

Political Science News

Amherst College

January 2015

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2014/2015 Political Science Department Chair Professor Javier Corrales

Office: 105 Clark House

Phone: 542-2164

Email: jcorrales@amherst.edu

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Meet Our Visitors this Semester (See last page for new courses)



Professor Dionne

Kim Yi Dionne, *Five College Asst Professor of African Government* teaches courses on African politics, ethnic politics, and field research methods. Her research interests include: political behavior and public opinion, health, ethnicity, and research methods. The substantive focus of her work is on the opinions of ordinary Africans toward interventions aimed at improving their condition and the relative success of such interventions. She is currently working on a book manuscript on the global intervention against AIDS in Africa. Her work has been published or is forthcoming in *African Affairs*, *African Studies Review*, *Comparative Political Studies*, *Electoral Studies*, *Health Policy and Planning* and *World Development*. She is also a regular contributor to *The Monkey Cage*, a blog on politics and political science at *The Washington Post*.

Dionne received her bachelors degree in political science from the University of California Los Angeles and her doctorate from the University of California Los Angeles. She was previously a Fulbright Scholar in Malawi (2008-09) and assistant professor of political science at Texas A&M University (2010-13).



Professor Pleshakov

Constantine Pleshakov, *Visiting Assistant Professor and Karl Loewenstein Fellow In Political Science and Jurisprudence* lives in Amherst, Massachusetts. His books include *There Is No Freedom Without Bread! 1989 and the Civil War That Brought Down Communism* (2009), *Stalin's Folly: The First Ten Tragic Days of World War Two on the Eastern Front* (2005), and *The Tsar's Last Armada: The Epic Journey to the Battle of Tsushima* (2002). He is currently working on a book about the ongoing Crimea crisis.

Course description for POSC-380: This course will examine the foreign policy of the Russian Federation of the past twenty years. As a successor state Russia has inherited both the Soviet Union's clout (nuclear arms, permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council) and Soviet debts - monetary, psychological, and historical. What are the conceptual foundations of Russian diplomacy? Can we deconstruct Russian nationalism so as to examine its different trends and their impact on foreign policy? Do Russian exports of oil and gas define Russian diplomacy, as it is often claimed? Is there any pattern in the struggle over resources and their export routes in continental Eurasia?



Professor Gescinska

Alicja Gescinska, Karl Loewenstein Fellow

Alicja Gescinska is a Karl Loewenstein Fellow at the department. Her research focuses on different concepts and theories of freedom, and covers many fields, ranging from political theory to European politics, ethics, continental philosophy, sexual ethics and metaphysics. In her writings she explores the validity of different concepts of freedom and also discusses the meaning and limits of freedom in specific social, political and moral issues and debates, such as freedom of speech, sexual liberty, and religious freedom. She obtained a Ph.D in Philosophy at Ghent University (Belgium). Last year she worked as a William E. Simon Research Associate at Princeton University. Besides her academic work, she has written non-scholarly books and articles about philosophy and politics, and is a frequently asked pundit in Belgium and the Netherlands.

Course Information for POSC 346, Philosophy of Freedom (offered spring 2015): This course introduces the students to the conceptual history of freedom. Three different concepts of freedom are central to the course: negative, positive, and republican freedom. The work of the main proponents of these different concepts will be discussed, as well as the common objections against each concept of freedom. We will also discuss specific contemporary social and political issues which

revolve around freedom, its meaning, how to safeguard and expand it, and which are often the cause of heated public debates: what are the limits of religious freedom, the limits of the freedom of speech and expression, when does the right of the government and external authorities to intervene in our personal lives conflict with our right to personal autonomy?



Professor Mattiacci

Eleonora Mattiacci, Karl Loewenstein Fellow & Visiting Assistant Professor in Political Science

Eleonora Mattiacci, Karl Loewenstein Fellow, will be teaching the following course this semester.

Course Information for POSC 130, Climate Change and Civil Unrest (offered spring 2015):

Can climate change increase the probability of riots, violent demonstrations, and even civil war by putting a country's economy under duress? And if so, what can be done about it? This class employs a diverse set of learning techniques to address these timely questions in international politics. First, we will build on cutting-edge Academic research to investigate the mechanisms through which climate change puts one country's economic and political system under duress, thus increasing the risk of experiencing riots and violent demonstrations. Second, we will utilize role-playing analysis procedures to have each student embrace the perspective of one key international actor (such as the US, the United Nations, China, Ghana, Kenya, the World Bank, etc.) and devise a strategy for that actor to address the connection between climate change and civil war. Finally, we will use simulations techniques to reproduce international negotiations to reduce CO2 emissions, where each student representing a key international actor will try to mitigate the impact of climate change on the recurrence of violence and war, while still advancing its own, national interest. The aim of the class is to wrestle with the fundamental contradiction between the global scale required by international efforts to tackle the climate change/civil war link and the sub-region specific challenges imposed by climate change on each country's economy.

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Profile: Eleonora Mattiacci is the Karl Loewenstein Post-Doctoral Fellow and Visiting Assistant Professor in Political Science. She earned her PhD from The Ohio State University and a BA from Universita degli Studi di Bologna (Italy). Her research and teaching tackle the conditions under which relations between countries swing back and forth inconsistently between episodes of intense cooperation (i.e., trade agreements, alliance formation, etc.) and instances of bitter conflict (i.e., wars, militarized disputes, etc.), and focus in particular on the role that nuclear weapons and climate change play in shaping such volatile foreign policy behavior.

Javier Corrales travels to Guatemala to Present Book

In October 2014, Prof. Corrales and Daniel Altschuler '04 traveled to Guatemala City to present their recent book, *The Promise of Participation: Experiments in Participatory Governance in Honduras and Guatemala* (Palgrave 2013). The book offers one of the most extensive studies ever on the effects of participatory governance in developing countries. It argues that civic participation can have positive spillover effects—that is, civic participation in one particular domain of public life can lead to more participation in other areas. Both Corrales and Altschuler also appeared on TV talk show, *Dimensión*, where in addition to discussing their book, they discussed contemporary politics in Latin America and in U.S.-Latin America relations.



The October 2014 issue of the *Journal of Democracy* includes an essay co-authored by Prof. Javier Corrales and Michael Penfold, entitled, "Manipulating Term Limits in Latin America." The authors discuss the reasons that some Latin American countries are changing their constitution to relax term limits. Drawing from a new dataset, the authors discuss why relaxing term limits is exacerbating the problem of the incumbent's advantage in Latin America.

Items of Interest and Upcoming Events

Political Science Senior Thesis Writers Dinner will be held on Wednesday, January 28th at 6:00 p.m. in Clark House, room 100. Professor Andrew Poe will be hosting.

On February 24th the Political Science Department will be holding an informational session for Junior's who are interested in writing a thesis. The meeting will be held at 5:00 – 6:30 p.m. in Clark House, room 100 with Professor Javier Corrales.

On April 23rd the Political Science Department will host a reception for Senior and Junior Political Science majors who are writing a thesis. The reception will be at 5:00 p.m. in the Alumni House.

Useful Links/Information

Faculty Office Hours: https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/departments/political_science/faculty-office-hours

Connect with Political Science Alumni: https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/departments/political_science/poliscialumni

Five College International Relationships Certificate Program: https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/departments/political_science/five_college

Honors/Thesis Requirements: https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/departments/political_science/honorsthesis

Latham Internships: <https://www.amherst.edu/campuslife/careers/students/jobs/internships/funding>

Latham Scholarship: Political Science

Scholarships 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 public service.

Eligibility: Classes of 2017, 2016, 2015, Must be in Washington, D.C., in offices of government or public service, Internship can be full-time or part-time, Preference will be given to students who are returning to Amherst, Extra consideration will be given to students whose summer internship is connected to work on a senior thesis

Events and News: https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/departments/political_science/events

Amherst College Department of Political Science New Courses offered for Spring 2015

Spring 2015

POSC 119: Violence and Politics (Obert)

POSC 130: Climate Change and Civil Unrest (Mattiacci)

POSC 260: African Politics (Dionne)

POSC 319: History, Time, and American Political Development (Obert)

POSC 346: Philosophy of Freedom (Gescinska)

POSC 380: Kremlin Rising (Pleshakov)

POSC 403: Social Policy in China (Ratigan)

Major Requirements

Majors in Political Science must complete 10 courses for rite or 12 for honors in courses offered or approved by the Department, including at least one introductory course numbered in the 100's and at least one advanced seminar. In addition they must fulfill a distribution requirement and complete a core concentration within Political Science.

Introductory courses: Courses numbered 100s are introductory courses. Because these courses are designed to introduce students to the study of politics, the department recommends that they be taken in the first and second year. Students may count a maximum of two introductory courses toward their major. FYSE courses taught by members of our department count toward the introductory course requirement.

Advanced Seminars: These courses are generally numbered in the 400s. They have prerequisites, limited enrollment, and a substantial writing requirement.

Distribution Requirement: To fulfill the distribution requirement, majors must take one course in each of the following areas: Institutions and Law: States, institutions, parties, political economy, the law and public policy [IL]; Society and Culture: Civil society, social movements, rights and identities, cultural politics [SC]; Global: War, peace, diplomacy, foreign policy and globalization studies [G]; Political Theory: Power, norms, and justice [PT].

Core Concentration: Political Science majors shall also designate a core concentration within the major. The core concentration will consist of a minimum of four courses organized around a theme chosen by the student in consultation with the advisor. Students may count up to two courses from outside the Political Science Department to fulfill the core requirement. These courses will count for the completion of the major. Ordinarily

students shall designate a core concentration by the end of the sophomore year or at the time they declare the major. Advisors will certify that graduating students have completed their core concentration requirement.

Credits for study abroad and transfer students: Two courses for those going abroad for 1 semester; 3 courses for students going abroad for 1 year.

Courses must 1) be taught by someone with a degree in political science or have substantial political content; and 2) must not be redundant with other courses already taken in the Five Colleges. The chair of the department will decide whether courses will be given credit toward the major.

For students transferring to Amherst, the Department will accept three courses for the major. We may waive the introductory course requirement if the transfer student has had an equivalent course.

For students coming to the College with a BA in hand (e.g. from Japanese universities), we will accept 4 courses and waive the introductory course requirement.

Decisions regarding credit or requests to vary the requirements for completion of the major: Decisions regarding credit or requests to vary the requirements for completion of the major shall be made by the Department Chair.



Amherst College

Department of Political Science
P.O. Box 5000
Amherst, MA 01002-5000
Phone: 413-542-2318
Fax: 413-542-2264
Email: polisci@amherst.edu

We're on the Web at

[https://www.amherst.edu/
academiclife/departments/
political_science](https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/departments/political_science)