

February 11, 2008

Greetings Political Science Majors:

This email is intended first and foremost for ALL political science majors who intend to graduate in May 2009 (or December 2008); for the most part, this means current JUNIORS. If you are one of these people and you have not yet fulfilled the political science senior seminar requirement, you will need to sign up for a senior seminar for fall 2008 or spring 2009. Non-juniors may wish to read on anyway.

As you are aware, all Political Science majors must successfully complete a research seminar course, normally taken in the senior year. Through your enrollment in this course you will complete a seminar research paper (formerly referred to as the "thesis"). We have 4 seminars scheduled: two in fall 2008 and two in spring 2009; as in previous semesters, at least one seminar covers our three basic areas of political science: U.S. Politics, international and comparative politics, and political theory and law. Full information about the seminars is contained in the attached file, including the seminar dates and times.

These seminars will have limited enrollments, and the department chair's signature is required for your registration. Students taking the seminar will be concurrently enrolled in POL-099 (0 credit), which is the registrar's way of accounting for taking a seminar. You will be officially enrolled in the research seminar and POL 099 during Fall Registration (April 14-24) for fall 2008 seminars, and during Spring Registration (November 2-13) for spring 2009 seminars.

HOWEVER, registration for senior seminars is done prior to the actual registration period through a pre-registration process, which this email explains in detail below. The final, official lists of who is in which seminar are sent by the Poli Sci Department to the Registrar's Office, which will automatically enroll students in the seminars.

IF YOU WILL BE TAKING A SENIOR SEMINAR DURING 2008-09, you must review the attached seminar descriptions and send department chair Chris Gilbert an e-mail by MONDAY, FEBRUARY 25, to cgilbert@gustavus.edu. This email MUST indicate the following:

- a ranking of your seminar preferences from #1 (most preferred) to #4 (least preferred); please list the seminar titles (there are two POL 344s, for example) so that we are clear what your preferences are
- a brief explanation (2-4 sentences) for your FIRST choice seminar
- another brief statement for your SECOND choice seminar (you may add such statements for #3 and #4, too, but these will probably not be necessary)
- your explanation should include ANY information we need to know in order to assign people to seminars. EXAMPLE: if you will be studying abroad in fall 2008, this would be a good reason to take a spring 2009 seminar, so tell us if that's the case!!

The department faculty will then assign students to seminars, using two main criteria:

- giving as many people as possible their first choice, although we cannot guarantee a first choice to every student

- balancing the enrollments across the seminars (the seminars do not have to be absolutely equal, but with around 40 total students next year, we'd envision seminars of roughly 8-12 students each)

TO NON-JUNIORS: Since the senior seminar is a REQUIRED course for graduation, preference will be given to CURRENT juniors, e.g. students graduating in May 2009; other Political Science majors may enroll in the course AFTER current juniors have been assigned to seminars and IF the faculty member teaching the seminar gives his/her permission. This process can take place during the normal registration times for fall 2008 and spring 2009; contact the professor of the course directly sometime before registration for fall/spring. However, we are committed to keeping the seminars small, and the seminar is intended to be a capstone for a political science major; so few spaces are likely to be available in the seminars after the class of 2009 has enrolled. Another full set of seminars will be offered in 2009-10, 2010-11, and so forth.

Students who have previously completed a research seminar MAY take another one, but will not have priority in registration. And yes, if you take a second seminar you will be doing a second seminar research paper!

By MONDAY, FEBRUARY 25 AT THE LATEST, and IDEALLY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, please send an e-mail to [cgilbert@gustavus.edu](mailto:cgilbert@gustavus.edu) with your ranked preferences for these research seminars (using the #s 1-4), with explanation. We should be able to announce who is in which seminar by the beginning of March.

This is an important process to complete your political science major, and we trust that you will give thoughtful consideration to these seminar offerings, as we give thoughtful consideration to your preferences and explanations. Once preregistered for a seminar, switching is not going to be allowed except under dire circumstances, so give your choices some thought.

Questions about the process? E-mail Chris Gilbert at [cgilbert@gustavus.edu](mailto:cgilbert@gustavus.edu). Chris has also posted this information page and the seminar descriptions on his home page: <http://www.gustavus.edu/~cgilbert/sems0809.pdf>

Questions about specific seminars as you decide? E-mail the professor of the seminar in question (e-mails included in the attached file)

## POLITICAL SCIENCE SENIOR SEMINARS FOR 2008-09

1. POL 340, US Foreign Policy  
Dr. Mimi Gerstbauer, [mgerstba@gustavus.edu](mailto:mgerstba@gustavus.edu)  
FALL 2008, Tuesdays 1:30-4:20 pm

This course seeks to explain and evaluate US foreign policy, with a focus on the Cold War to the present. There are essentially four threads to the course that will be intertwined throughout the semester: 1) an exploration of US national interest and values represented in

foreign policy both past and present. How do historical notions of US exceptionalism manifest themselves in an age where the US is the global superpower? What has been, is, and should be the role of the US in the world? 2) What theoretical and strategic doctrines have guided US foreign policy and how have these developed over time from Containment to the Bush Doctrine? 3) What models help explain specific foreign policy decisions and what role do institutions like the Presidency, Congress, media, and others have in the process? 4) an analysis and debate of specific issues and cases in US foreign policy. US foreign policy can be studied from the perspective of US domestic politics and institutions as well as through the lens of international relations and global issues. Thus, the research possibilities are particularly rich and papers might explore any issue, process, theory or case related to US foreign policy.

2. POL 344, Interest Groups in American Politics  
Dr. Kate Stenger, kstenger@gustavus.edu  
FALL 2008, Mondays 1:30-4:20 pm

Organized interest groups are alternately maligned as “special interests” representing the elite and celebrated as a vocal and powerful reflection of citizen interests. Interest groups or “factions” have existed since the founding of our country and are every bit as controversial now as they were then. Whatever your view, there is little question that these organized groups have a major impact on policymaking in America through their role in providing valuable information to policymakers and connecting citizens with their elected officials. This course considers the role of organized interest groups in American politics and provides students with a background in interest group theory as well as exposure to contemporary group strategies and tactics. We discuss the theoretical reasons groups form, compare competing theories that explain group success, examine group strategies of policy influence, and consider the impact of groups on American democracy. Research projects involving organized interest groups, policymaking at the state or federal level, and traditional and/or grassroots lobbying are appropriate topics for this course.

3. POL-344, Democratic Principles and Practices  
Dr. Jill Locke, jlocke@gustavus.edu  
SPRING 2009, Wednesdays 1:30-4:20 pm

What makes something democratic? Historically, democracies have not been described in favorable terms. Many of the ancients (e.g., Aristotle, Cicero) thought them to be the “best of the worst” regimes. None of the U.S. Founders expected or supported democracy to the extent that it would require full enfranchisement of the American people. Nineteenth-century liberals J.S. Mill and Alexis de Tocqueville worried that democracies would be plagued by majoritarianism and therefore tend toward tyranny. With few exceptions, classical works in the history of political thought have characterized “the people” as incapable and undeserving of the right to self-rule. Yet in the post-Cold War era, democracies are the preferred form of government. A variety of domestic and international policies are justified because they are “pro-democracy,” while anything “anti-democratic” is presumed to be harmful and dangerous. “Democracy” is used to justify causes as varied (and competing) as pre-emptive warfare, deregulation of markets, school

vouchers, universal health care, and stricter environmental standards. “Democracy” seems to mean both everything and yet nothing at all.

Looking at historical, contemporary, theoretical, and policy-directed accounts of democratic ideas, students in this course will investigate democracy's myriad meanings. Questions explored in this course may include, but are not limited to, the following: What is the role of the majority in a democracy? Can “the people” ever err? What is democratic leadership? Do democracies need Constitutions and Bills of Rights? How democratic is the Supreme Court? Whose votes should be counted? What form of economy is most democratic? What—if anything—should democratic citizens share in common? What role does religion play in a democracy? Can democracy “work” anywhere?

4. POL 330, International Relations Theory  
Dr. Richard Leitch, rleitch@gustavus.edu  
SPRING 2009, Tuesdays 6:00-9:00 pm

“Great powers” have shaped the course of human affairs for millennia, and the current era of international relations is no different. This seminar will analyze the rise and decline of great powers from a historical and contemporary perspective. What makes a great power a great power? Is China an emerging or a re-emerging great power? What about the US? Is it a declining great power? What about India? Russia? What causes the rise, decline, and re-emergence of a great power? To what extent are great powers able to realize their values and their visions of world order? How do other international relations actors challenge or accommodate those values? Research papers will analyze how great and lesser powers address an international phenomenon (whether historical or contemporary), and attempt to get their way in conflict with other international and domestic actors.