January 2011

Dear Political Science Majors,

Welcome Back! I am providing some information about courses, talks and deadlines this spring.

Courses offered by visiting Faculty

If you have not yet finalized course selection, consider the following courses which are being offered by visiting and five college faculty members:

Professor Chow will be teaching POSC 31, “Threats and Security in Postwar East Asia.”

This course examines the political processes that have promoted or hindered regional integration in East Asia. We will discuss the concept of what a region is and briefly review some of East Asia’s Cold War history before examining a variety of topics relating to security and trade in the region. Topics include the rise of the developmental state model; what China’s economic and military growth mean for regional stability; the Asian financial crisis; the U.S.-Japan alliance; the North Korean nuclear crisis; the development of ASEAN as an institutional model for regional cooperation; attempts to develop regional free trade regimes, and the problems of developing a regional identity. Open to sophomores, juniors and seniors. Students who took PS 31 in spring 2010 are NOT eligible for enrollment.

Professor Chow and Machala will be teaching POSC 53, Contemporary Global Order and the Future of the Westphalian System.

The course examines the sovereign state, the basic building block of modern world politics, is eroding. Or is it? While the principle of the state as supreme within its territory remains, the practice of sovereignty faces growing challenges from above (in the form of nascent global governance structures), from below (in the form of transnational non-state actors), and possibly even from the "side" (that is, from states that might seek to overthrow the Westphalian system and establish a more hierarchical order in its place). In this course, we will examine the nature of the state in contemporary world politics, and various challenges to the traditional Westphalian conception of state sovereignty. We will read extensively from Hedley Bull’s "The
Anarchical Society," examine different models of order among sovereign states, and discuss how recent developments are raising new questions about the trajectory of the sovereign state system as we know it. Topics will include the establishment and decline of the Breton Woods System, the creation of the European Union and the International Criminal Court, the post-Cold War rise of China, the growing prominence of religion as a political motivator and the emergence of global terrorist and criminal networks.

Professor Picq will be teaching, POSC 44, “Political Economy of Gender in Latin America.”

Latin America has the greatest extremes of wealth of any region in the world, and gender is one of the most important factors leading to this inequality. The study of gender therefore offers a valuable window into the socio-economic structures and political systems of the region. Bringing together the disciplines of comparative politics, political economy, and gender, this course proposes to analyze the gender implications of economic and political reforms at large in Latin America, from the military dictatorships of the 1970s through the democratization of the 1980s, the neoliberal reforms of the 1990s, and the New Left. We will also explore the history and geography of women's rights in terms of political participation, agrarian reform, informal economics, reproductive rights, welfare policies, migration, and human trafficking. Beyond women's rights, the class offers a larger analysis of social movements and the politics of contestation in Latin America, the movements’ interactions with state actors and the impact of changing markets on women's empowerment.

Professor Western will be teaching POSC 82, “United States Foreign Policy: Democracy and Human Rights.”

Is the United States committed to promoting democracy and human rights abroad or just advancing its own strategic and domestic corporate interests? What influence does the United States have on the development of democracy around the world and the emergence of-and compliance with-international human rights conventions, protocols and laws? This seminar begins with an historical overview of American democracy and human rights rhetoric and policies and seeks to uncover the range of political, economic, cultural and geostrategic motivations underlying U.S. behavior. We will then examine American foreign policy responses to a broad range of contemporary human rights and democracy issues with special attention given to analyzing and comparing the post-Cold War state-building efforts in the Balkans, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Previous course work relating to international relations, American politics or foreign policy, or political theory required.
Professor Poe will be offering POSC 35 “Modern Political Thought.”

This course surveys the development of key political concepts in modern Western thought. These include new conceptions of political rationality and affect (how we think and feel about our politics), as well as reconceptualizations of equality and liberty in a world of rapidly changing economic conditions and social mobility. The course begins with recent and contrasting views (Hannah Arendt, Leo Strauss) on what constitutes the basis for political action in the modern world: whether tradition is the only legitimate measure of political action, or if there are preferable standards by which to justify politics. Then, as a means to explain this problematic, the course will examine critical philosophical engagements on the historical appearance of modern political concepts. We will trace these paradigmatic shifts as they begin to surface in late 18th and 19th century European thought (evidenced in the writings of Kant, Hegel, Marx, and Nietzsche amongst others), on through to the consequent political outcomes of such transformations in 20th century politics. Through close textual readings and contextual analysis we will engage in a systematic comparison of our assumptions about politics with those expressed in these philosophical debates. And, in so doing, we will attempt to further our understanding of contemporary politics and the political problems requisite to our own political practices.

Professor Thaxton is offering, POSC-61 “China’s Global Rise: Implications for the Liberal Democratic Order.”

This seminar will assess the impact of China's rise for the liberal global democratic order constructed by the United States in the aftermath of World War II. It comprises four parts. First, we will explore how China's limited global engagement during the Cold War backfired and ultimately created a political situation in which Beijing's leaders had to open China to global market forces. Second, we will attempt to grasp China's quest for grandeur. We will study the ways in which its grand international strategy poses a challenge to democratic nations, including Japan and South Korea, Australia, the United States, and Europe. We also will pay attention to China's economic commitment to Southeast Asia, Africa, and Latin America, analyzing how this commitment has gone hand in hand with support for anti-democratic forces from Burma (Myanmar) to Sudan to Venezuela and Cuba. Third, we will analyze how China's growing involvement in the global economy is guided by an authoritarian work style that developed during the formative stage of Mao era state formation. We will study how this style influences China's global hunt for land and food, wild life reserves, mines and minerals, oil, energy, financial hubs, commercial art, and fashion. To what extent does this style pose a threat to global political institutions and norms, including those supportive of basic human rights and the rule of law? Finally, we will ask whether China's ascent will undermine the liberal global democratic order and, in time, pit a rising China against a declining United States and thus increase chances of an armed conflict between authoritarian China and democratic America.
Professor Poe is teaching POSC-71 “Political Emotions.”

This course explores debates on the place of emotions in democratic politics. While many political theorists once considered political emotions as dangerous (at worst) or unnecessary (at best) to a well-functioning democracy, some have recently sought to challenge this assumption and have re-conceptualized political emotions as central components in democratic politics. To make sense of this debate, this course investigates the following questions: What are political emotions? Do some emotions help smooth the functioning of democratic politics more than others? What is the role of emotion in the formation of political allegiances? What, if anything, is the relationship between political obligation and feeling? (Between justice and feeling? Between freedom and feeling?) Do we need to understand emotion better in order to conceptualize – and perhaps enact – the functioning of central democratic processes? The first half of the course delves into the parameters of "political emotions" as a general conceptual category; engaging arguments on what emotions are and how emotions function provides a framework for the second half of the course, which examines particular emotions as presented in the works of a variety of prominent political theorists.

Talks Sponsored By the Political Science Department this spring include:

Melvin Rogers, The University of Virginia, “People Rhetoric, and Affect: On the Political Force of DuBois’ The Souls of Black Folk,” February 8, 4:30PM, Pruyne Lecture Hall, Fayerweather.

Professor Machala and Professor Griffiths will moderate a discussion of two recently published books, Amrita Basu’s edited anthology, Women’s Movements in a Global Era: The Power of Local Feminisms, and Javier Corrales’, The Politics of Sexuality in Latin America, February 17, 4.30 pm, the Frost Library.

Professor Zoya Hasan, Nehru University, New Delhi, “The Injustice Within: Muslims in Emerging India,” February 18, 4:30PM, Porter Lounge, Converse Hall.

Carlos de la Torre, FLACSO-Quito, Ecuador, “Technopopulism: are charisma and democracy incompatible?,” February 28, 4:30PM, Pruyne Lecture Hall, Fayerweather.

Professor Erik Jones, Johns Hopkins SAIS Bologna Center, “The Global Financial Crisis and the Future of Europe,” Tuesday, March 1, 4 PM, Room 209, Converse Hall.

Film screening and presentation by film director Luis Argueta of, "AbUSed: The Postville Raid," about one of the largest immigration enforcement raids in 2008, which took place in Postville, Iowa, March 8, 2011, at 4PM in Pruyne Auditorium, Fayerweather.

The Copeland Colloquium is presenting a number of interest talks. For details see https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/colloquia/copeland_colloquium/2010

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Faculty Office Hours

Can be found at this link: https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/departments/political_science/office-hours

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Deadlines

Professor Basu will be meeting with prospective thesis writers on Tuesday April 5th at 4.30 pm, Clark House, room 100. All juniors who are considering writing theses should attend this informational session.

Latham Summer Internships: These stipends are awarded each year to Amherst students who are seeking to spend the summer working as interns in Washington, D.C., in offices of the federal government, or in other positions in the public service. The students are expected to find their own internships, but they may find it easier to place themselves when they bring some financial support of their own from Amherst. (The stipend will probably be in the range of $800 to $1,000.) Applications should be sent to the office of the Department, and directed to: Theresa Laizer, Latham Internships, Clark House. Deadline for applications is April 1, 2011.