

**POLITICAL SCIENCE 506  
INTRODUCTION TO THE PROFESSION\*  
FALL SEMESTER 2008<sup>1</sup>**

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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. 26. Topic 1. Researching and writing good papers at the graduate level.** Badly-researched and badly-written papers are a plague for graduate students as well as their professors. What should you do to avoid such disasters? Professor Brandon Valeriano, who has dealt with this problem repeatedly, will tell you. Come prepared with questions because you will be writing papers very soon.

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<sup>1</sup> \*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. 2. Topic 2. What every graduate student needs to know to survive and thrive in the UIC Political Science Department. Several 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.**

**Assignment :** Read the following brief articles (and take note of the references) in *PS Political Science & Politics*: Lisa Baglione, *Doing Good and Doing Well: Teaching Research Paper Writing by Unpacking the Paper*, July 2008, 595-602; Jeffrey W. Knopf, *Doing a Literature Review*, Jan. 2006, 127-132, and Iain McMenamin, *Process and Text: Teaching Students to Review the Literature*, Jan. 2006, 133-135; Steven B. Rothman, *Comparatively Evaluating Potential Dissertation and Thesis Projects*, April, 2008, 367-369; and Shannon K. Orr, *New Technology and Research: An Analysis of Internet Survey Methodology in Political Science*. Session 2 is your opportunity to ask about broad issues raised in these articles.

**September 9, 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. Also, plagiarism has escalated 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, how it can be avoided and what teaching assistants can do to detect plagiarism among their students' submissions.

**Assignment :** Access UIC's IRB website and study its 'Guidance for New Investigators.' Interview two teaching assistants in social science departments about their experiences with plagiarism cases. Be prepared to report your findings.

**September 16, Topic 4. 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 :** Our guest will be Lisa Knepshield who is UIC's guru about fellowships, grants, etc. Go to the Graduate College website and click on "Funding your Education," and then on "Fellowship Office Information." Then make an appointment to visit the office to gain some insight into the information relevant to social science studies and to your particular interests. Prepare questions to ask following Lisa Knepshield's presentation.

## **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. The subfields are Political Theory, American Politics, Urban Politics, International Relations and Comparative Politics.

**Assignments** : Presenters for each subfield will suggest relevant readings that you should complete before each session. Students currently specializing in each field may also be invited to participate in the session. The timetable for subfield presentations is tentative.

**September 23. Topic 5. Political Philosophy** – Assignments will be announced prior to the session.

**September 30. Topic 6. American Politics** – Assignments will be announced prior to the session.

**October 7. Topic 7. Urban Politics** – Assignments will be announced prior to the session.

**October 14, Topic 8. International Relations** – Assignments will be announced prior to the session.

**Oct. 21. Topic 9. Comparative Politics** – Assignments will be announced prior to the session.

**Oct. 28. Topic 10. Reflections** -- This period has been set aside to reflect on topics that we have discussed too sparsely before or to add topics that are not currently in the syllabus. Please submit suggestions for new topics whenever you have a brainstorm during the first nine weeks. Assignments will be based on students' choices. Be prepared to present your ideas.

**Nov. 4. Topic 11. 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 and format of a Master's thesis or research paper or a Ph.D. dissertation. A research librarian will enlighten us about the print and electronic resources available at UIC libraries.

**Assignment** : Visit the library and check out a dissertations covering social science topics and completed in the year 2000 or later. Prepare a three page description of the layout of the research project and the way in which the author presented it. Skim through the UIC Graduate College's Manual for Thesis

Preparation to identify the major issues that are important in the preparation of theses and dissertations. Make an outline of these issues for future use.

**Nov. 11. Topic 12. 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** : Read the following brief articles (and take note of the references) in *PS Political Science & Politics*: Donna Lee Van Cott: A Graduate Student's Guide to Publishing Scholarly Journal Articles, Oct. 2005, 741-743 (Skim the next article on pp.745-747); Gary King "Publication, Publication, Jan. 2006, 119-125; Andrew J. Polsky, Seeing your Name in Print:Unpacking the Review Process at Political Science Scholarly Journals, July 2007, 539-544.

**Nov. 18. Topic 13. Careers in Political Science: Becoming an Academic**

We will discuss the general process of getting a start in academia at the teaching assistant level , at a junior college, college, or at the university level. What is life like as a college professor? How do you get tenure? What are the pay scales and the benefits? How do you move from job to job?

**Assignment** : Read the following brief article (and take note of the references) in *PS Political Science & Politics*: Derek A. Webb, Twelve Easy Steps to Becoming an Effective Teaching Assistant, " Oct. 2005, 757-761; Familiarize yourself with the 'Preparing Future Faculty' program by reading the Council of Graduate School's report on "Preparing Future Faculty in the Humanities and Social Sciences" on the APSA's website. The UIC Political Science department was chosen by APSA as a participant. Political Science 510 is based on the program.

**Nov. 25. Topic 14. 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.

**Dec. 2. Topic 15. 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** : Assignment will be tailored to the interests of the class.