Introduction to Political Science
POLS 2000
The University of Georgia
Prof. Anthony Madonna
ajmadonn@uga.edu

Instructor Info
Instructor: Anthony Madonna
Email: ajmadonn@uga.edu
Website: http://ajmadonn.myweb.uga.edu/
Office: 407 Baldwin Hall
Office Hours: W 1:00-3:00pm

Syllabus is on the website. Slides and reading assignments will be posted regularly.

The Ideal v. The Real

• The contrast between realists and idealists is a popular fictional theme.
  – Untouchables
  – Star Wars

• Struggle between:
  – what we would like to do (idealism)
  – what we must do or what is possible (realism)
The Ideal Versus the Real in Plato’s *Republic*

- Thrasymachus, the realist, is a sophist.
  - A sophist is one who taught the skills necessary for political success.
  - A sophist does not teach ethics.
- Socrates is the idealist.
  - The purpose of politics is the happiness of the citizenry.
- Who has the stronger point?
- Politics is about the ongoing struggle between realists and idealists.

Your “Own Private Idaho”

- Everyone brings to the study of politics their own unique set of experiences.
- People organize and simplify their understanding of politics through conceptual frameworks.
  - personal experience
  - preferences
  - Expectations
- People use these frameworks to interpret political phenomena. “If you do not become annoyed or downright angry at some point along the way, you are missing part of the introduction to politics.”

A Note on Framing

- Framing explains how both the mass media and political campaigns can affect people’s expressed political opinions. The messages sent by the media and the candidates do not have the change attitudes to change expressed opinions. They merely have to frame the issue in a way that draws out one response rather than the other.
  - “Tastes like chicken.”
  - Gudger University and binge drinking.
  - The Health Care Debate…
    - Nancy Pelosi (D-CA): “I think they’re Astroturf… You be the judge. They’re carrying swastikas and symbols like that to a town meeting on healthcare.”
    - Conservative talk show host Rush Limbaugh: “[There are] similarities between the Democratic Party of today and the Nazis in Germany” and saying: “Adolf Hitler, like Barack Obama, also ruled by dictate.”
Fiction as a Tool for Exploring Politics

• Fiction is a useful tool for study politics because:
  – It provides a window into an environment where our conceptual frameworks give way to the author’s creativity.
  – It can give us a taste for political situations that we will likely never experience.
  – It exaggerates political phenomena, thus making them easier to identify.
  – It is engaging.
  – It promotes active learning.

What is Politics?

• It is a word clouded by personal opinions and potentially conflicting examples.
• Political scientists cannot agree on a definition!
• People often think of calculating behavior meant to influence others in order to get something or attain a goal.
• People often have negative impressions of politics.
• Politics consists of individual or combined actions of individuals, governments, and/or groups, aimed at getting what they want accomplished, when those actions have public consequences.
• Definition does not distinguish between “good” or “bad” behavior.

What is Political Science?

• Political scientists do not agree on a definition; often heated battles.
• What is meant by “science”?
• Aristotle wrote about a science of politics.
  – He was referring to a body of knowledge regarding how to organize a state to obtain happiness.
  – He was being normative; he was offering his opinions on the good life.
• “Some believe that political science should be a science in the same way that biology, chemistry and physics are sciences – they believe that politics should employ a strictly defined scientific method.”
  – An example of “framing” here...
What is Political Science?

• Social scientists usually cannot isolate individuals, organizations, and groups in the laboratory or isolate and manipulate the things that might influence them.

• Political scientists have come up with numerous ways of approximating the ideal of laboratory conditions, primarily through the use of statistics.

• Some suggest that the use of statistics pushes researchers to examine things that can easily be counted, catalogued, or quantified:
  – money
  – votes
  – Weapons

• This causes important things that cannot be counted, like beliefs, expectations, or hopes to be discounted or ignored entirely.

• Still, researchers using statistics have made tremendous contributions to the study of politics.

Why Study Social Science?

John Sides: We study social science because social phenomena affect people’s lives in profound ways... Social ills—poverty, lack of formal education, family dysfunction, ineffective governments, wars—are associated with and arguably cause a great deal of physical illness and death. You can do a lot to fight malaria with medicine, and we need new and better medicines to do so, but these treatments aren’t going to go very far if in the meantime we are losing more than half a million children each year in Africa to preventable diseases because they have no access to clean water or vaccines, or if we are fighting wars that end up killing millions of people. Doctors in labs can create a miracle drug. However, that drug won’t do much good if you can’t get it to needy populations because warring militias set up roadblocks and kill NGO workers. If social and political scientists can figure out how to help create viable democratic institutions, how to help resolve civil wars, whether and how foreign intervention can help contain terrorism, etc., etc., then they will help save lives—both on their own and in concert with other scientists who focus on new medicines, or more efficient cookstoves, or new ways to filter drinking water, or what have you.

Social phenomena also matter in less dramatic ways, but in ways that still make people’s lives profoundly better or worse. Consider this partial list:

Families. What makes families more or less successful? What makes marriages more successful? What makes them fail? What are the effects of divorce? Does it hurt the children of divorce? How much, in what ways, and for how long? A medical doctor can treat the effects of family dysfunction and divorce—say, with antidepressants or therapy and so on—but we can learn and know more about how to prevent some of this dysfunction from doing social science.

Schools. What are effective means of educating children? What makes for good teachers? How can we measure and evaluate teaching and learning? How can we overcome inequalities in educational achievement created by socioeconomic status and other factors? The “hard” sciences and medicine might be able to help a bit here, but these too are mostly questions for social science.

Economies. Fundamentally, what makes them grow or shrink? Few things are as central to people’s quality of life as economic prosperity. Here again, there is synergy with, say, medicine: getting sick affects your ability to be economically productive, but doctors are not going to be much help on this question. Economists and other social scientists can.

Mass Media. The information conveyed through mass media—cultural, political, and otherwise—can profoundly influence how we understand the world. How is that information produced? What are the incentives and norms that govern media organizations? How does that information affect people? How does that information help or hurt people—six example, by stigmatizing or reinforcing stereotypes, or by inflaming or fomenting outright violence? Social scientists spend a lot of time trying to figure this out.

Attitudes. Why do people develop particular attitudes about social and political phenomena? How does those attitudes affect subsequent behavior? Whether people like or dislike social groups, for example, has an impact on the quality of life for those groups. So we must understand the origins and evolution of attitudes like prejudice.

Social networks. The networks which people are embedded—which encompass families and schools as well as other institutions—can affect many things about them. Whether they are healthy, whether they are prejudiced, whether they can survive natural disasters, and so on.

That is just a quick rant through some of the foundational topics in sociology, economics, psychology, and other social sciences. I should say that the politics, and therefore political science, is integral to all of these. The policies that governments produce can affect families—for example, by providing child care subsidies, or by allowing same-sex couples to be married and build their own families. Politics also affects the economy, needless to say. Witness the gains or losses of wealth that could be attributed to government stimuli, to austerity, to debt ceiling debates, to financial crises. How political institutions function—and the roles played by voters, leaders, reporters, activists—will also end up affecting people’s lives in myriad other ways. Whether they live in poverty, whether they get prenatal care when their kids are born, how easy it is to buy a house, how long they sit in traffic, how much tax they pay, how good their health care is, and so on and on...
What is Political Science?

• Some argue that it is not possible to be objective about politics in the way one can be in the natural sciences.

• These scholars have increased our understanding by showing how rhetoric, decision process, and culture influence the behaviors of individuals and governments.

• Perhaps there should never have been science in the term “political science.”

• The best way to approach science may be to use social scientist Earl Babbie’s framework.

• Experiential reality versus agreement reality.
  – experiential reality = the things we directly experience.
  – agreement reality (more important) = things we believe are real even though we have never directly experienced them.

What is Political Science?

• We can think of science as a set of rules and processes we agree to use to generate agreement reality.

• Thus, the “science” in political science is the effort to develop a greater understanding of politics by conducting research openly and transparently, utilizing methods that will convince other political scientists to accept the results as accurate and correct.

• To create agreement reality regarding politics, all researchers must carefully document their research, fully explain their findings, disclose any of their known biases, and acknowledge any known weaknesses in their research.

What is Political Science?

• There will be issues/events/institutions in politics that can not be easily studied by quantitative analysis. This does not mean quantitative analysis can not be applied.
  – As is always the case, the theory comes first. Ask yourself: is the authors theoretical conclusions justified by the quantitative or qualitative evidence he/she presents?

• Beware of “shock” statistics.
  – Polls without margins of error but with stories drawing definitive conclusions.
  – Numbers presented accompanied by “as much as” or “as little as” - these typically reference the high or low end of a range of numbers. (Levitt on abortion).
  – Percentages without raw numbers or baseline estimates.

• Ask yourself: What does this mean in the simplest possible terms?
  – “No candidate has won the Presidency without carrying Missouri in over 50 years.” This is only 12 elections. 8 of which were decided by over 200 electoral votes. “In the last four reasonably competitive elections, the winning candidate has taken Missouri” is a far less impressive-sounding statistic.

• If something looks funny – it probably is.
  – White Sox power outage.
Utopias in Fiction and Politics

- Utopias are perfect worlds; they are not necessarily wonderful.
- Perfect worlds are subjective; no one context will appeal to everyone.
  - *One person’s utopia may be another person’s Detroit.*
- Utopias are helpful for studying politics because they are ideas taken to extremes, i.e., they make it easier to see the flaws in ideas.
- Political theorists use utopias to evaluate aspects or dynamics of politics and political or social structures.

Utopias in Practice

- A political ideologist proposes a utopia not just to conceptualize a better world, but to suggest a means of achieving it.
  - Marx points out flaws in capitalism
  - He projects socialism out to a communist utopia.
- Utopian thought reaches its pinnacle during the idealist period.
  - The period following World War I
  - The League of Nations was built on the hope of spreading liberal democracy across the globe
  - The idea is not even supported in the United States

Theorists and Theories of Politics

- It is difficult to gain consensus about who are the most important political theorists.
- Many great theorist come from professions outside of political science, including:
  - political commentators
  - philosophers
  - economists
  - sociologists
  - military officers
  - political leaders
  - political advisors.
Theorists and Theories of Politics

Political science originates with the ancient Greeks. They believed that the purpose of the *polis*, or state, was to promote the happiness of citizens.

The normative nature of classic political theory sharply contrasts with the modern scientific ideal of dispassionate and objective study.

There are political scientists who write normative political theory. Theorists conceive of politics on the grand scale.

The Top Seven Dead White Male Political Theorists: Plato – Commencing the Debate

- Some argue that all of Western political theory is a response to Plato (427–347 B.C.).
- His greatest work of political theory is found in *The Republic*.
- Plato envisions that the ideal society is not democratic.
- He did not believe that simply because the masses favored something that it was the correct thing.

*“The best argument against democracy is a five minute conversation with the average voter.” – Former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill*

Plato – Commencing the Debate

- Plato believed that one could not rely on one’s senses to discover what was real.
- One senses only imperfect representations of actual reality.
- The hidden “real world” is unchanging and perfect, *i.e.*, the forms.
  - perfect form of beauty.
  - perfect form of justice.
- Plato did not believe that everyone could know the forms.
- In Plato’s utopia, it is philosophers who are the only ones who can see the true forms.
  - Everyone should do what they do well.
  - Philosophers should rule.
  - Plato does not believe in democracy, but was more of an idealist than realist.

*“Wise men talk because they have something to say; fools talk because they have to say something.” – Plato*
Aristotle – The Rebellious Student

- Aristotle (384–322 B.C.) was more of a realist and was highly critical of Plato.
- He thought one could learn far more by observing the way that things actually work and the way that people actually behave.
- Compared to Plato, Aristotle was pragmatic; he believed that people should do the best they could within the limits of the real world.
- According to Aristotle, everything worked toward a specific end, or telos.
- The telos for human beings is happiness.
- People should create governments with this human end in mind.
- Also, he believed, “man is a political animal;” people are naturally social.
- The polis is an extension of the natural associations people form.

Aristotle demonstrated that some types of governments are better at helping people achieve happiness than others.
- He also believed one could improve a bad form of government.
- Therefore, one need not only be concerned with the ideal world, but also with improving the flawed world that we know.
- Aristotle was more of a realist than Plato, but still an idealist because he believed that the main aim of government was to create happiness for the people.

Machiavelli – The Reality of Power

- Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527) is often referred to as the father of the modern theoretical tradition known as realism.
- His realist perspective was shaped by the politics of his day:
  - Italy fractured
  - Chaotic situation in Florence
  - He is tortured for participation in government
- Machiavelli believed that theory should be based on the way that people actually live and the things that they actually do.
- Unlike Aristotle, Machiavelli did not look to human potential.
- He believed people are ungrateful, fickle, and deceptive.
- One who wishes to lead has to work with this reality.

“Before all else, be armed.” — Machiavelli
Machiavelli – The Reality of Power

- A leader must be able to control human nature.
- Machiavelli concentrated on the rules of power politics.
- Machiavelli’s advice was cold, sometimes brutal, but it dealt with the realities of the politics he observed.
- It might seem archaic, but politicians still use Machiavelli’s advice.
- Machiavelli’s utopia was a simple one.
- He wanted a government strong enough to secure peace and security.
- In his later writings he advocates a republican government.
- He did not necessarily believe democracy was a fairer way of doing things; he believed a republic could best supply long-term peace and stability.

“A wise ruler ought never to keep faith when by doing so it would be against his interest.” – Machiavelli

Hobbes – The Purpose of Government

- Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) rejected any information not acquired empirically.
- In his work, The Leviathan, he sought to craft a scientific theory of politics and government.
- He engages in a thought experiment, asking what life was like in the state of nature before government.
- Hobbes believes life in the state of nature was “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.”
- People formed governments because they are rational pleasure seekers; they want peace and personal security.
- People are willing to trade some of their liberty in order to achieve tranquility.

“The condition of man... is a condition of war of everyone against everyone.” – Thomas Hobbes

Hobbes – The Purpose of Government

- Government begins when people join together to form a social contract.
- They trade their liberty for protection from the harshness of the state of nature.
- They turn their freedom over to a sovereign, a person or a group of people with supreme authority.
- The sovereign is responsible for securing and maintaining the peace.
- This sovereign has all power in the society.
- Once people consent to join the social contract, they hand over all rights including the right to disagree.
- They sovereign can do whatever is necessary to ensure domestic tranquility.
- There is no freedom of speech or freedom of religion.
- Hobbes gives us the perfect world of the state of nature to contrast with the positive utopia of a life of security.
- The negative utopia lurks in the background as a justification for the sovereign’s rule.
John Locke (1632–1704) Second Treatise of Government also begins with a state of nature.

Unlike Hobbes, Locke’s state of nature is not a bad place.

All have natural rights to “life, liberty, and property.”

People are social.

They rule each other according to the rules of natural law.

Any social difference among them is due to how hard they work.

All wealth is the product of labor.

The reason why men enter into society is the preservation of their property.” – John Locke

Civil society then creates the government.

Government is limited.

People only surrender rights that are absolutely necessary for the government to carry out its primary function: “the preservation of property.”

I have always thought the actions of men the best interpreters of their thoughts.” – John Locke

Locke’s utopia is one where the government exists as a subcontractor for the civil society.

The subcontractor continues as long as it performs its responsibility to protect.

All are free to enjoy their rights, property, and the fruits of their labor.

What happens if the government does not live up to its responsibility? Can it be fired?

Do the people have a right to cast off a government that fails to protect the rights and privileges of its citizenry or abuses its power?

The U.S. Declaration of Independence declares: “That whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government.”

The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants” – Thomas Jefferson
Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) political theory does not stress individualism to the same degree as Hobbes or Locke.

He did not believe that civilized society was an improvement on the state of nature.

In his work *On the Social Contract*, Rousseau writes, “Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains.”

Like Locke, Rousseau believed that life in the state of nature was not all that bad.

People were primitive and simple-minded, but retained their liberty.

Rousseau believed that all of society was corrupt.

It made people focus on their individual desires, robbed them of their compassion, and promoted inequality.

Rousseau thought civilization was the problem.

He believed people need to reject societal inequality by placing the common good of all above their own personal interests.

They can then form a new social contract—one that is different from Hobbes’ or Locke’s.

Rousseau rejects the voice of the majority.

His new contract is formed by the “total alienation of each associate, together with all of his rights, to the entire community.”

In exchange for surrendering individual rights, each person joins in the solidarity of “the general will.”

The general will is the voice of the majority speaking for the common good of all, where each person ignores his or her own personal stake.

All who participate grow through their participation.

The general will can never be wrong.

The general will is the sovereign.

If people do not follow the general will’s rules, they will be “forced to be free.”

The general will represents Rousseau’s perfect world.

It is a government that rules for everyone at nobody’s expense.

Rousseau has a higher view of human nature and human potential than does either Hobbes or Locke.
Marx – You Will Wait!

• Karl Marx (1818-1883) is also generally agreed to be one of the most influential political theorists.
• Most of his theoretical impact comes in relation to government and the economy.
• The book will focus heavily on his work when we cover government and the economy.
• He views history as proceeding through a necessary series of modes of production (including capitalism), culminating in communism.

"History repeats itself, first as tragedy, second as farce." — Kurt Marx

Non-Western Philosophers

• Sun Tzu’s *Art of War* is, perhaps, the oldest secular text still in existence, and it is still widely read and incredibly influential.
• One key element of Chinese political theory that contrasts with Western models is its focus on the society first and the individual second.
• Indian political theory is built upon the idea of innate human obligations rather than the idea of innate rights.
• Islam includes substantial space for what might be called tribal identities and other local adaptations.
• Islamic political thought is also the only major body of political theory that is not focused on the state, but on the idea of a nation that transcends borders and governments.

"If you know the enemy and know yourself, your victory will not stand in doubt; if you know Heaven and know Earth, you may make your victory complete." — Sun Tzu

Ideologies

• The difference between political theory and political ideology centers on action.
• Theory is aimed at developing knowledge.
• Ideology is about organizing and directing goal-oriented action.
• Marx wrote both theory and ideology, and it is clear to see the difference between his theoretical writing and his ideological call for the workers of the world to unite.
• A crude way of distinguishing between theories and ideologies is to think about the audience.
  - Political theories are written for elites.
  - Ideologies are written for the masses.

"An ounce of action is worth a ton of theory." — Friedrich Engels
Distinguishing Ideologies from Theories

- Political theories, generally are:
  - complex,
  - logically robust,
  - usually accompanied by an epistemology (a theory of the nature of knowledge),
  - written for a select audience, and
  - in some ways, timeless, because they raise questions and provide answers for problems that persist throughout the centuries.

- Ideologies:
  - attempt to convince mass numbers of people,
  - paint dramatic pictures of the utopia its proponents hope to achieve,
  - are written in simple enough terms to be convincing,
  - contain how-to instructions for achieving the utopia.
  - Because ideologies must appeal to large numbers of people in specific countries at specific times, they are also usually malleable enough to be changed to meet the necessary conditions.

Classical Liberalism: The Mother of All Ideologies

- Classic liberalism is rooted in the theories of freedom articulated by Hobbes and Locke that culminated in the American Revolution.
- Adam Smith (1723–1790) added economic freedom as a key variable.
- He believed a nation could achieve economic success by keeping the government out of the economy and allowing the free hand of the market to work unfettered.
- Classic liberalism also includes the belief that people should be generally free from governmental constraints.

"On the road from the City of Skepticism, I had to pass through the Valley of Ambiguity." – Adam Smith

Classical Liberalism: The Mother of All Ideologies

- The closest ideology to classic liberalism in existence today is libertarianism.
- Libertarians believe the government should provide military protection, a police force, and basic infrastructure, such as roads and bridges, but do little more.
- Are classic liberals realists or are they idealists?
  - To the extent that they believe government is necessary to control the human beings’ selfish nature, they are realists.
  - Some might argue that their faith in unregulated economic markets is idealistic.

"Deficits mean future tax increases, pure and simple. Deficit spending should be viewed as a tax on future generations, and politicians who create deficits should be exposed as tax takers." – Ron Paul
Classic Conservatism

- Classic conservatism is generally associated with the eighteenth-century British parliamentarian Edmund Burke.
- It developed as a reaction to the excesses resulting from the French Revolution (not classic liberalism).
- Burke objected to the belief that unrestrained individual human reason could replace long-lasting traditional institutions.
- Institutions are honed by centuries of experience, success, and failure, as they evolved and as human knowledge grew.

Classic Conservatism

- Institutions and traditions are shorthand for information that would be impossible for any group of human beings to possess.
- **Institution:** In a democracy, an organization that manages potential conflicts between political rivals, helps them to find mutually acceptable solutions, and makes and enforces the society’s collective agreements. Among the prominent federal political institutions in the United States are Congress, the presidency and the Supreme Court.
- Classic conservatives believe that people should be very wary of changing things until they understand all ramifications.
- The perfect world envisioned by classic conservatives tends to be negative.
- They draw a picture of the anarchy that might result from the careless elimination of treasured institutions.

Communism

- Karl Marx argued that the key to understanding capitalism was its division of classes.
- Under capitalism there are two classes, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.
- The bourgeoisie are the capitalists who control the machinery of the state and who benefit from the inequities of the capitalistic system.
- The proletariat is the working class, which gets paid only a fraction of the worth of the goods it produces and the services it provides.
- Because the proletariat do not make enough to purchase the goods they supply, there is constant overproduction and, consequently, economic depressions.
- "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs." – Karl Marx
Communism

- Marx believed there would be a day when workers from advanced industrial nations would realize that they shared more in common with the other workers around the world than they did with the capitalists in their own countries.
- The workers of the world would revolt and cast off the rule of the capitalists.
- They would institute a classless society where justice and fairness prevailed.
- In Marx’s utopia, there would be no need for government as we know it.

**Quotes:**

“Freedom in capitalist society always remains about the same as it was in ancient Greek republics: Freedom for slave owners.” — Vladimir I. Lenin

Democratic Socialism

- Like Karl Marx, the democratic socialists of the early twentieth century believed that people are inherently social beings.
- They argued that classic liberalism placed too great a stress on individualism.
- They also envision a society characterized by social, political, and economic equality.
- Social democrats believe in operating a political party in democratic countries in order to achieve the socialist policies.
- There is a difference between democratic socialists and social democrats.
- Democratic socialists believe that a socialist state can be achieved through democratic means.
- Social democrats, on the other hand, aim to modify the harshness of capitalism with the infusion of some elements of socialism.

**Quotes:**

“Let’s see you take *this* under advisement, jerkweed!” — Eduard Bernstein
Reform Liberalism

- In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries some began to think that classic liberalism needed to be modified.
- Reform liberals argued that government should regulate the economy and remove major inequities caused by the capitalist system.
- Government should remove the obstacles that hinder people from pursuing their individual goals and provide opportunities.
- It should provide education, job training, a safety net, etc.
- Classic liberals would agree with the first goal, negative liberty.
- Classic liberals would disagree with government’s involvement to secure equal opportunity, positive liberty.
- Reform liberal’s utopia includes a government where no one is left behind.

“…they deserved to die and I hope they burn in hell…” – Thomas Hill Green

Facism

- Fascism is a twentieth century ideology.
- Fascists argue for the supremacy and purity of one group of people.
- They believe in a strong military rule headed by a charismatic dictator of a ruling party.
- The fascist party totally controls all aspects of social life, which it molds after the history and traditions of the superior group.
- Fascists often emerge during a severe economic depressions.
- The leader promises to take control of the economy and works with businesses to plan recovery.
- “Fascism should more appropriately be called Corporatism because it is a merger of state and corporate power.” – Benito Mussolini

“Fascism is a synonym for terrorism” – George Orwell

Fascism

- Public spectacles are used to reinforce traditions and to motivate people to support the ruling party.
- Fascists dislike democracy because it dilutes customs and traditions and because it undermines the dictators’ authority.
- Nationalism plays a strong role in fascism as does a belief in constant vigilance against enemies at home and abroad.
- The fascist utopia is one where people of the correct lineage return to the supposed greatness of their roots undistracted by enemies who would change or corrupt their way of life.
Conclusion

Questions? Concerns? Angry Rants?