**Course Description**

This course explores current debates about the “state of the state,” both in the U.S. and abroad. Why do most nations have states? Why are some states more repressive than others, more war-prone than others, better promoters of development than others, more inclusive than others, more rights-granting than others? We also look at how societal actors react to various forms of state formation, ranging from active support to negotiated limits to apathy to vigorous contestation. We explore these questions by studying empirical cases cross-nationally and across time. This course, therefore, serves as a survey of Political Science since we look at the state from the angle of at least six different subfields of political science:

- political theory (mostly on 17th-19th arguments about the purpose of states),
- comparative politics (mostly on theories about regime type and regime change),
- international relations (mostly on theories of war, conflict, and cooperation),
- political economy (mostly on variations across welfare states);
- American politics (mostly on the role of institutions in regulating conflict),
- law and constitutions (mostly on how politics shape the law and vice versa),
- and gender studies (mostly on how states, parties, and society interact to expand or hinder gender-based rights and protections).

**Departmental Requirements and Political Science**

As stated in the Amherst College Course Catalogue, students majoring in Political Science are required to take one course numbered at the 100 level. This course counts as one of them.

Enrollment is limited, and priority will be given to students majoring (or thinking of majoring) in Political Science at Amherst College. Order of priority: Seniors (majoring in Political Science); Sophomores (considering a major in Political Science).

Although the course is ideally suited for students with little exposure to Political Science, you should not think of this as an entry-level course. Instead, this is a “panoramic” course, intended...
to provide an overview of different subfields of Political Science. You will be introduced to some of the major debates and methodologies prevalent in these subfields.

Readings

- All students are required to come to class having completed the readings (and watched the movies if applicable) for that class meeting.
- There are no assigned books.
- Readings consist of journal articles, book excerpts, or journalistic pieces.
- Most readings are available on e-reserves at moodle.amherst.edu. Only students officially registered for the course will have access to the readings.

Course Requirements

- All students are required to write four papers.
- I will only grade three of these papers: the first two and either paper 3 or 4. You will decide at the end of the course which paper (3 or 4) you would like me to grade.
- Topics for all papers will be distributed at least one week prior to the due date.
- Papers will be based on class material; no outside reading is necessary or expected.
- Each paper will count approximately 20-40 percent of your grade, with your strongest paper counting the most.

Your Participation

This course relies heavily on class participation, counting for 15 percent of your grade. The format of the class will combine lecture and discussion: on some days I will mostly lecture; on others, I will mostly lead a discussion. Regardless of the format, you must come to class prepared to discuss the readings and the movies.

Attendance: Class attendance is mandatory. I will only allow one absence per semester. Additional absences will lower significantly your participation grade. Attendance, however, is not the same as participation. The latter is the extent to which you make a qualitative contribution to the discussion in progress. It entails addressing the issues raised by me and your classmates, as well as raising your own issues, when pertinent.

I will never call on you to participate; it is ultimately your responsibility to be heard in class. The point is not to speak for the sake of speaking (or to impress me), but rather to contribute with a different or a supplementary perspective that is relevant to the ongoing discussion.

Lead Discussants

At the beginning of the semester, you will be assigned to one group of “lead discussants.” On designated class meetings, lead discussants will be expected to participate more actively and be
better prepared than the rest of the class. The list of assignments indicates what days each
group is expected to take the lead.

My Participation

One objective of class discussion is to allow me to respond to your own comments. I want to
make everyone feel comfortable participating. But at the same time, I must correct or modify
comments, and sometimes challenge them. If I hear a statement that is factually wrong,
logically weak, or debatable, it is incumbent upon me to call attention to this. Please do not be
offended by my corrections and probes, and please don’t be discouraged to participate in fear of
being corrected or challenged. I do not expect your comments to be perfect. I simply expect
you to be engaged. In assessing participation grade, I look for pertinence, more so than
accuracy.

Academic Conduct

Plagiarism is forbidden. Remember, you are expected to discuss (not restate) the ideas of other
authors. Make sure that you always attribute the source. You want to make sure that you are
clear about the ideas that are yours and those that belong to others. When in doubt, indicate
sources. You are advised to read about plagiarism at:
http://www.amherst.edu/~dos/plagiarism/index.html

Learning Objectives

- Learn about concepts that will allow you to understand politics, across time and places.
- Learn to identify key theoretical arguments seeking to explain political puzzles
- Learn to compare theories
- Learn the basics of the comparative method in social science (and the importance of
  identifying variations in outcomes that need to be explained).
- Learn to use evidence to evaluate and test theories about causality
- Learn to write succinctly papers that compare and contrasts arguments
- Learn to participate in group discussions to interpret facts, apply theory, use evidence to
  support or challenge arguments. I’m not going to teach debate skills. You will be
  exposed to how social scientists discuss, apply, and rank theory.

This class asks a lot of you. We will cover many fields of political science. Chances are that you
will like some topics more than others; that you’ll do better in some parts of the course and not
others. But don’t be intimidated. I will do my best to provide support, especially in class.

Etiquette:

- No cell phones while in class.
- Please arrive punctually.
- If you need to be late, do still come to class; I prefer tardiness to absence.
- Refrain from sleeping, yawning, or chatting with your neighbor during class. In class,
one person speaks at a time.
- Be respectful of others. Raise your hand and wait for your turn to speak.
- Do not interrupt others, but feel free to interrupt me if I seem to be moving on to a new topic and you are not ready to move on or for clarification.
- If you need to leave early, please let me know before the beginning of class. If you need to leave the room temporarily, feel free to do so.

Extensions

My policy is simple: no extensions will be granted, except in extreme circumstances. Late papers will be marked down.
## List of Assignments

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class meeting</th>
<th>Reading Assignment</th>
<th>Work Due</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tue Sep 17</td>
<td><strong>No Class</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
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<td>Oct 1 and 3</td>
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<td>Date</td>
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<td>Reading/Commentary</td>
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<td>Tue Oct 15</td>
<td>Holiday/No Class</td>
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<td>Thu Oct 17</td>
<td>Holiday/No Class</td>
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<td>Special Session</td>
<td>Competitive Authoritarianism (Russia)</td>
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<td><em>Journal of Democracy</em></td>
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<td><a href="http://www.journalofdemocracy.org/sites/default/files/Diamond-26-1_0.pdf">http://www.journalofdemocracy.org/sites/default/files/Diamond-26-1_0.pdf</a></td>
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<td>Tue Oct 22</td>
<td>Competitive Authoritarianism (Venezuela)</td>
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<td>Brief skype interview Ambassador Patrick Duddy</td>
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<td>Corrales, Javier. 2006. Hugo Boss. <em>Foreign Policy</em></td>
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<td>Corrales, Javier. 2015. Autocratic Legalism. <em>Journal of Democracy</em></td>
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<td>Thu Oct 24</td>
<td>Democratic Backsliding in the US</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
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http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/09/united-states-china-war-thucydides-trap/406756/?utm_source=SFFB |
Harvard Magazine on China.  
http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/9598b09e-2c9b-11e1-8cca-00144feabcd0.html#axzz1hvMOZEFi  
Paper 3 Due Nov 16 |
### The Economist
- [http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/apr/18/vladimir-putin-surveillance-us-leaders-snowden](http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/apr/18/vladimir-putin-surveillance-us-leaders-snowden)
- The feeling someone’s watching (added Feb 2019) [https://on.ft.com/2UPUzo9](https://on.ft.com/2UPUzo9)

**Tue Nov 19 G-3**

**Terrorism III: White Nationalism**


**Part IV: Contemporary Case:**

**The State, Institutions, Societies and LGBT Rights in the US and Abroad**

**Thu Nov 21 G-4**

**LGBT Rights: Introduction**


**Movie:** [Serving in Silence](https://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/07/opinion/bruni-java-and-justice.html?r=1&ref=opinion)

**Nov 26 – Dec 3**

**Thanksgiving break**

**Movie:** [Stonewall](https://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/07/opinion/bruni-java-and-justice.html?r=1&ref=opinion)

**Thu Dec 5 G-5**

**Gay Rights: Lessons from the Women’s Movement**


**Gay Rights: Barriers at the Society Level**

**Movie:** [The Normal Heart](https://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/07/opinion/bruni-java-and-justice.html?r=1&ref=opinion)
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Events</th>
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<td><strong>LGBT Rights Abroad</strong></td>
<td><a href="http://www.washingtonblade.com/2012/11/28/clinton-lgbt-inclusion-the-smart-thing-for-u-s-foreign-policy/">http://www.washingtonblade.com/2012/11/28/clinton-lgbt-inclusion-the-smart-thing-for-u-s-foreign-policy/</a></td>
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<td>Final paper Due Fri. Dec 13</td>
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