol for classroom behavior:

1. Students are expected to attend and be prepared for *all* regularly scheduled classes.
2. Students are expected to arrive on time and stay in class until the class period ends. If a student knows in advance that he or she will need to leave early, he or she must notify the instructor before the class period begins.
3. Students are expected to treat faculty and fellow students with respect. For example, students must not disrupt class by leaving and reentering during class, must not distract class by making noise, and must be attentive to comments being made by the instructor and by peers.
4. Students must turn off and stow all electronic devices (e.g., cell phones, iPods, etc.) before class begins. Anyone wishing to use a laptop to take notes during class must first ask permission.

Students in serious violation of any these rules will be subject to whatever *grade penalty* I deem appropriate.

Asking for Help

Be sure to ask questions whenever you need to. Here is how:

- I am generally available to answer quick questions both before and after class.
- I hold office hours on a first-come, first-serve basis every Monday and Wednesday afternoon from 12:00-1:00 p.m. and again from 3:00-4:00 p.m. If those hours are not compatible with your schedule, please do not hesitate to ask for an appointment. My office is located on the 5th floor of Old Mill, room 519.
- While you can reach me by telephone at (802) 656-4062, e-mail is generally faster. I check e-mail on a regular basis, but please understand that I may not be able to respond immediately to those messages in the evening or on weekends. My e-mail address is: Deborah.Guber@uvm.edu

CLASS CALENDAR

NOTE: All content—including reading materials and the dates assigned for guest speakers—is subject to change.

I. POLITICS AS SCIENCE / SCIENCE AS POLITICS

Monday, August 31 – Relevance and the Social Sciences

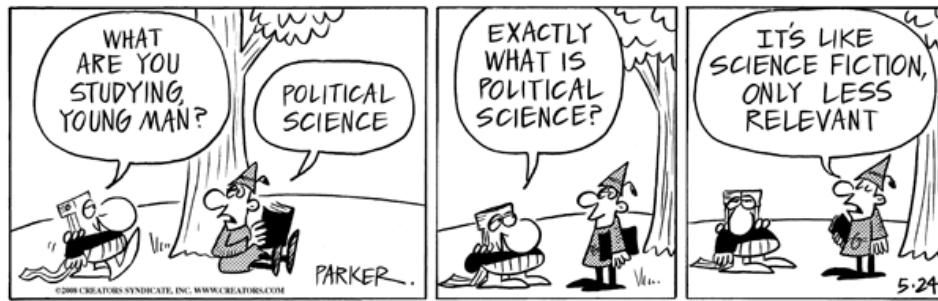
- No reading assignment.

Wednesday, September 2 – The State of the Discipline

In the fall of 2000, an anonymous and disgruntled political scientist sent an e-mail to a small group of colleagues, signed under the pseudonym “Mr. Perestroika.” As Susanne Hoerber Rudolph explained later in a book describing the “raucous rebellion in political science” that followed, the memo “excoriated the APSA and its flagship journal, the *American Political Science Review* (APSR), for irrelevance, technicism, statistical obsession, third-class economics, domination by East Coast white males, and oligarchical practices...” (Monroe, 2005: 12).

To explore the contours of this debate, read the original e-mail online, then select one or more of the following to discuss in class:

- Jonathan Cohn, “Irrational Exuberance: When Did Political Science Forget about Politics?” *The New Republic* (October 25, 1999): 25.
- Rogers M. Smith, “Should We Make Political Science More of a Science or More about Politics?” *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 35 (June 2002): 199-201.
- David Laitin, “The Perestroikan Challenge to Social Science,” *Politics and Society*, 31 (2003): 163-184.
- Robert D. Putnam, “APSA Presidential Address: The Public Role of Political Science,” *Perspectives on Politics*, 1 (2003): 249-255.
- Kristen Renwick Monroe, ed., *Perestroika! The Raucous Rebellion in Political Science* (2005): Introduction and Chapters 1-2.
- Ian Shapiro, *The Flight From Reality in the Human Sciences* (2005): Introduction and Chapter 5.
- Alan Wolfe, “Reality in Political Science,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (November 4, 2005): B19.
- Peter N. Ubertaccio and Brian J. Cook, “Wilson’s Failure: Roots of Contention about the Meaning of a Science of Politics,” *American Political Science Review*, 100 (November 2006): 573-578.



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Friday, September 4 – Putting Problems First

▣ **HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT #1:** Select a relevant excerpt from any one book on the following list (or, based on reading you have done in a previous class, choose another classic text in the field of political science) and write a 2-3 page paper in which you identify the central question it addresses and discuss the reasons for its influence outside of academia. Note, these books are not available online. Please use Google books or visit Bailey-Howe library to read the item of your choice.

- Harold Lasswell, Politics: Who Gets What, When, How (1935).
- Kenneth Waltz, Man, the State, and War (1959)
- Theodore White, The Making of the President (1960)
- Robert Dahl, Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City (1961)
- Richard Neustadt, Presidential Power: The Politics of Leadership (1962)
- Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations (1963)
- V.O. Key, The Responsible Electorate (1966)
- G. William Domhoff, Who Rules America? (1967)
- Samuel P. Huntington, Political Order in Changing Societies (1968)
- Graham T. Allison, Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis (1971)
- David R. Mayhew, Congress: The Electoral Connection (1974).
- James Q. Wilson, Thinking About Crime (1975)
- Richard Fenno, Home Style: House Members in their Districts (1978)
- Samuel P. Huntington, Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order (1996)
- Robert Putnam, Bowling Alone (2000)
- Joseph Nye, Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics (2004)
- Richard H. Thaler and Cass R. Sunstein, Nudge (2008)

Monday, September 7 – Labor Day

- Class will not meet.

II. TRUST IN GOVERNMENT

For Democrats, the question is whether this moment is more like 1932—the dawn of the New Deal era and long-term progressive dominance—or more like 1992—prelude to loss of the Congress to Republican control... [t]he answer will depend on whether President-elect Barack Obama and the expanded congressional majority succeed in restoring public trust in government. If he does, he will have the political authority to enact broad swaths of his agenda; if he does not, his political fortunes could be fleeting.

—Bill Galston and Elaine Kamarck, *The Third Way*
(November 2008)

Wednesday, September 9 – Trust and Why It Matters

- Arthur C. Brooks, “Why Obama’s Ratings Are Sinking,” The Wall Street Journal (August 17, 2009).
- Gary Wills, A Necessary Evil (1999): Introduction, Chapter 9, and Conclusion.
- Marc Hetherington, Why Trust Matters: Declining Political Trust and the Demise of American Liberalism (2005): Chapters 1-2, 7-8.

Friday, September 11 – What Citizens Want

- Mark Schmitt, “Letting the People In,” The American Prospect (August 12, 2009).
- John R. Hibbing and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, Stealth Democracy: Americans’ Beliefs about How Government Should Work (2002): Chapters 1, 4-6.
- William A. Galston and Elaine C. Kamarck, “Change You Can Believe in Needs a Government You Can Trust,” The Third Way Middle Class Program (November 2008): 1-33.



Monday, September 14 – News That Matters

- Sarah Palin, “Statement on the Current Health Care Debate” (August 7, 2009).
- Howard Kurtz, “Journalists, Left Out of the Debate,” The Washington Post (August 24, 2009).
- Shanto Iyengar and Donald R. Kinder, News That Matters: Television and American Opinion (1987): Chapters 1, 3, and 7.

Wednesday, September 16 – The People and the Press

- The Pew Research Center, “Audience Segments in a Changing News Environment” (August 17, 2008).
- Cass Sunstein, Republic.com (2001): Chapter 1, “The Daily Me.”

III. INSTITUTIONAL CONSTRAINTS

...[A] wiser West Wing ought to have seen this train wreck coming. For months polls have shown a huge gap between the popularity of the president and the unpopularity of his policies. Sooner or later, one of these had to give.

— William McGurn, "Saving the Obama Presidency: Obama Needs to Move to the Right," The Wall Street Journal (August 24, 2009).

Friday, September 18 – Setting the Agenda

▣ **HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT #2:** Agenda-setting is key to understanding the roots of political conflict. After carefully reviewing each of the sources below, write a 2-3 page paper in which you compare and contrast the policy agenda (as defined by President Obama and the GOP opposition in Congress), the public agenda (which reflects the priorities of average citizens, as measured in polls), and the media agenda (measured by the amount of attention journalists pay to various new stories).

- "Remarks of President Barack Obama—Address to Joint Session of Congress" (February 24, 2009) AND "GOP Response to President Obama's Address" (February 24, 2009).
- Jeffrey M. Jones, "Domestic Priorities Top Americans' To-Do List for Obama," The Gallup Organization (January 19, 2009).
- "The State of the News Media: An Annual Report on American Journalism" (2008).

Monday, September 21 – The Perils of Bipartisanship

- Steven Stark, "Too Representative Government," The Atlantic Monthly (May 1995).
- Jonathan Chait, "What's So Great About Bipartisanship?" The New Republic (January 15, 2001): 17.
- Thomas E. Mann and Norman J. Ornstein, The Broken Branch: How Congress is Failing America and How it Get it Back on Track (2006): Excerpt.

Wednesday, September 23 – Class Visit (Professor Garrison Nelson)

- Garrison Nelson, The Austin-Boston Connection: Leadership in the U.S. House (2009): Excerpt.

Friday, September 25 – Presidents and the Power of Persuasion

- Michael Link, "Obama, You're No Machiavelli," Salon.com (August 18, 2009).
- Gene Healy, "The Cult of the Presidency," Reason (June 2008).
- Richard Neustadt, Presidential Power: The Politics of Leadership (1962).
- Samuel Kernell, Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership, 4th edition (2006).

Monday, September 28 – The Limits of Likeability

▣ **HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT #3:** Pick one key issue on the President's agenda (HINT: The official White House website is a good place to start) and use polling data from the Gallup Organization to examine the "gap" between the president's popularity and public support for his policies. Summarize your conclusions in a 2-3 page paper.

- Robert B. Reich, "The Limits of Likeability," The American Prospect, August 17, 2009.
- William McGurn, "Saving the Obama Presidency: Obama Needs to Move to the Right," The Wall Street Journal (August 24, 2009).

Wednesday, September 30 – Class Visit (Professor John Burke)

- T.B.A.



Friday, October 2 – Playing Politics with the Court

- Dahlia Lithwick, "Sotomayor in 60 Seconds: A Guide to the Confirmation Hearings," Newsweek (July 20, 2009).

Monday, October 5 – Judicial Power

- James McGregor Burns, Packing the Court: The Rise of Judicial Power and the Coming Crisis of the Supreme Court (2009): Excerpt.

Wednesday, October 7 – Class Visit (Professor Lisa Holmes)

- Lisa M. Holmes, "Why "Go Public"? Presidential Use of Nominees to the U.S. Courts of Appeals," Presidential Studies Quarterly, 38 (2008): 110-122.

Friday, October 9 – Fall Recess

- Class will not meet.

IV. POLICY INERTIA

President Obama's collision with reality continues apace today, as his signature initiatives hit snags—or what Nancy Pelosi calls “the legislative process”—on a variety of fronts.

—Ben Pershing, “As Obstacles Abound, Obama Dismisses ‘Cynicism,’” *The Washington Post* (June 19, 2009)

Monday, October 12 – Health Policy

- Transcript, “Remarks by the President at the Annual Conference of the American Medical Association,” June 15, 2009.
- Transcript, “News Conference by the President,” July 22, 2009.
- Jonathan Cohn, “Diagnosis: Inertia,” *The New Republic*, August 18, 2009.

Wednesday, October 14: Learning from Harry and Louise

- Theda Skocpol, *Boomerang: Health Care Reform and the Turn against Government* (1997): Introduction and Chapters 1, 6.
- Atul Gawande, “Getting There from Here: How Should Obama Reform Health Care,” *The New Yorker* (January 26, 2009).

Friday, October 16 – Class Visit (Professor Alex Zakaris)

- Alex Zakaris, “Expensive Speech, Illegitimate Power: Corporations and Free Expression” (2009).

Monday, October 19 – Energy Policy

- Transcript, “Obama speech on Energy Plan, Lansing, Michigan, August 4, 2008.”
- Thomas L. Friedman, *Hot, Flat and Crowded: Why We Need a Green Revolution—and How it Can Renew America* (2008): Excerpt.



Wednesday, October 21 – Making Climate Hot

- Matthew C. Nisbet, "Communicating Climate Change: Why Frames Matter for Public Engagement," Environment (March-April 2009): 12-23.
- Susanne C. Moser and Lisa Dilling, "Making Climate Hot: Communicating the Urgency and Challenge of Global Climate Change," Environment (December 2004): 32-46.

Friday, October 23 – Class Visit (Professor Bob Bartlett)

- T.B.A.

Monday, October 26 – Civil Rights

- "Remarks by the President at LGBT Pride Month Reception" (June 29, 2009).
- Dan Gilgoff, "It's Slow Going on Gay Rights Issues for Obama," U.S. News and World Report (June 23, 2009).
- John Cloud, "Obama, the Gay Marriage Flip-Flopper," Time (August 19, 2009).

Wednesday, October 28 – The Battle Over Same-Sex Marriage

- Gerald N. Rosenberg, The Hollow Hope: Can Courts Bring About Social Change?, 2nd edition (1991): Excerpt.
- Peter Irons, A People's History of the Supreme Court (1999): Excerpt.

Friday, October 30 – Class Visit (Professor Ellen Andersen)

- Ellen Ann Andersen, "The Gay Divorcée: The Case of the Missing Argument." In, Queer Mobilizations: LGBT Activists Confront the Law, edited by Scott Barclay, Mary Bernstein, and Anna-Maria Marshall (2009).

V. AMERICA ABROAD

[E]ach nation gives life to democracy in its own way, and in line with its own traditions. But history offers a clear verdict: governments that respect the will of their own people are more prosperous, more stable, and more successful than governments that do not.

—Barack Obama, Speech to Ghana's Parliament, July 11, 2009

Monday, November 2 – The Democratic Peace

▣ **HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT #4:** According to the scholars, the following cases appear to contradict the basic tenets of democratic peace theory, which—in essence—says that democracies do not wage war against other democracies. Keeping this context in mind, select one conflict from the list and write a 2-3 page summary of it: the 1861-1865 American Civil War; the 1947 Indo-Pakistani War; the 1948 Arab-Israeli War; or the 2008 South Ossetia War.

- John M. Owen IV, "Iraq and the Democratic Peace," Foreign Affairs (November/December 2005).
- James Traub, The Freedom Agenda: Why America Must Spread Democracy (Just Not the Way George Bush Did) (2008): Excerpt.

Wednesday, November 4 – Advising the President

- Andrew Bennett and G. John Ikenberry, "The Review's Evolving Relevance for U.S. Foreign Policy, 1906-2006," *American Political Science Review*, 100 (November 2006): 651-658.
- Richard Jordan, et al., "One Discipline or Many? TRIP Survey of International Relations Faculty in Ten Countries," unpublished manuscript (February 2009).

Friday, November 6 – Class Visit (Professor Greg Gause)

- F. Gregory Gause, III, *The International Relations of the Persian Gulf* (forthcoming 2010): Excerpt.



VI. REINVIGORATING THE PUBLIC SPHERE

We have been told we cannot do this by a chorus of cynics who will only grow louder and more dissonant in the weeks to come. We've been asked to pause for a reality check. We've been warned against offering the people of this nation false hope. But in the unlikely story that is America, there has never been anything false about hope. For when we have faced down impossible odds; when we've been told that we're not ready, or that we shouldn't try, or that we can't, generations of Americans have responded with a simple creed that sums up the spirit of a people. Yes we can.

—Barack Obama, speech following the New Hampshire primary, January 8, 2008

Monday, November 9 – Social Capital

- Robert Putnam, "Tuning In, Tuning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America," PS: Political Science and Politics, 28 (December 2005):664-683.

Wednesday, November 11 – Class Visit (Professor Frank Bryan)

- Frank Bryan, Real Democracy: The New England Town Meeting and How It Works (2003): Excerpt.

Friday, November 13 – The Virtual World

📖 *HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT #5*: Find an online community devoted to political issues and write a 2-3 page paper assessing the quality of its efforts to build "virtual" social capital.

- Henrik P. Bang, "'Yes We Can': Identity Politics and Project Politics for a Late-Modern World" (April 2009).

VII. STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

Student presentations—based on the seminar papers you prepare—are scheduled for Monday, November 16 through Monday, December 7.

VIII. POLITICS AS SCIENCE REDUX

Wednesday, December 9 – The Question of Relevance

- No reading assignment.