
PS 601 Th 2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. PH 333

This seminar is the “Capstone Experience” for majors in political science. Students should make full use of the accumulated knowledge from their entire Westminster education. The political science capstone course has been organized along broad themes that cut across the major subfields in the discipline (i.e., American politics; Comparative Politics; International Politics; and Political Theory). Seminar participants will take the lead in analyzing, discussing and debating the weekly readings and research (including their own) brought to the seminar.

This semester’s version of Capstone will provide participants with the opportunity to consider some of political science’s “big concepts” in light of the transforming effects brought on by globalization. The seminar will focus on the changing nature of democracy in an era of globalization. Significant academic debates have emerged within the discipline around each concept. Here we will consider the debates which have arisen around these concepts, reviewing one book length and several article length treatments of issues related to this theme, focusing on the methodologies employed by researchers engaged in these debates.

The primary goal of Capstone is for each student to produce their own, methodologically sound, research on a topic of their choosing.

Readings:


Each unit has additional readings. These are indicated on the Seminar schedule.

Learning Objectives:

1. For students to familiarize themselves with the major lines of academic debates related to the themes of the course.
2. For students to develop their critical reading skills with particular focus on understanding and evaluating methodologies commonly used in Political Science research.
a. Students will develop their ability to identify the structures of the theoretical arguments presented in the readings.
b. Students will be able to critically review each argument for external and internal validity.
c. Students will be able to compare ideas and arguments from various authors.

3. For students to develop their own ideas related to the topics presented in the readings.
4. For students to be able to complete an article length research project grounded in the existing academic debates related to one or more of the course themes.

NOTE from the Facilitator:

This is a seminar. Seminars are far more common at the graduate than undergraduate level. Almost all graduate courses in Political Science are taught as seminars. In a seminar the participants (i.e. the students) take the lead in all class activities. They assume primary responsibility for presenting and conducting discussions of the material. The facilitator (instructor) is there as a resource and an evaluator rather than as a leader. Occasionally, if participants are having extreme difficulty facilitators may step in to help the group through some particular issue. If things are going well facilitators might, from time to time, offer their own insights to the discussion. However, a facilitator’s job is not to “teach” the material, that is the job of the participants themselves. You need to be willing to take ownership of your capstone experience. It is your responsibility (and opportunity) to learn from the readings and from each other. In short, I am not teaching this class, you are!

Finally, a word about reading load; while the readings may at times appear heavy, even onerous, please keep in mind that they are about half of what you could expect in a typical graduate course. You are expected to complete all the readings that are assigned. Several weeks have been reserved to provide you with additional time to concentrate on your research papers. Something you would also not likely find in graduate school. Basically, this capstone experience has been designed as a slow paced graduate seminar.
Expectations:

Class Participation
Participants are expected to attend classes on a regular basis, and keep up with all readings. Assigned readings must be completed by the class indicated on the syllabus. Participants are expected to actively participate in class discussions every week, so it is very important that the readings are completed on time. Occasionally, points will be awarded for completing additional in-seminar assignments related to weekly readings. Participation grades will be calculated in the following manner: number of classes a participant actively contributes to seminar discussions/ (the total number of sessions and additional in seminar assignments -1). No adjustments will be made for missed sessions except in extreme extenuating circumstances (as determined by the facilitator). Participants will only be awarded participation credit if they make a substantive contribution to the class discussion.

Readings Presentations:
Throughout the semester whenever there are readings due, groups of 2 participants will present the readings. These presentations should be about 15 minutes in length and should frame themes and questions to help kick off the seminar’s weekly discussions.

Exam
One exam will be given. The format of the exam will be essay and short answer and will cover all course readings.

Capstone Project
Participants are expected to write article length paper that presents and piece of original empirical research. Students will meet with the facilitator on a regular basis throughout the semester to update the facilitator on their progress. Final papers should follow standard guidelines for college level writing regarding grammar, spelling, organization and the use of citations. Any commonly used format for citation is acceptable. While the length of individual papers will depend upon both the topic selected and the author’s writing style, an average paper should be approximately 25 - 30 pages.

This project is a substantial portion of one’s final grade and will constitute four distinct grades:

Projects will be evaluated based on the quality of the data they collected and the appropriateness for the research question they were seeking to answer. This is the research design grade.

All students are required to present a poster at the capstone poster session at the end of the semester. This poster and the quality of their presentation will be graded.

A draft version of the paper will be submitted for review.

The final article length paper will be graded.
Academic Integrity:

This course is covered by all College policies on academic integrity. No forms of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, will be tolerated. The facilitator will insist as a **minimum punishment** that *students determined to have cheated on any exam or assignment receive an “F” in the course*. Be advised that more serious actions may be taken by the administration, as the facilitator will report all instances of academic dishonesty to the appropriate college officials and will vigorously pursue all such cases though the College disciplinary procedures.

Grading:

Grades will be calculated according to the following formula.

- Class Participation: 15%
- Presentations: 15%
- Exam: 15%
- Draft Paper: 5%
- Poster Presentation: 10%
- Final Research Article: 40%

+/- Grades will be issued:

- 93% and up = A
- 90-92% = A-
- 87-89% = B+
- 83-86% = B
- 80-82% = B-
- 77-79% = C+
- 73-76% = C
- 70-72% = C-
- 67-69% = D+
- 63-66% = D
- 60-62% = D-
- 59% & less = F
Seminar Schedule:

Th Aug. 31 Introduction to the Seminar/Update on Projects

Th Sept. 7 The “dangers of Democratization” argument
Readings: Mansfield and Snyder (see D2L)
Snyder Ch 1-2

Th Sept. 14 Responses to the “dangers of Democratization” argument
Readings: Correspondence (see D2L)
Bogaards (see D2L)
Cederman et al. (see D2L)

Th Sept 21 Case Studies of types of nationalisms in from Voting to Violence
Readings: Snyder Ch 3-4

Th Sept. 28 Working session

Th Oct. 5 Working session/ Class presentations of Capstone Progress I

Th Oct. 12 Democracy, Authoritarianism in the Post-Communist World
Readings: Snyder Ch 5
Vanderhill (see D2L)
Beyond the Color Revolutions (see D2L)

Th Oct. 19 Snyder From Voting to Violence, Ch5-7

W Oct. 25 Attend Faculty Scholarship Panels
Th Oct. 26 Presentation of Report about Scholarship Panels

Th Nov. 2 Working session/ meet with instructor to update about Capstone progress

Th Nov 9 Avoiding the Dangers of Democratization
Readings: Snyder Ch 6-7 (see D2L)
US media article (see D2L)
Case study of Germany and Iraq (see D2L)

Th Nov 16 Exam

Th Nov 23 Class does not meet, Thanksgiving Break

Th Nov 30 Draft of Article Due/Class Presentation of Capstone Progress II

Th Dec 7 Working session
F Dec 8 Poster Presentations- 3:30- 6:30 Witherspoon Rooms

Final Article Due Thursday Dec. 14th at 5pm.