

Political Science (PSCI) Courses

PSCI1001 Introduction to Political Science

Political Science is the study of how human beings create governments, leaders, laws and policies. This foundational course explores how and why politics involves all aspects of our everyday lives. The dynamics of politics center on acquiring, distributing, and/or restricting access to power held by citizens and states. From local politics to international relations, the study of politics enables understandings of who ultimately gets what, when, where, why and how - or not. This course therefore explores the major ideas that drive the ways in which leaders govern, the systems in which they operate, motivations and barriers for citizens to participate in political life, how institutions of government work, and the role of money and media in the making of politics, from Main Street to Wall Street. This course also considers the modes by which citizens drive change in their governments, from Facebook and the ballot box to mass-scale protests driving political revolutions of the 21st century.

Offered at Charlotte, Online, Providence

3 Semester Credits

PSCI1030 Introduction to Political Theory

This course examines the major political propositions and ideas advanced in Western political thought that address and analyze core political controversies. By considering many of the primary thinkers and classic texts influencing political thought, this course explores the foundational concepts of political science. Students are equipped with the intellectual tools to comprehend and rationally question political concepts such as justice, liberty, rights, equality, power, authority, law and sovereignty.

Offered at Online, Providence

3 Semester Credits

PSCI2001 International Relations and World Politics

This course provides a comprehensive introduction to the study of international relations, core concepts and key theories of world politics. Presented in this course are foundational ideas for understanding major historical and contemporary events in world politics, the behavior of states, and their relationship to the global order. This course prepares students to interpret world politics through analysis of particular trends, patterns, crises and global change. The chronic nature of war and ceaseless search for peace are considered, exploring how twentieth century historical events contribute to the twenty-first century nature of international relations. Politics and economics are also considered, focusing on economic relations among advanced post-industrial economies and issues of development of non-western nations, emphasizing the Global South. The role of post-colonial legacies and the failure of states is an important theme of the course. Additional topics include critical and emerging analyses that imagine possible future systems of international relations; imperialism; cold war politics and its legacies; national security theory including deterrence and the role of international political and monetary organizations in world politics.

Offered at Online, Providence

3 Semester Credits

PSCI2050 Political Communications

This course examines how political actors communicate, select and design their messages and choose the medium that delivers them. Topics include how previous "information revolutions" (e.g., the rise of newspapers and broadcast media) extend the reach of communication, and radically remake political participation by voters, interest groups and/or political parties. Emphasis is on identifying and evaluating "frames," the underlying, unspoken assumptions that support political communication in mainstream media. Students also examine how recent changes of digital media are currently altering or disrupting long-established patterns of voting, activism and voter opinion-making. Students research and evaluate claims regarding the long-term benefits and/or risks of a globally connected digital media network, including its effect on democratic participation, government surveillance and political legitimacy. Students develop, present and critique a political media project.

Offered at Online, Providence

3 Semester Credits

PSCI2100 Comparative Politics and Government

This course introduces students to the vital role that comparing systems of governments and political life plays in understanding the complex world of the 21st century and its politics. Through a focus on basic theories, analytical methods and questions in the field of comparative politics, students explore how political systems differ, how ideologies play a key role in defining political systems and governments, and the ways in which socio-cultural factors are a force in the making of particular models of government. Topics include the purpose of government and the role of the modern nation-state; autocratic and democratic structures of government; parliamentary and presidential democracies; elections and electoral systems; revolutions and political change; the influence of economics, religion and culture on government; globalization; and how governmental structures and institutions ultimately impact the lives of those governed. Country-specific case studies are examined throughout the course.

Offered at Online, Providence

3 Semester Credits

PSCI2150 American Constitutional Law

This course examines the Constitution's role in the relationship between the American people and their government, the constitutional structure and power of the American government, the preservation of individual rights and liberties, and the work of the Supreme Court of the United States. In addition to considering the text, theories and seminal cases related to the Constitution of the United States, this course explores the political, cultural and historical influences contributing to American constitutional jurisprudence.

Prerequisite(s): Sophomore status.

Offered at Online, Providence

3 Semester Credits

PSCI2200 Race, Politics and Power in America

This course explores the pivotal question of why and how race matters so greatly to the making of politics and governance in historical and contemporary America. The course begins at the earliest formations of the U.S., underscoring the pivotal part that race played in defining citizens and rights during this era. Focus is on these foundational-period linkages to race and political rights and their political implications for the post-modern civil rights movement. Historical factors, status changes of minority communities in the U.S., and the idea of a post-racial society are compared and contrasted.

Offered at Online, Providence

3 Semester Credits

PSCI3005 Political Ideologies and the 21st Century

Historical events and processes of the 20th century help us to grasp the rising political ideologies of the 21st century and the emerging ways in which these ideologies are expressed as organizations, such as ISIS. Political ideologies of the past and of this century often stand in opposition to each other, as demonstrated in globalization/anti-globalization movements. Movements such as anarchism, perceived as marginal in the U.S., play a considerable role in shaping political events abroad. Digital movements of disruption, such as Anonymous, represent new modes of ideology, power and expression. The fate of ideologies with their roots in the 19th and 20th centuries, such as environmentalism, feminism, fascism, and radical-right-wing and anti-government groups in the 21st century is explored. Emerging and splinter hate groups, insurgent, anti-state movements and alternative political models and organizations are examined in global context, from Canada to New Caledonia.

Prerequisite(s): ENG1021 or ENG1027, sophomore status.

Offered at Online, Providence

3 Semester Credits

PSCI3050 American Politics, Policy and Institutions

This course is an exploration of the interrelationships between U.S. politics and institutions and one of their key functions: making public policy. The theoretical and political foundations of policy studies and the craft of policy analysis as an academic and professional discipline are introduced. This course assesses both formal representative institutions (e.g., legislatures and/or executives), and their relationship to informal institutions (e.g., political parties, interest groups and/or the media). In addition, students define and apply concepts and analytical tools in evaluating how effectively or efficiently a government provides public goods. Assignments and projects give students opportunities to apply these concepts and techniques to policy problems and dilemmas and to practice communicating their analyses and recommendations to decision makers and/or stakeholders in a professional format.

Prerequisite(s): ENG1021 or ENG1027, HIST3200, sophomore status.

Offered at Online, Providence

3 Semester Credits

PSCI3100 Research Methods in Political Science

This course explores the vital role research plays in the making of political science as an academic field of study. Probing how the scientific method works in the practice of studying, predicting and analyzing politics, this course investigates the array of qualitative and quantitative methods foundational to research in politics. How to research campaigns, political actors, processes and practices in both policy and legislative arenas, and their impacts comprises the scope of this course. The concepts and tools explored are pursued through continuous engagement with the empirical, utilizing seminal and current research in the discipline to introduce, reinforce and put to practice the ways in which design, data and results inform contemporary political thought and practice in both standard and innovative ways.

Prerequisite(s): Junior status.

Offered at Online, Providence

3 Semester Credits

PSCI3150 Ethics in Public Life

This course provides an introduction to ethics in political and institutional public life, the meaning of a fair and equitable society, and the obligations of public actors (elected officials, bureaucrats, lobbyists, advocates and others). Students identify and evaluate major theoretical frameworks, including utilitarian, Rawlsian and deontological ethics, and in discussing individual cases and dilemmas propose courses of action grounded in one or more of these ethical models. In addition, the course examines the organizational and political models that assist and/or interfere with the fulfillment of public ethical obligations. Students also assess the extent to which institutions may be organized to encourage desired ethical outcomes. Finally, students learn to develop and communicate their decisions through classroom exercises and in appropriate professional formats.

Prerequisite(s): ENG1021 or ENG1027, sophomore status.

Offered at Online, Providence

3 Semester Credits

PSCI3200 Women in American Political Life

This course explores the role played by women in American politics and the effect of political decision making on women from the founding of the United States until the present day. Topics include women's acquisition of political power, including the struggle for suffrage and for the vote; the role played by women in creating public policy and the effect of policy on women; and women as reformers and political activists. Emphasis is on the role played by women of color as political actors in their communities and on the national stage.

Prerequisite(s): ENG1021 or ENG1027, sophomore status.

Offered at Online, Providence

3 Semester Credits

PSCI3250 Dynamics of Contemporary Diplomacy and Statecraft

This course traces the origins of diplomacy from the imperial post-Westphalian world order to the emergence of the concept of the diplomat and formation of the nation-state system in the wake of Woodrow Wilson's 14 Points, on to the present era of globalized, insurgent anti-state movements. This course utilizes case studies to illustrate the major themes organizing the study of diplomacy and statecraft, grounded in an exploration of core theories and dilemmas of diplomacy drawn from near past to the present. The course offers a systematic approach to the analysis of this interrelationship, drawing on key concepts and theories from political science.

Prerequisite(s): ENG1021 or ENG1027, sophomore status.

Offered at Providence

3 Semester Credits

PSCI3300 Politics of Food, Human Security and Social Justice

This course examines food as a medium of political life. The cultural politics of food and its connection to the production, distribution, consumption and waste of food to human security and social justice is discussed. Some of the issues addressed include food (in)security and sovereignty, body image and food, hunger and obesity, food citizenship, and the tension among government, industry, labor, consumers and food activists.

Prerequisite(s): ENG1021 or ENG1027, sophomore status.

Offered at Online, Providence

3 Semester Credits

PSCI3350 Political Parties, Social Movements and Interest Groups

This course explores how political groups form and why they matter to political life in both authoritarian regimes and democracies. The impact of these groups on the effectiveness of political representation and the efficacy of governments is analyzed. Three types of groups central to U.S. politics are compared: 1) political parties, 2) social movements and 3) interest groups. This course explores dynamics driving the formation of these groups, such as interest articulation, ideology, grievances and contentious issues of policy. The impact of how these groups wield influence on the core institutions of government, individual political actors, media discourse, and voting behavior are explored. Key theories and thinkers that explain the processes and practices of interest articulation, underlying dynamics of collective identification and action, political mobilization, patterns and processes of lobbying behavior, and an investigation of their impact on the US political landscape are examined.

Prerequisite(s): ENG1021 or ENG1027, sophomore status.

Offered at Providence

3 Semester Credits

PSCI3500 Special Topics in Political Science

This course focuses on a different area, issue or theme each semester, depending on student interest and faculty opportunities to teach and lead innovative course initiatives. Possible topics include study of Congress, the presidency, Washington political culture and the role of the media, national security, political campaigns, public social policy, political violence, and regional studies (e.g., European Union, Middle East). Additional fees may apply depending on specific course section offered.

Prerequisite(s): Sophomore status.

Offered at Providence

3 Semester Credits

PSCI3550 Inside Washington: Contemporary American Politics in Critical Perspective

This course explores the contemporary American political landscape as it is constituted and impacted by regular midterm and presidential election cycles; ongoing deep political polarization among the electorate; radical politics on both the left and right; the role of mainstream, alternative and social media in American politics; issues of campaign financing; dynamics driving levels of prevailing voter attitudes and turnout, and emergent domestic policy issues. The point of departure for this course is an engaged examination of the themes, factors, variables and actors that constitute the complex American political landscape, as broadly examined during The Washington Center's Inside Washington intensive seminar. This course enables students to examine more specifically those issues, events, trends, patterns, precipitous political happenings, and current political science research of interest to them, on an individualized basis.

Prerequisite(s): Sophomore status.

Offered at Providence

3 Semester Credits

PSCI4100 Issues in Political Theory: The Politics of Human Rights in Global Perspective

This course explores categories of rights granted by the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights; ideological, political and cultural tensions concerning human rights; and their application to all peoples and societies. International failures to ensure these rights are analyzed in case studies. The politics of human rights, barriers to realizing human rights as a global priority for the 21st century amid worldwide atrocity and terrorism, and origins of the idea of individual rights and cultural analogues to western notions of rights are explored.

Prerequisite(s): ENG1021 or ENG1027, sophomore status.

Offered at Online, Providence

3 Semester Credits

PSCI4900 Capstone Seminar in Political Science

This capstone seminar is the culmination of the learning experiences and skills students have acquired throughout the course of their political science program. Students develop a research thesis and professional portfolio in preparation for them practicing political science in a variety of professional settings and graduate school programs. The emphasis of this research/professional seminar is three-fold: 1) to support students in designing and making operational a research project, 2) to produce a portfolio and professional development plan, and 3) to write an effectively articulated research thesis. Students engage in on-going peer-review and consultation sessions with the purpose of encouraging a resourcefulness-approach to professionalism and personal skills enhancement, both in future career and academic pursuits. Throughout the seminar, emphasis is on supporting students to conceive of and articulate the applicability of their acquired skills and program-related experiences to their developing career and future study.

Prerequisite(s): PSCI3100, senior status.

Offered at Online, Providence

3 Semester Credits