

Political Science (PO)

Courses

PO 100 Power & Justice: 3 semester hours

This course pursues the answer to a general political question such as “What is equality?” or “What is justice?”. The class discusses that question and reads works of other political thinkers—ancient and modern—related to that topic. More concretely, the course considers the ways in which that issue influenced the Framers of the American government, and compares that to how other countries have handled that issue differently with the specific institutions they have created. For example, the course may look at how the United States Congress attempts to provide for equal representation differently than the German Bundestag or the Chinese National People’s Congress. Finally, the course examines how countries interact with each other militarily and economically to address potential cooperation and conflict among countries. Through this ongoing dialogue, students are introduced to the four major subfields of political science: political philosophy, American politics, comparative politics, and international relations.

PO 101 Introduction To Political Philosophy: 3 semester hours

This course is an examination of main ideas, methods, and perspectives of some of the major Western political theorists from Plato to the modern period. Drawing upon study of the original texts, the course aims to convey an understanding of political philosophy as a tradition of inquiry into fundamental questions of human nature, the origins of ethical codes, the role and limitations of government, and social justice. The course also encourages assessment of the relevance of the theories studied for understanding and evaluating politics today.

PO 102 Government and Politics Around the World: 3 semester hours

This course aims to illustrate the diversity of political life, institutional alternatives, and differences in political processes and policy outcomes in the context of foreign countries representing different cultures and regions of the world and different stages of development. The course introduces basic methods and concepts of comparative study and examines similarities and differences in such areas as political parties, elections, executive and legislative institutions, as well as economic, social, and welfare policies.

PO 103 Introduction to International Relations: 3 semester hours

An introduction to the basic principles underlying the interaction between nation states, such as war, trade, alliances, balance of power, and international law. Students will become familiar with major theories of international politics and will evaluate these theories in the context of major events in international politics, including the collapse of the Soviet Union, the global financial crisis, terrorism, environmental degradation, and the rise of new international structures such as the European Union.

PO 111 Introduction To American Politics: 3 semester hours

A broad survey of American politics, including political behavior of the American electorate, the theory and practice of constitutional government, the structure and functioning of American political institutions, and contemporary issues.

PO 112 Globalization and Human Survival: 3 semester hours

This course is an introductory examination of some problems that confront all people today and will require global attention and cooperation for their amelioration. Some problem areas considered include war, peace and security, ecology and resources, and poverty and development. The course also highlights the interconnectedness of the emerging global problems, considers various proposals, which have been made for addressing them, and treats the complications arising from differences of culture and values.

PO 201 The Presidency: 3 semester hours

This course is an examination of the office, powers, and roles of the American presidency, the relationships of the presidency with other elements of the American political system and issues and problems raised by the presidency’s performance today. Recommended: PO 111.

PO 202 Congress: 3 semester hours

An examination of the powers, activities, and functions of the American Congress, the relationships of Congress with constituents and other elements of the American political system leading up to an analysis of issues and problems raised by Congress’ performance today. The course highlights the tension that exists between Congress as a representative assembly and as a national policy-making institution. Recommended: PO 111.

PO 203 The U.S. Supreme Court and the American Judiciary: 3 semester hours

This course is an introductory course to the structure and characteristics of the U.S. legal system at both state and federal level, with special consideration given to the interaction between law and politics. The course will cover topics such as the evolution of the judiciary and its effects on the other branches of government, the institutional structure of the Supreme Court and of the state and federal courts, models of judicial decision-making, as well as the role of judges, lawyers, and litigants in the judicial process. Recommended: PO 111.

PO 204 Political Parties, Voters and Elections: 3 semester hours

The core elements of any democratic political life are political parties and election; this course examines both. Topics to be discussed include the causes and evolution of the U.S. two-party system, voting for President and Congress, how voters decide, voter turnout, and the electoral foundations of divided government. Recommended PO 111.

PO 205 History of American Political Thought: 3 semester hours

An examination of writings by selected political theorists throughout American history. Two goals of the course are identification of the distinctive features, themes, and preoccupations of American political theory and assessment of the relevance of the theories studied for understanding and evaluating American politics today. Recommended: PO 101 and PO 111.

PO 265 Politics and Film: the Art of the Message: 3 semester hours

This is not a popcorn and movies class; it is a course to introduce students to a range of political films and to develop their skills in understanding and analyzing their political significance and influence. Film has a broad and persuasive appeal to a significant cross-section of the public. Whether through intentional documentary, dramatic renderings of historical events or timely issues, fictional drama dealing with big issues, or though satire, the cinema has been a powerful medium in influencing public views on the events, people, and places that make up our complex political world. The purpose of this class is to introduce the student to the portrayal of that complex political world through film, its effect on the thinking and attitudes of the public, and ultimately its role in shaping public policy and decision-making.

PO 270 Environmental Politics: 3 semester hours

This course examines relationships between political forces and environmental change, doing so at the national and international level. We analyze underlying issues central to addressing environmental concerns, such as the tragedy of the commons problems, capitalism, and multilateral diplomacy. And we consider a variety of environmental issues, such as climate change, waste management, and water scarcity. For some parts of the course, students will negotiate in simulations in which they take on the roles of actors with conflicting interests (e.g. countries, international interest groups, and NGOs), and try to formulate tenable solutions to specific problems.

PO 301 Constitutional Law I: Structure of Government: 3 semester hours

Learn the principles, doctrines and controversies regarding the basic structure and division of powers in American government as defined through the text of the Constitution and its interpretation by the Supreme Court. Specifically, we inquire about the exercise of judicial review, the scope of congressional powers, the nature of executive prerogatives, as well as the tug of war that characterizes the balance of power among these the three branches of government and the balance of authority between the national and state governments. The Constitution is primarily a legal document, but the historical and political context of constitutional interpretation is inseparable from the legal analysis, so the course will explore each of these areas in detail. Prerequisite: sophomore standing or consent of instructor; PO 111 or PO 203 recommended but not required.

PO 302 Constitutional Law II: Civil Rights and Liberties: 3 semester hours

This course introduces students to the constitutional principles that govern the relationship between individuals and the state. It explores the concept of national citizenship and examines the limits on governmental action imposed by the Due Process and Equal Protection Clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment, as well as by the First Amendment. The student will be expected to learn about freedom of speech and press, freedom of assembly, guarantee of the free exercise of religion, privacy, discrimination, and capital punishment. The primary goal of the course is to discuss our rights, therefore, emphasis is on the Constitution and the United States Supreme Court cases, which delineate the legal doctrines relevant to defining the Constitution's guarantees of liberty. Prerequisite: sophomore standing or consent of instructor; PO 111 or PO 203 recommended but not required.

PO 307 Political Science Research Methods: 3 semester hours

Students will learn the basic qualitative and quantitative research methods used in the social sciences. The course will begin with an introduction to the foundations of scientific research, hypothesis construction and testing, along with the strengths and weakness of different methodological approaches. Students will use a statistical analysis program (SPSS) to create and manipulate data sets. This computer assisted data analysis will permit students to understand and report basic descriptive statistics, a variety of difference of means tests, bivariate correlations, and basic multiple regression analysis. Students will also learn to read and understand literature from academic journals in the social sciences, including (but not limited to) political science, political/social psychology and political sociology. This course has no prerequisite courses. Familiarity with algebra is a plus, but not a requirement. Prerequisites: PO 111, PO 102 or PO 103 or consent of the instructor).

PO 311 American Foreign Policy: 3 semester hours

This course provides analysis and evaluation of American foreign policy since 1945, the institutions and processes involved in its making and the historical and cultural factors affecting it. Prerequisite: PO 111 or PO 103.

PO 312 Politics of International Economic Relations: 3 semester hours

Analysis of reciprocal relations between global politics and economics, examining such topics as North/South conflict, the emergence of multinational non-state actors, problems of global resource allocation, the institutional framework of international development, and the growing interconnectedness of a global economy. Prerequisite: PO 103 or an introductory course in economics.

PO 313 International Law and Organization: 3 semester hours

This course provides analysis of the history, role, and future of international law and organizations in the social, economic, and political development of the world community. Prerequisite: PO 103 or permission of instructor.

PO 314 Contemporary Political Ideologies: 3 semester hours

This course provides a comparative study of conservative, liberal, socialist, religious, fascist, and other ideologies prominent in contemporary national and world politics. Prerequisite: sophomore standing.

PO 326 Politics and Public Policy: 3 semester hours

An analysis of the different policy-making processes incorporated in the American political system and the different kinds of political actors, patterns of conflict, and outcomes found in each. The course also treats policy-making, current policies, and policy debate found in several major areas of public policy, such as business regulation, civil rights, and economic, defense, welfare, and health policies. Prerequisite: PO 111 or equivalent.

PO 335 State and Local Government: 3 semester hours

The course deals with the theories, principles, and practices of the state and local governments in the United States with an emphasis on Iowa. The topics include scope and functions of the state local government, capacity, federalism, institutions, participation, public administration, and budgetary matters. Prerequisite: PO 111.

PO 353 Politics and Economic Policy in the United States: 3 semester hours

The course is designed to develop an understanding of the politics of economic policy making and the institutional infra-structure of policy implementation in the United States. The course aims at exploring the complexities of fiscal, monetary, regulatory, and distributive policies in the United States. Prerequisite: PO 111 or consent of instructor.

PO 359 Advanced Studies in Law and Politics: 3 semester hours

Seminar-style course designed to employ various academic perspectives and methodologies to the study of legal issues, shedding light on both the understanding of law as well as debates central to other disciplines. The course is designed to offer a great deal of flexibility to adapt its content to current and contentious issues relevant to law, society, and politics. The scope of legal concerns ranges from the local (states and communities), to the national, and to the global (regions and international bodies). The course topics change from semester to semester and may be repeated with change of content (maximum 9 credit hours). The course does not require prior knowledge of the specific areas or topics covered and is open to all majors. Prerequisites: PO 111, PO 102, PO 103 required, or consent of the instructor.

PO 368 Welfare States: Advanced International and Area Studies: 3 semester hours

Seminar-style course designed to offer an interdisciplinary, internationally focused study of timely and relevant issues not generally covered in existing courses. Major topics in comparative and international politics will be analyzed in the context of selected nations within distinct geographical areas of the world in order to gain understanding of the institutions and dynamics of the area. Areas to be studied include: Western and Eastern Europe, South America, Asia, and the Middle East. The course topics change from semester to semester and may be repeated with change of content (maximum 9 credit hours). The course does not require prior knowledge of the specific areas or topics covered and is opened to all majors.

PO 399 Special Topics in Political Science: 3 semester hours

This course is an examination of a specific area of political science. Course content will vary according to student interest. This course, with different content, may be repeated.

PO 406 Major Political Problems: 3 semester hours

This course provides an examination of a general problem or issue in politics today. Course content and subtitle will vary. The course may be repeated with consent of the instructor.

PO 425 Public Service Internship: 3 semester hours

A supervised introduction to public service through placement in a public agency. It develops an understanding of agency functions and of employees in the public sector. Prerequisite: It is open to non-majors upon completion of PO 111.

PO 441 Seminar In Political Research: 3 semester hours

This course is a seminar having variable content and emphasizing oral and written presentation of independent study and research done by participants. Required for political science majors. Prerequisites: sophomore standing and PO 307.

PO 445 Independent Study: 3 semester hours

Directed readings and research in political science. Topics to be determined by the student and instructor.