

Department of Politics Spring 2026 Course Descriptions

All Politics Department courses are open to all students who meet the prerequisites. For information on requirements for any Politics major or minor, please email Chip Gagnon, Chair of the Politics Department vgagnon@ithaca.edu.

POLT 10100-01 U.S. POLITICS AND POLICY

4 CREDITS

INSTRUCTOR: **Juan Arroyo, Muller 316**, Ext. 4-3969

ENROLLMENT: 28 per section

PREREQUISITES: None

OBJECTIVES: Covers institutions, processes, and cultural/ideological roots of U.S. politics, and look at the outcomes in the form of policies. We begin by studying a framework of ideologies that will help us to understand the political-economic institutions that have evolved to reflect the conditions of U.S. society. These provide the foundation for understanding the major institutions of US politics: Congress, the presidency, bureaucracy, judiciary, parties, interest groups, media, and the electoral process. We will often pause to discuss opposing positions on US political institutions. Throughout, we will constantly ask: how democratic is this place? What are your criteria for measuring democracy?

STUDENTS: Open to all students.

FORMAT AND STYLE: Discussion/lecture

REQUIREMENTS: Readings, active participation in class discussions, 2 short papers (2-3 pages), 2 medium papers (5-7 pages), 1 final paper (7-10 pages)

POLT 10100-02 U.S. POLITICS AND PUBLIC POLICY

4 Credits

INSTRUCTOR: **Michael Gorup, mgorup@ithaca.edu**, Muller 333

ENROLLMENT: 26

PREREQUISITES: None.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This introductory course offers an overview of the basic principles, historical development, and present functioning of the American political system. We will examine how the structure of government organizes political conflict, how citizens form political opinions, how people participate in politics (e.g., via voting, political parties, protest, and interest groups), the distribution of power between local, state, and national governments, and more. Our aim is to work together to better understand the major challenges facing U.S. politics and how institutions and citizens might be able to meet them.

COURSE FORMAT/STYLE: Lecture.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING: Regular attendance, participation and group activities, weekly quizzes, reader response paper, two exams.

POLT 10100-03, U.S. POLITICS & POLICY SS, LA; ICC: Humanities; Social Science;

Themes: Power and Justice; World of Systems

4 Credits

INSTRUCTOR: **Carlos Figueroa**, cfigueroa@ithaca.edu

ENROLLMENT: 28

PREREQUISITES: None

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This introductory discussion-based course **explores** a) the development of the U.S. political system, b) the values it is rooted in, c) how it works, d) how politics and policy intersect within it, and e) the political system's impact upon individuals and groups within an evolving neoliberal capitalist system. The course **focuses** on democracy, representation, governance, and capitalism, as well as the values, beliefs, and principles that support these concepts in different contexts. We take a *social deliberative approach* to U.S. Politics and Policy. Taking a social deliberative approach to U.S. Politics and Policy at the undergraduate level means we emphasize inclusive, reflective, and collaborative dialogue—rather than adversarial debate or rote memorization of political facts. It draws on the principles of *deliberative democracy*, which views governance as rooted in reasoned discussion among citizens and policymakers, aiming for mutual understanding and more informed decisions.

COURSE FORMAT/STYLE: Lectures/Discussions/Debates/Simulations/Guest Speakers

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & GRADING: Regular attendance, participation/debate, (10) take-home quizzes, policy proposal, and Policy analysis paper (8-10 pages).

POLT 12900-01 INTRODUCTION TO GLOBAL AND POLICY STUDIES SS LA

4 Credits

INSTRUCTOR: **Peyi Soyinka-Airewele (314 Muller | ext. 4-3508)**

ENROLLMENT: 25

PREREQUISITES: None

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Examines global issues, including culture and identity formation, globalization, human rights, the environment, and militarism. National and international public policies are examined critically, and policy alternatives are explored, as are individual responses and responsibilities. Utilizes country case studies, international simulations, literature, and film to interrogate our world. This will include the ongoing Ukraine-Russian conflict, the return of the Taliban in Afghanistan, the mass migration situation in Europe, the 2023 earthquakes in Syria and Turkey and the realities of climate change. Recently, the United Nations Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, stated that "the era of global warming has ended, and the era of global boiling has arrived". Together, we will deepen our awareness of complex global realities and foster dialogue that contributes to our personal growth through the systematic questioning of old assumptions, the humanization of distant issues, and the search for policies that effectively address global problems.

COURSE FORMAT/STYLE: Lectures, Discussions, Films, and Collaborative work.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING: Regular attendance, active participation| Presentations, Tests, Essays, and Projects.

POLT 14200-01, 02: IDEAS AND IDEOLOGIES

4 Credits

INSTRUCTOR: **Evgenia Ilieva**, elieva@ithaca.edu, Muller 311

ENROLLMENT: 25

PREREQUISITES: none

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Why do people often accept, and even embrace, social and political conditions that seem to run counter to their own interests? How is it possible that we sometimes support forms of

domination with our ways of behaving and thinking without intending or even realizing it? Where do our ideas and perspectives on the world come from? How do we know that our ideas are right? Why might it be useful to entertain doubt about our ideas? What is the relationship between our individual beliefs and broader systems of thought we call political ideologies?

In this course, we will seek answers to these questions by exploring the historical development and contemporary manifestations of several influential ideological perspectives including liberalism, conservatism, socialism, anarchism, and fascism. In addition to exploring the key concepts and normative assumptions of these various “isms,” the primary goal of the course is to encourage us to begin thinking more deeply about our own worldviews. We will ask why and how we have come to hold these beliefs, and we will seek to understand the way that our beliefs inform our practical conduct in the world.

COURSE FORMAT/STYLE: discussion

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING: 3 take-home papers; class participation; short discussion posts

POLT 30600-01 US FOREIGN POLICY

Attributes: INBG, LMEL, LMSP, LSCO, SS

4 Credits

INSTRUCTOR: **Juan M. Arroyo, Muller 316**, jarroyo@ithaca.edu

ENROLLMENT: 22

PREREQUISITE: Sophomore standing (Chip: is this still correct?)

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This class will study US foreign policy from theoretical, historical, and contemporary perspectives. We start with different views of what drives US actions in the world. We then look at the evolution of US foreign policy over the past 240 years, such as various foreign policy 'doctrines' or the evolution of US involvement in international organizations. Several classes will introduce the government institutions that shape the country's foreign policy. We'll look at some current issues -- including international trade, Iran, North Korea, Russia and China -- and their historical roots. We'll finish up the course looking at the current debates about the future of the international order and of US foreign policy. We'll do this through readings -- both primary documents as well as secondary analysis -- and films.

COURSE FORMAT/STYLE: Lecture and Discussion

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & GRADING: Attendance and participation in class discussions; presentations; in class quizzes and exams or papers.

POLT 31901-01 Selected topics in US politics: US Presidential Power & Leadership SS LA 1h

4 Credits

INSTRUCTOR: **Carlos Figueroa**, cfigueroa@ithaca.edu

ENROLLMENT: 22

PREREQUISITES: Sophomore Standing

COURSE DESCRIPTION: The reelection of Donald Trump in 2025 and the subsequent structural and policy changes that followed have forced a national reexamination of the U.S. presidency. This course **explores** the origins, development, and operations of the U.S. presidency in light of these changes. The course has two premises: a) that many debates regarding the U.S. presidency remain unresolved, and the role of the presidency continues to evolve; and b) that understanding the U.S. presidency requires looking beyond the office itself. To truly grasp a president's power and leadership, one must consider the influence of various groups and organizations, including legislators, bureaucrats, judges, and numerous

external factors. The course analyzes the sources of *power* that U.S. presidents rely on, and the development and modern practice of presidential *leadership* by: (1) examining the evolution of the modern presidency, the process of presidential selection, and the structure of the presidency as an institution; (2) considering *how and why* presidents make the decisions they make, when they make them, as they seek to shape domestic, foreign, and economic policy; and (3) exploring the relationship of the presidency with other major government institutions, organized interest groups, the press, and the public. Besides providing historical context for recent presidencies, the class will examine several theories of the presidency and the workings of the world's most powerful executive position. This course invites students not only to examine the institution of the presidency but also to consider the personal ambitions of those who hold the office, the political norms they face, and how chance events affect their ability to lead the country. At the end of this course, students will have a better appreciation and understanding of several political science concepts, theories, and methods that help explain presidential power and leadership.

COURSE FORMAT/STYLE: Seminar

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & GRADING: Regular attendance, active discussion, close-reading of texts, in-class presentations, mid-term exam, and a final paper (12-14 pages).

POLT 33400 HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE POLITICS OF CULTURE SS LA

4 Credits

INSTRUCTOR: **Peyi Soyinka-Airewele (314 Muller | 607-274-3508)**

ENROLLMENT: 25

PREREQUISITES: Sophomore Standing

COURSE DESCRIPTION: The course investigates debates about the universality and value of International human rights at this critical historical moment. Participants will explore the contradictory ways in which religious, social, and cultural forces, gender and class struggles, and structural global inequalities generate diverse concepts of moral rights, justice, freedoms, and protections. We will use case studies to respond to central questions in the struggle to protect human rights such as that posed by Mahmood Mamdani: "Can a culture of individual rights coexist with the right of every individual to practice one's culture?" We will study contemporary issues in the United States, Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East and examine the contributions of African human rights law, discourses and practice. Counts as a Comparative & International Studies course for politics majors and international politics minors. *This course counts as a Comparative and International Studies course for the purposes of the Politics major, the Concentration in International Studies, and the International Politics minor.*

COURSE FORMAT/STYLE: Lecture, Discussion, Engaged Research and Practicum.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & GRADING: Regular attendance, active participation| Presentations, Tests, Essays, Research and Projects.

POLT 33800-01 TERRORISM AND INSURGENCIES

4 Credits

INSTRUCTOR: **Chip Gagnon, Muller 324, vgagnon@ithaca.edu**

PREREQUISITES: Sophomore Standing

COURSE DESCRIPTION: What is terrorism? Why do people become terrorists? How is terrorism related to insurgencies? We will be looking at these and other related questions to try to understand why people use violence and how they respond to violence. We'll also be looking at specific terrorist groups and insurgencies in various parts of the world. *This course counts as a Comparative and International Studies*

course for the purposes of the Politics major, the Concentration in International Studies, and the International Politics minor.

COURSE FORMAT/STYLE: discussion, lecture, presentations, films

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & GRADING: participate in discussions; biweekly reading reactions; presentations; in-class quizzes and exams.

POLT 35002-01: Selected Topics in political theory: DIALOGUE & DIALECTICS

4 Credits

INSTRUCTOR: **Evgenia Ilieva**, elieva@ithaca.edu, Muller 311

ENROLLMENT: 22

PREREQUISITES: none

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

What are dialogue and dialectics? How are they related to one another? Can dialogue and dialectics furnish the tools for not only understanding our social and political world, but also, for changing it? Taking these questions as its starting point, this course explores the relationship between dialogue and dialectics as two distinct yet interrelated methods of reasoning and analysis. Dialogue is most easily understood as a conversational back-and-forth between two or more participants. Rather than attempt to make common certain ideas or items of information that are already known to each participant, we may say that in a dialogue two or more interlocutors are striving to make something in common, i.e., they are creating something new together. Dialectics, on the other hand, is a structured form of dialogue that relies on contradictions to move participants to higher levels of understanding or truth. Modern dialectics sets out from two ideas: first, that it is impossible to think about anything in isolation, that we understand all things via relation and contradistinction, that we couldn't call any person "good" if we weren't also compelled to call some people "bad"; and second, that all such conceptual pairs (good/bad, male/female, black/white, east/west, teacher/student, parent/child) are less settled than they look. While we cannot help but divide the world into oppositions, dialectics teaches us that all such oppositions are bound to collapse. This is an idea that, systematically pursued, can change the way we think about politics, ethics, literature, and art.

The best way to study dialogue and dialectics is to see them in application. To this end, we will study works by several thinkers who have anchored their political analyses in these two approaches. We will explore how dialogical and dialectical methods can be used to enhance our understanding of colonialism and to inform its critique; how dialogue and dialectics have been used to comprehend the relationship between realism and idealism in International Relations; how feminist scholars have employed dialectical and dialogical reasoning to theorize and critique relations of domination.

Possible texts may include:

Jessica Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love*

E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis*

Plato, *Five Dialogues*

Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America*

Alvaro Enrique, *You Dreamed of Empires*

COURSE FORMAT/STYLE: discussion

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING: class participation; willingness to read some great books in their entirety; 2 take-home papers; 1 final project.

POLT 40105-01 SEMINAR in International and Comparative Studies: NATIONALISM, POPULISM, AND CONFLICT CP/IR SS LA

4 Credits

INSTRUCTOR: Chip Gagnon, vgagnon@ithaca.edu, Muller 324

ENROLLMENT: 10

PREREQUISITE: Junior or Senior standing; and 3 courses in social sciences or equivalent, one of which must be Politics.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This seminar will be focused on the rise of nationalism and right-wing populism and their relationship to conflict, both violent and nonviolent. We'll look at the political, military, and cultural origins of the nation-state and the role of culturally defined violence in constituting state, national, and group boundaries. We'll also look at the relationship between populism and nationalism. Cases will include Yugoslavia/Bosnia, Rwanda, Australia, Europe, the United States and others.

This course counts toward the 400-level course requirement for the Politics major, the Politics major with the International Studies concentration, the Politics minor, and the International Politics minor.

COURSE FORMAT/STYLE: Seminar discussion

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & GRADING: Attendance and active participation in Seminar; reaction papers for each reading; presentation on research topic; final research paper

POLT 40210-01 SEMINAR: U.S. SLAVERY AND ITS AFTERLIVES

4 Credits

INSTRUCTOR: Michael Gorup, mgorup@ithaca.edu, Muller 333

ENROLLMENT: 10

PREREQUISITES: Junior or Senior standing or permission of the instructor.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This seminar examines U.S. politics through the prism of slavery. The first part of the course attends to the origins, development, and abolition of slavery in the United States, from the colonial era through Reconstruction, with special attention devoted to slavery's importance for the development of American law, politics, and economy in the 19th century. Then, we will consider how slavery's legacy has shaped, and continues to shape, the politics of race, labor, citizenship, and incarceration in the U.S. We will examine debates regarding slavery and capitalism; the politics of abolition; wage labor and wage "slavery"; race and citizenship; mass incarceration and prison slavery; and the question of reparations.

COURSE FORMAT/STYLE: Seminar.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING: Regular attendance, seminar participation, reader response paper, class presentation, scaffolded research paper.