Overview. What is politics and how do political scientists study it?

If this question were asked about one of the natural sciences, students would be given a short definition, examples of key problems it addresses, and an overview of the methods employed in the field. Political science, however, cannot offer a clear single answer. Rather, political scientists study politics in a wide range of settings and in a variety of ways. Among political scientists there is great disagreement about what the field's core questions are and how best to study them. As a result the majority of political science departments in the United States do not offer an introduction to the field as a whole. Instead students are typically introduced to political science through courses in sub-fields such as American Politics, Comparative Politics, International Politics, or Political Theory in which there is often more agreement about key questions and methodological approaches.

At Bryn Mawr, this has been the case for decades. This course has only been taught in the past decade and is based on the idea that the diversity of theoretical and empirical ideas about the nature of politics and how it should be studied can provide the basis for an introductory course. It is intended for students who go on to further study in political science, as well as those whose longer term interests lie elsewhere. The course's goal is not to present a unity to the field that does not exist, nor to pretend that underlying surface differences are unifying core questions. Rather, it is hoped that students will learn how to think analytically about politics in a variety of settings and come to appreciate different ways to understand it, key assumptions of particular approaches to the field, and something about the connections between how politics is understood and how it is studied. Towards this goal, students will read a good deal of diverse material and classes will aim to both provide important background to the topics each week as well as to allow time for discussion of the material.

Course organization. This introduction to political science is organized in four main units. Each focuses on general questions about political life and provides detailed cases which help you explore the general questions which are raised in the readings and in class. Seeing how different political scientists link the two is crucial to your mastery of the course material.

The first part of the course explores how we think about politics. For many politics is about government (indeed that is what some political science departments are named) and what it does. For some, politics is not necessarily associated with any single institution (or set of institutions) but refers to processes that exist in all social units ranging from the family to the international system. Others emphasize politics as a particular kind of discourse concerning the organization of life in a community. Hopefully, you will come to appreciate some of the different ways political scientists think about politics and come to see particular questions and methods that are associated with each approach.

Part II first examines some of the many different forms of political organization humans have constructed and then turns to the modern nation-state, the dominant form of political organization in the world today. The case of France is explored in some depth to consider what the relationship is between the creation of state institutions and the development of a sense of national identity. Central to politics, especially in the modern state, are questions about authority, community, and conflict and how they are organized in different places.

The relationship between the citizen and the state is the central concern in Part III. We will ask questions about the role of the citizen in the face of strong state power, the question of
political participation in modern society, and the nature of social and political institutions which mediate between the citizen and the state. Another focus is on the tensions between diversity and democracy in the contemporary world. The final section of the course examines international relationships focusing primarily, but the entirely, on the question of inter-state relations for some of the authors we will consider emphasize ways in which the nation-state is but one of many international actors. Of particular importance are the different kinds of conflicts found in the international system and the paucity of institutions and practices to manage them constructively.

Assignments. Students are expected to complete the assigned readings before each class and come ready to raise questions and to participate in class discussions. There is a good deal of reading assigned and you should only take this course if you are prepared to complete it on time. Class participation is important and attendance matters and will be part of your grade. In addition to the assigned readings, it is expected that students will read a daily newspaper such as the Philadelphia Inquirer or The New York Times and one of the goals of the course is to connect current political events to the analytic questions covered in the course.

Logs. Each student will write seven logs consisting of a paragraph to a page of reactions to material in the readings or in recent classes. The logs provide a way for students to formulate their thoughts about specific theories, to raise questions, to ask for clarification, and to make connections among ideas presented by different authors. The logs will not receive a grade, but they must be completed to pass the course. All will be read and commented on before the next class. You can choose when to submit the logs with the provision that at least one must be turned in at least every three weeks.

Papers, quizzes and exams. There will be several short papers, several announced short quizzes, a midterm and a final exam. The emphasis in the papers and exams is on analysis of the material covered in the course and on linking specific cases and examples to more general arguments. Students are encouraged to work together in all phases of the course including paper writing and studying for exams. It is NOT a violation of the honor code to share your ideas and work with other students to develop new insights.

Grades. The exams will count for about half of the final grade, the short papers 40% and class participation makes up the remainder. Students do not compete against each other in the course, but against themselves. There is no limit on the number of top grades which can be awarded.

Office hours. My office is 219 Thomas Library. Regular office hours are Wednesday 2:15-4 and Thursday from 4:15-5:45. If these are not possible, other meeting times are can be arranged. Students are encouraged to come to discuss questions about the class and any material covered as well as to talk about upcoming assignments. I can also be reached by email: mross@brynmawr.edu. Students are also encouraged to talk about material and assignments with each other. Peer exchanges can often be a critical source of learning and inspiration.
REQUIRED BOOKS
(available at Bryn Mawr College Bookstore)


RESERVE ARTICLES
(Students are encouraged to copy a complete set for their personal use)

7. John Locke, Second Treatise, Chapter 5, Chapter 7 sections 87-90, Chapter 19 section 222.
8. The Federalist Papers 10, 37 and 51.
18. Thomas Friedman, The Lexus and the Olive Tree, 1999, Chapter 1, pp. 3-24
READINGS ASSIGNMENTS

Part I: Thinking About Politics

Week 1: September 2-4: Introduction: What is Politics?

What is politics? What is political action? Compare the different conceptions of politics found in Shively and presented in class. Is politics associated exclusively with the state or is it found in all social units? What does it mean to talk about the politics of family relationships? How does our understanding of the political affect what we study and how we study it?

Week 2: September 9-11: Politics as Conflict

A prominent feature of contemporary politics is conflict between groups with different ideologies and life styles. Perhaps no issue in American politics typifies this better than the issue of gun control (with the possible exceptions of abortion and gay rights). Spitzer provides both an overview and analysis of this issue and explains why and how it has become so divisive in American politics. Try to understand why proponents on each side understand the conflict so differently and are willing to commit such great resources to their cause. To what extent do opponents of gun control feel their identity is wrapped up on the issue? How and why is identity central to understanding the intensity of the dispute? Can you imagine a constructive solution to this divisive conflict?

Week 3: September 16-18: Politics as Community Decision-Making

While political activity in all societies shares some common elements, politics occurs in and is studied in specific settings. Mansbridge examines two in detail—a New England town and a participatory workplace—to understand what she calls unitary and adversarial democracy. The first eleven chapters present an initial statement about the two forms of democracy—make sure you understand what she means by each and how they help you understand the New England town and other small communities. Later in the semester we will complete the book.

Part II: Politics in the Modern State

Week 4: September 23-25: Varieties of Political Organization: Cross Cultural Comparisons

1. Lorna Marshall, "!Kung Bushman Bands," (on reserve)
3. Donald V. Kurtz, "Strategies of Legitimation and the Aztec State," (on reserve)

Although politics is found in all human communities, it can take many different forms. These articles point out some of the diversity of political organization found in different preindustrial societies ranging from hunting and gathering bands to complex states. They also suggest important variation in political leadership styles and the organization of authority. In addition to identifying this variation, consider why it occurs and what its consequences are.
Week 5: September 30-October 2: The Rise of the European State: The Case of France


The nation-state is the quintessential form of modern political organization. It is clear that the nation-state is an organizational form, but it also can be the object of great emotional attachment. Geertz, an anthropologist, explores this loyalty in a classic article about the nations of Asia and Africa. Weber's study of France is instructive and important in raising important questions about the relationship between national identity and state formation. His detailed historical analysis suggests that the formation of the state preceded the development of a sense of "Frenchness," that the state power of the state was used to change identities among many rural people living in France, and that this could only occur with the technological changes in the later part of the 19th century. It should suggest important questions about the nature of states today.


October 7

Modern states make and implement policies. But what exactly does this mean. Think about various areas of our lives and consider how they are affected by state action. How do different concerns compete for attention of the state? Shively raises the question of how we are to evaluate state action as governments make policy. What is your reaction to his criteria of efficiency and fairness? How do they sometimes complete? Finally, how are we to think about the relationship between the state and its citizens?

October 9

Democratic nation states are organized in many different ways. The most striking contrast is between presidential and parliamentary systems. Make sure you understand not just what the key differences are between the two, but what difference they make. In other words, how might it matter if the US was a parliamentary, and not a presidential, democracy? What is the role of the bureaucracy and the rule of law in each? Consider the contrasting examples Shively presents.

Week 7: October 23-25: The Politics of Equality and Group Differences

1. Douglas Rae, *Equalities*. (on reserve)
2. Lani Guinier, "Groups, Representation, and Race Conscious Districting: A Case of the Emperor's Clothes," (on reserve)

There is social and cultural diversity in all modern nation states. What are its political consequences? These readings focus on different ways to think about the concept of equality and ask you to apply them to questions of ethnic and racial differences. To what extent are these differences the greatest source of political tension in modern states? To what extent can structural formulas protect minorities and ensure them full citizenship? Rae points out different meanings of equality. Make sure you understand the distinctions he makes between group and individual equality in particular. Guinier points out why majoritarian democratic procedures may
not meet the needs of many majorities. In what ways are her arguments similar to Mansbridge's? Bowen and Rudinstine examine the theory and some data behind affirmative action in college admissions.

**Part III: Citizens and Modern States**

Week 8: October 28-30: The Individual, Groups, and the State

1. Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, "Pericles' Funeral Oration" (on reserve)
2. John Locke, *Second Treatise*, Selections (on reserve)
3. The Federalist Papers 10, 37 and 51 (on reserve)

What is the relationship between the individual and the political community? Western thought gives particular attention to the idea of the individual as distinct from the community, but this is far from universal. Consider how this idea is imbedded in the notion of the contemporary nation state.

Week 9: November 4-6: Citizen Participation and Daily Life


What is political participation and what are the different realms of people's lives it can touch? Consider the consequences of a theory of political participation as you read Mansbridge's discussion about participatory workplace. What are the problems in participatory organizations? How is inequality inherent in all organization? When and why is inequality not necessarily unfair?

Week 10: November 11-13: Citizen Participation and the State: Parties, Interest Groups, and Elections


Political participation, is to many, the hallmark of modern democracy. Yet beyond voting every few years most citizens are hard pressed to say what participation entails. Mansbridge's final chapters push us to think about different conceptions of democracy in general and to consider democracy’s relevance for our personal and work environments as well as the larger political world. Think about participation as a social, not just individual, political act, and the importance of institutions and practices such as political parties, voluntary associations, and interest groups in the process in terms of the examples Shively presents.

Week 11: November 18-20: Democracy, Civil Society and Democratic Transitions


The post-Communist transition in Central and Eastern Europe is more difficult and more complicated that many expected in 1989. Simply holding elections is not enough to insure
effective, stable democracies. Much recent attention has focused on the idea of "civil society," the notion that effective democracy requires many intermediate institutions between the state and the individual and these are still absent in much of the region. Consider this argument and make sure you understand its key elements. Yet civil society (called pluralism in some cases) is only one democratic model. Consider how it compares with corporatism as Lehmann and Schmitter describe it. Why do you think that corporatism and corporatist thinking is so uncommon in the United States?

Part IV: Relations Among States

Weeks 12-14: November 23-December 7: International Politics

November 23: The Interstate System: Key Elements

1. Bruce Russett and Harvey Starr, World Politics, Chapters 3-4, pp. 46-98 (on reserve)

What is the international system? What are its key elements? Who are the key actors and what do they do? Be sure you understand ways in which nation-states are not the only important actors in the international system. How is the organization of politics and choice within states similar and different to that of the international system?

December 2: Order and Disorder Among States

4. Thomas Friedman, Chapter 1-2, (on reserve)

Mearsheimer argues that the structure provided by the Cold War was important in limiting many conflicts within the international system. He, like others, worries about the lack of structure in the present system. Although some of his initial assumptions will disturb many of you, see if you can find examples from the past two or three years to support his argument. Huntington suggests that ethnicity and religion now have replaced ideology as the basis of political divisions in the world. Is what he calls “the clash of civilizations” so new, and if it is what are the prospects for war and peace in the coming years? Friedman raises the issue of the importance of technology as a focus for integration and conflict.

December 4: International Conflict: The North-South Case


The conflict between the haves and have-nots, the north versus the south has the potential to be the most intransigent international conflict in the next twenty years. What are its key elements? Are the ways in which it can be limited effectively? How much inequality is compatible with a just solution?

December 9: Just War


December 11: Synthesis and Conclusions