

<p style="text-align: center;">PSC 500 POLITICAL INQUIRY</p>
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Class website: <http://www.acsu.buffalo.edu/~mbenson2/PSC500.htm>

Park Hall 513
Office Hours: Friday 8:30-10, 1-1:30
(or by appointment)

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(e-mail is preferable)

Course Description

PSC 500 is designed to introduce graduate students to the philosophy and logic underlying inquiry and research in the social sciences. This is a very important course in your graduate career. Other courses will provide you with more specific methodological tools and acquaint you with specialized areas of the scholarly literature. This course, on the other hand, will provide you with a solid basis for understanding *why* contemporary political scientists approach research in the way they do.

The course has two principal components. The first is an introduction to the philosophy of social science, where you will be introduced to the philosophical bases of knowledge and the competing logics at work in contemporary science. By the end of the course, students should understand what constitutes “knowledge” and understand what are acceptable and valid means of accumulating this knowledge. We will explore how human decision-making has been examined by political scientists using several competing models—especially the scientific method and thick description. The evolution of theory and of the field of political science overall will also be discussed.

In addition, this course explores important issues that political scientists are faced with when pursuing their research. Most significantly, this course will help students learn to formulate their own research question. An important part of this is gaining a solid understanding of how explanation, law, theory and hypothesis are approached in the physical and social sciences. We will address in detail the topics of necessary and sufficient conditions, levels of analysis, and concepts and measurement. Finally, we will go over several specific research strategies and discuss how values play a role in political science. By the end of this course students should have a solid understanding of how theoretical political science is approached and the myriad issues that must be dealt with in constructing and testing their own theories.

Readings

The core readings are to be found in the following books which may be purchased at the College Store on 3908 Maple Road (across from the Boulevard Mall) ph. 332-3040.

- Goertz, Gary and Harvey Starr, ed. 2003. *Necessary Conditions*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Klemke, et al. 1998. *Introductory Readings in the Philosophy of Science*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.
- Kuhn, Thomas. 1996. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 3rd edition* (however, any edition will do). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Lakatos, Imre, and Musgrave Alan (eds.) 1970. *Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes. Volume 4. In Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge: Proceedings of the International Colloquium in the Philosophy of Science*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Shively, Phillips. 2002. *The Craft of Political Research*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- * Seltzer, Richard. 1996. *Mistakes That Social Scientists Make*. New York: St. Martin's Press. (available at www.amazon.com) –Recommended-a great book to read for your Master's project or dissertation. (currently out of print)

In addition to the textbooks, there are several articles assigned throughout the semester. These additional readings fall in to three groups; a) those available online at a specific website, b) those available online through UB library's electronic journals, c) those available online through UB course reserve materials at <http://library.buffalo.edu/>.

Requirements and Grading

25%: Participation, and Short Essays (note that class attendance without excellent participation and a demonstrated familiarity with the readings can substantially decrease your grade).

5% Discussion Leader (two presentations, see below)

30% Midterm Exam

5% Abstract of Original Work (see syllabus)

10% First Draft of Final Paper

25% Final Paper

1) *Regular and Active Participation in Discussions and Short Assignments* (25% of the course grade): First is the expectation that you will be properly prepared to constructively participate in class discussion every day. This means that you will have completed the assigned readings before each class and be on time for class (it is a foregone expectation that all graduate students will attend class). The discussion leader and I will ask questions of all of you during class pertaining to the readings, my lectures, and our discussions. In addition, every student should come to class with a 1page answer to that week's question. Evidence that a student has not done the readings or that a student has come to class not prepared to discuss the readings will substantially lower their participation grade. Short assignments are described below in the syllabus. All assignments should refer to class readings. Because these assignments are used as the basis of class discussion, no late assignments will be accepted. Assignments are graded on a completion/no completion basis only.

2) *Discussion Leader* (5% of the course grade) Each day of the course, one or more students will lead the class discussion. You should come to class prepared to lecture and lead class discussion on the day's assigned readings. Students must provide *at least* two weeks notice for a replacement for discussion leadership or find their own replacement for the presentation. (See below for further details.) Students who spend the majority of their presentation reading from their notes will receive a *maximum grade of B-* for their presentation.

3) *Midterm Exam* (30% of grade) The Midterm Exam will focus on material covered in the first ½ of class.

4) *First Draft of Final Paper* (10%) and *Final Paper* (25%)

The final paper for the course will involve detailed examinations of a collection articles from political science journals (at least 15 articles/books). You must choose a single topic of interest for these assignments (e.g., judicial review, democratization, the democratic peace, deterrence, human rights, trade and conflict, economic voting). The articles examining your topic must be from peer-reviewed political science journals (e.g., *The American Political Science Review*, *American Journal of Political Science*, *Comparative Political Studies*, *Comparative Politics*, *World Politics*, *Foreign Affairs*, *Journal of Politics*, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *Journal of Peace Research*, *International Studies Quarterly*, *Political Research Quarterly*...) or from books or appropriate reference sources. Newspaper articles and articles from the web are not acceptable reference materials. You must have a copy of all articles used for the assignments and have them available to present for review if requested. The final paper is due **Friday, December 18th at 1pm.**

Notes for Course Presentations

The presentation is worth 5% of your course grade. A copy of the course presentation must be e-mailed to me by the Wednesday afternoon prior to your presentation. I will contact you with brief comments and/or suggestions by Thursday afternoon. The suggestions will be general rather than specific as I will be grading you on your ability to understand and synthesize the course material. Failure to provide me with an early copy of your presentation will result in a letter reduction in your grade.

You, the presenter, are responsible for 30-45 minutes of the class. You may organize your time any way you see fit. However, be aware that during your presentation, I will be assessing your ability to

- a) understand the material
- b) present the material in a clear, well organized manner
- c) relate the material to readings from this and other courses
- d) elicit questions and direct discussion on the material and topic in general
- e) make it an interesting and enjoyable time for the class.

Your presentation may focus on any aspect of your section of the day's readings. Ideally, you will provide a short summary of the work you will be covering and then discuss a few interesting, problematic, or debatable points of the literature. Your presentation must include questions for the class and you are responsible for eliciting responses and directing the conversation. If an interesting and/or important class discussion begins, I may jump in to expand upon a topic or draw out related discussion. (Such discussions will not be deducted from the presenter's time.)

You may work from either a power-point presentation or from notes. You may NOT read the entire presentation directly from your notes (this always makes for an extremely uninteresting presentation and convinces me that you do not know the material well). I highly recommend that you practice your presentation and prepare how you plan on organizing class discussion beforehand. Students who spend the majority of their presentation reading from their notes (including from the power-point presentation) will receive a *maximum grade of B-* for their presentation.

In eliciting class discussions, you have the right to ask questions of any student in the class. Students' responses to your questions will make up part of their overall participation grade in the course.

Special note to foreign students with English as a second language:

It is expected that you have a fluent written and spoken command of the English language. I studied abroad during graduate school so I empathize with the difficulties of foreign language students. However, I must grade you on the same criteria as the other students in this class. This means that you may have to work much harder than the native English speakers in the class to complete your readings, to write your papers, and to prepare your presentation. As mentioned above, you may not read your presentation to the class. You may briefly refer to your notes. However, for the bulk of your presentation, you must address the class directly. This means you will almost certainly have to rehearse your presentation several times beforehand and that you may need to obtain a tutor to make sure that your presentation is clearly understandable.

Extensions and Incompletes

Regular progress towards a graduate degree is severely impeded when past assignments hang over one's head. Incompletes and extensions are not an entitlement. In the event that a serious problem emerges that you feel necessitates an incomplete, you must speak with me *before* the due date regarding this request. Please see me when problems develop rather than wait until they become intractable.

Week 1: (September 4th): **NO CLASS**

No Class: Professor Benson will be at the *American Political Science Association* Conference.

Week 2 (September 11th): **Political Science and Political Scientists**

Come to class with written definitions (as well as the definition's citation) of the following terms:

Historian
Anthropologist
Psychologist
Sociologist
Economist
Political Scientist

*Please complete each week's readings before the beginning of class.

- Ralphe Bunche. 1954. "Presidential Address." *American Political Science Review* (Hereafter APSR) 48: 961-971. (available at www.jstor.org)
- David Truman. 1965. "Disillusion and Regeneration: The Quest for a Discipline." *APSR* 59: 865-873. (available at www.jstor.org)
- Robert Putnam 2002. "The Public Role of Political Science." available at <http://www.apsanet.org/imgtest/presaddressputnam.pdf>
- Almond. "Separate Tables: Schools and Sects in Political Science" in *A Discipline Divided* (available on course reserve)

Week 3 (September 18th): **What is Science? ...**

- Klemke: Introduction and Part 1: "Science and Pseudoscience," Chapters 1-5.
- Klemke. Part 2: Chapters 8-10.

DISCUSSION LEADERS: _____

1 page short assignment: Umbrellaology question in Klemke appendix.
(One-page assignments must be contained on one sheet of paper and be typed in 12-point font.)

Week 4 (September 25th): **Explanation & Law & Theory and Observation**

- Klemke. Part 3. "Explanation and Law."
- Klemke. Part 4. "Theory and Observation." pp. 309-351.

DISCUSSION LEADERS: _____

Due at the beginning of class: Briefly describe your topic of interest for your final paper. Provide references for at least 12 books or articles that you plan on using for your paper.

(Be sure to come to class with a solid understanding of Hempel.)

Week 5 (October 2nd): **The Growth of Knowledge, I**

- Kuhn. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.
- Nelson Polsby. "Social Science and Scientific Change: A Note on Thomas S. Kuhn's Contribution." *Annual Review of Political Science*. Vol. 1 (Available through electronic journals on the UB library site)

DISCUSSION LEADER(S): _____

1 page short assignment: Are there any examples of paradigms and paradigm shifts in political science? Elaborate.

Week 6 (October 9th): **The Growth of Knowledge, II**

- Lakatos 1970. *Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes. Volume 4. In Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge: Proceedings of the International Colloquium in the Philosophy of Science*. Edited by Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave. London: Cambridge University Press, pp. 91-196. Required reading: pp. 91-138, 154-159, 173-189 (skim the rest)
- -suggested: Lakatos, Imre. "Science and Pseudoscience." Read the contents of the following two sites:
<http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/lakatos/scienceAndPseudoscience.htm>
<http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/lakatos/scienceAndPseudoscienceTranscript.htm>
(Be sure to read carefully about degenerative and progressive research programs.)

DISCUSSION LEADER(S): _____

1 page short assignment: Are there any examples of research programmes in political science? Are they progressive or degenerative? Explain.

Week 7 (October 16th): **Clouds or Clocks Part I: The Interpretive Critique**

- Almond, Gabriel, A. "Clouds, Clocks, and the Study of Politics." In *A Discipline Divided*.
- Clifford Geertz. "Thick Description: Toward and Interpretive Theory of Culture." *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Chapter 1. (available on course reserve)
- Clifford Geertz. "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight." *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Chapter 15. (available on course reserve)
- Murdock Pencil. "Salt Passage" (unpublished manuscript available on course reserve)
- Diesing, Paul. Hermeneutics: The Interpretation of Texts." In *How Des Social Science Work: Reflections on Practice*. pp. 104-145. (available on course reserve)

DISCUSSION LEADER: _____

1 page short assignment: Provide an explanation of an area of political research where a thick-description approach would be useful. Provide an explanation where it would not be useful.

Week 8 (October 23rd): **Clouds or Clocks Part II: The Physical Science Model**

- John Vasquez. "Introduction" and "The Steps to War." In Vasquez, John A. and Marie T. Henehan, eds. 1999. *The Scientific Study of Peace and War*. Oxford, UK: Lexington Books. (available on course reserve)
- Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, "Toward a Scientific Understanding of International Conflict: A Personal View," *International Studies Quarterly*, 29, 2, June 1985, 121-136
- Gary W. Cox "Lies, damned lies, and rational choice analysis." In *Problems and Methods in the Study of Politics*. pp. 167-185. (available on course reserve)
- **. (Recommended) "Methodological Pluralism in Political Science", a symposium in PS: Political Science and Politics 36 (3): 371-399.

DISCUSSION LEADER: _____

1 page short assignment: Are there any limits as to what can be quantified in your area of interest? Explain.

Week 9 (October 30th): **MIDTERM EXAM**

- MIDTERM EXAM (the Midterm will cover material on all of the above readings)

Week 10 (Nov 6th): **The Practice of Political Science and Levels of Analysis**

- Shivley, Chapters 1, 2, and 10.
- David Singer. 1961. "The Levels of Analysis Problem in I.R." *World Politics*, 16, pp. 77-92. (available at www.jstor.org)
- Nils Petter Gleditsch. 1998. "Armed Conflict and the Environment: A Critique of the Literature." *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 35, No. 3, Special Issue on Environmental Conflict. (May), pp. 381-400. (available at www.jstor.org)
- Putnam, Robert D. "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games." *International Organization*, Vol. 42, No. 3. (Summer, 1988), pp. 427-460. (available at www.jstor.org)

DISCUSSION LEADER: _____

Due Monday November 2nd at 10am, e-mailed to me at mbenson2@buffalo.edu.

Abstract: Read 7 or 8 abstracts from political science journals. Now, write an approximately 250-word abstract of your research. Be sure to briefly describe your theory, the methodology used to test the theory, a summary of your findings and their implications. Besides describing your work, your abstract should also provide information on why your work is important. Please e-mail me a copy of your abstract and bring one copy to class. All abstracts will be posted on the course web site for students to read and critique for next class.

Due Thursday November 5th by 8pm: e-mail me your preference for best abstract (all abstracts will be posted on the course website). Be prepared to come to class ready to discuss your criteria.

Week 11 (November 13th): **Concepts and Measurement**

- Giovanni Sartori. "Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics" *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 64, No. 4. (Dec., 1970), pp. 1033-1053. (available at www.jstor.org)
- Adcock & Collier. "Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research." *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 95, No. 3. (Sep., 2001), pp. 529-546.(available at www.jstor.org)
- Shivley. Chapters 3-5
- Munck and Verkuilen. "Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy: Evaluating Alternative Indices." *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol 35, No. 5. (2002), pp. 5-34. (available through electronic journals at UB Libraries).
- * (Optional but suggested for International Relations Students) Jones, Bremer, and Singer. 1996. "Militarized Interstate Disputes, 1816-1996: Rationale, Coding Rules, and Empirical Problems." *Conflict Management and Peace Science*. Pp. 163-183 (available on course reserve)

DISCUSSION LEADER: _____

Library Presentation by Charles D'Aniello at 109 Lockwood Library.

Week 12 (November 20th): **NO CLASS**

No Class: Professor Benson will be at the *Peace Science Society* Conference
Work on First Draft of Final Paper (Due on December 1st).

Week 13 (November 27th): **NO CLASS**

No Class: Thanksgiving Break

Week 14 (December 4th): **Necessary Conditions**

First Draft of Paper due on Tuesday, December 1st by 1pm (e-mailed to me at mbenson2@buffalo.edu)

- Goertz and Starr. Chapters 1-4.
- Goertz and Starr. Chapters 5, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13.

DISCUSSION LEADER(S): _____

1 page short assignmet: Bring an explanation of of at least one necessary or sufficient condition regarding your subject of interest. Can any examples of study of this condition be found in the literature.

Week 15 (December 11th): **Values in Political Science**

- Klemke. Chapters 29, 30, 31, 33.

DISCUSSION LEADER(S): _____

1 page short assignment: Does political science face more challenges than other disciplines regarding of the impact of values on research? Explain.

******Final Papers due on Friday, December 18th at 1pm by e-mail at mbenson2@buffalo.edu.**