

**POLITICAL SCIENCE 506  
INTRODUCTION TO THE PROFESSION\*  
FALL SEMESTER 2007**

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**Class Time: T, 5-6**  
**Classroom: 1171 BSB**

**About POLS 506.** This course has been structured as a 2-credit-hour seminar. The word 'seminar' comes from the Greek language and refers to 'a group of advanced students studying a subject under a professor, each doing some original research, and all exchanging results by informal lectures, reports, and discussions.' The essence of a seminar is participation by all.

The POLS 506 seminar is designed to introduce graduate students to the profession of political science. The syllabus lists the topics that we will cover in the seminar. However, the dates for particular discussions may change depending upon the availability of guest speakers and the interests of class members. Seminar participants will be closely involved in defining the scope of discussion topics and in identifying appropriate reading and research materials.

**Course Requirements:** Graduate students are budding professionals and must act accordingly. That means that you must complete all assigned readings prior to class; you must prepare and deliver required in-class presentations in timely fashion; and you must contribute to class discussions. If missing a class is truly unavoidable, you must notify your professor at [dgrab@uic.edu](mailto:dgrab@uic.edu) and attach your completed assignment or place the assignment into the professor's mailbox. If you were scheduled as a presenter for the session that you cannot attend, you must indicate which student will take your place (after obtaining the fill-in presenter's consent). If you have more than two absences during the semester, your course grade will plummet because a one-grade penalty takes effect for each subsequent miss. The quality of the seminar suffers when members' attendance is irregular.

**Tentative Outline of Discussion Topics**

Topics and assignments for particular class sessions will be confirmed at least one week in advance.

**Aug. 28. Topic 1. What every graduate student needs to know to survive and thrive in the UIC Political Science Department. Three seasoned graduate students will start you off in the right directions. There are few 'dumb' questions – so be sure to ask your 'smart' questions about issues that concern you.**

\*This syllabus draws heavily on previous syllabi prepared by Professors Judd and Rundquist and on graduate student documents prepared by Graduate Advisor James Nell.

#### **Sept. 4. Topic 2. The Institutional Structure of Political Science.**

We will discuss the hierarchy of departments based on published rankings, and the impact of a department's reputation on job opportunities for its graduates. Where do urban universities, such as UIC, fit into the rankings? How does 'Harvard on Halsted' differ from 'the' Harvard on Massachusetts Ave. and does it matter? If so, how?

#### **Assignment :**

Check out various ranking systems, including the one by U.S. News and World Report. Be prepared to discuss the philosophy behind these systems and consider their advantages and disadvantages. Be prepared to discuss your findings and opinions.

#### **September 11, Topic 3. Research Ethics.**

Social Science research must be conducted within the bounds of ethics. We will discuss the ethical requirements that should guide researchers during data collection, data interpretation, and during presentation of their findings. Much social science research is conducted with the help of 'human subjects' who provide information through interviews, surveys, observations, etc. The rights of these subjects must be carefully guarded. We need to discuss what these rights are and how they can be protected.

**Assignment :** Access UIC's IRB website and study its 'Guidance for New Investigators.' Prepare questions for the IRB member who will visit our class.

#### **September 18, Topic 4. Plagiarism.**

Plagiarism has always been a serious problem. But it has become far worse in the age of the Internet because it is increasingly unclear what can and cannot be copied and how the author or authors should be acknowledged. We will discuss what constitutes plagiarism and how it can be avoided. We will also discuss recent cases in which prominent people have run afoul of plagiarism rules and paid a heavy price. Finally, we will focus on what teaching assistants can do to detect plagiarism among their students' submissions and how they can reduce its incidence.

**Assignment :** Prepare brief reports on two plagiarism cases. You may select them from news reports in old and new media or from interviews or your own experiences. In addition, interview two teaching assistants in social science departments about their experiences with plagiarism cases. Be prepared to report your findings.

#### **September 25. Topic 5. Careers in Political Science: Becoming an Academic**

The UIC Political Science department has been selected by the American Political Science Association as a participant in the Preparing Future Faculty program. Selection is a great honor. We will discuss this program and the kinds of job opportunities it opens up. We will also discuss the general process of getting a start in academia at the junior college, college, and university level.

**Assignment** : Use the department's website to familiarize yourself with the 'Preparing Future Faculty' program. There is a lot of literature about the ins and outs of hunting for jobs in academia. Search the Web for leads and then browse a few for ideas of what the important job-hunting issues are.

**October 2. Topic 6. Careers in Political Science – Working in the Private for-Profit and Non-Profit Sector.**

Will your MA or Ph.D. degree be of much value to you in private sector employment by for-profit or non-profit institutions?

**Assignment** : Examine the relevant publications prepared by the American Political Science Association. Then prepare two job applications – one for a for-profit employer and one for a non-profit employer in which you describe how your training makes you an excellent prospect for the job.

**October 9. Topic 7. Careers in Political Science –Becoming a Government Employee.**

One out of every six employed people in the United States works in the public sector at the national, state, or local level. What sorts of jobs are most likely to need the services of a person with a political science degree?

**Assignment** : Check the Riley Guide on the Web for current openings in diverse areas of public service. Or study various government job sites. Then select three jobs that interest you and research what steps are required to apply for them. Be prepared to report your findings in class.

**October 16, Topic 8. Thesis and Dissertation Writing.**

Professional training ending in an MA or Ph.D. degree requires a great deal of practice in writing lengthy research reports. The biggest one of these reports is the Ph.D. dissertation which is really a full-blown book. We will discuss the essential steps in reporting findings from original research in the form of a Master's thesis or a Ph.D. dissertation.

**Assignment** : Visit the library and check out two master's theses and two dissertations covering social science topics and completed in the year 2000 or later. Prepare a brief description of each research project and the way in which the author presented it. Descriptions should be 250 to 500 words in length.

**Oct. 23. Topic 9. Getting Published.**

"Publish or Perish" is a key command for young academics serving in good colleges and research universities. But even outside academia, the ability to become a published author is highly prized.

**Assignment** : The Text and Academic Authors' Association (accessible on the Web) offers a lot of advice to budding authors. Browse these materials and prepare a one-page report about the most important things that you have learned. Be prepared to share your findings with your colleagues.

**Oct. 30. Topic 10 Getting Money for Study and Research.**

Graduate students need money to complete their university studies and money to pay research expenses. Departmental resources are insufficient to cover these needs. Therefore the UIC Political Science Department works hard to land university and other fellowships for graduate students, as well as financial aid from outside the university. We will discuss and identify sources of tuition and research aid, and how to apply for these awards.

**Assignment** : Assume that your dissertation research will require money to travel abroad and money to duplicate extensive records. What kind of funding is likely to be available and who are the funding organizations? Find out and report your findings to the seminar.

**The Subfields of Political Science**

Faculty members from each of the subfields covered at UIC will be invited to discuss how and why they selected their subfield and what advice they can give to students interested in majoring in the subfield.

**Assignments** : To get the full benefit of these presentations, students should familiarize themselves with each subfield prior to the presentation. A quick way to do that calls for looking at the offerings in the subfield in catalogs of major universities. Concentrate on catalogs that offer brief descriptions of courses, beyond the listings of titles and credit hours. Compare the various programs and assess their advantages and draw backs.

Below is the tentative list of subfields, along with the name of the current chair of each subfield.

**Nov. 6. Topic 11. Political Philosophy – Prof. Balbus**

**Nov. 13. Topic 12. American Politics – Prof. Rundquist**

**Nov. 20. Topic 13. Urban Politics – Prof. Simpson**

**Nov. 27. Topic 14. International Relations – Prof. Choi**

**Dec. 4. Topic 15. Comparative Politics – Prof. Tepe**