Political Science

Department of History and Political Science

Our department explores the present and past through two distinct disciplines: History and Political Science. The Political Science program at Worcester State University offers a minor in Political Science and a minor in Pre-Law. Political Science gives students the opportunity to pursue a broad range of questions about the organization and function of government. Students in Political Science programs acquire the analytical skills to ask and answer questions about how and why governments operate in the way that they do. Students can choose to focus on any of the traditional subfields of political science, which include American politics, comparative government, international relations, and political theory. Graduates are prepared to work in a broad array of professional settings, including in traditional career paths such as government service, law, business, journalism, and education; working with community and nonprofit organizations; and involvement in political movements and elected office. Many graduates continue their education to pursue advanced degrees in graduate school or law school.

- Political Science Minor
- Pre-Law Minor

Faculty

Nathan Angelo, Assistant Professor (2016), B.A. Hofstra University; M.A. New York University and City University of New York; Ph.D. New School for Social Research

Erika Briesacher, Associate Professor (2012), B.A. Illinois Wesleyan University; M.A. Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville; Ph.D. Kent State University

Anthony Dell’Aera, Assistant Professor (2016), B.A. Trinity College; M.A., Ph.D. Brown University

Tona J. Hangen, Associate Professor (2008), B.S. Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Ph.D. Brandeis University

Najib E. Saliba, Professor (1971), A.B. Miami University; M.A., Ph.D. University of Michigan

Robert W. Smith, Associate Professor (2007), B.A. Syracuse University; M.A., Ph.D. College of William and Mary

Courses

PO-110 American Government
LASC Categories: HBS, USW, CON
This course introduces students to the American political system and thus will be an exploration of American republican democracy. We will attempt to understand the way that the political system operates by examining Congress, the presidency, the judiciary, federalism, political parties, interest groups, elections, civil liberties and civil rights, and policy issues relevant to Americans. We will explore the way that institutional arrangements facilitate debate, which ultimately leads to policy changes. Our objective in this class will be to understand the workings of American democracy.
Fall and Spring and every year. 3 Credits

PO-120 Global Politics
LASC Categories: GP, HBS, DAC
An introduction to Comparative Politics and International Relations. In this course, students will learn how different countries around the world govern themselves and how they interact with each other. Topics may include democratic and non-democratic regimes, theories of war and peace, global political cultures, and intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations. [Applicable to the Global Studies Concentration.]
Alternating and every year. 3 Credits

PO-130 Introduction to Political Theory
LASC Categories: TLC
This course introduces students to the field of political theory by focusing on some of the major works and concepts such as democracy, freedom, liberty, and justice.
Alternating and every year. 3 Credits

PO-150 Foundations of Legal Studies
LASC Categories: HBS, CON
This course introduces the fundamentals of the American legal system. Primary topics will include the sources of law; constitutional interpretation; the roles of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government; federal and state judicial systems; civil and criminal law; legal ethics; and questions of power, authority, justice, inequality, individualism, and the community. Students will also learn the fundamentals of legal research, such as locating the texts of statutes, regulations, and court decisions on specific subjects; reading and analyzing statutes and case law; and developing techniques for legal writing and oral presentations.
Fall and Spring and every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

PO-193 First Year Seminar Political Science
LASC Categories: FYS
Introductory level course covering topics of special interest to first year students. Offered only as a First Year Seminar.
Fall only and every year. 3 Credits

PO-201 International Relations I
LASC Categories: USW, GP, WAC
Prerequisites: PO-110 or PO-101 (archived) or HI-103 or HI-104 and EN-102, EN-202 or EN-250.
Theory and practice of international security (realism and internationalism) and international political economy (liberalism and protectionism) in their historical context. [Cross-listed with HI-201.]
Every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

PO-202 International Relations II: Globalization
LASC Categories: USW, GP, WAC
Prerequisites: PO-110 or PO-101 (archived) or HI-103 or HI-104 and EN-102, EN-202, or EN-250
The promise and problems of globalization (spread of free market capitalism and political democracy). [Cross-listed with HI-202. Applicable to the Global Studies Concentration.]
Every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

PO-209 Ancient and Classical Political Theory
This class introduces students to the ideas and concepts found in the works of ancient and classical political theorists. We will read major works by theorists like Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Locke, Mill, Hobbes, the Federalists, and Rousseau. Emphasis will be placed on how theorists justify the existence of government and how its conception has evolved over time. We then trace fundamental principles, such as democracy, liberty, and justice and show how these ideas are encapsulated in the US Constitution.
Every 2-3 years. 3 Credits
PO-211 History of US Foreign Policy I
LASC Categories: USW
Prerequisites: HI-111 or HI-112
Colonial origins to the era of the Spanish-American War. The sources and development of United States foreign policy in that period. [Cross-listed with HI-211.]
Every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

PO-212 History of US Foreign Policy II
LASC Categories: USW
Prerequisites: HI-111 or HI-112
From 1900 to recent times; United States foreign policy traditions and the challenges of great power status. [Cross-listed with HI-212.]
Every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

PO-213 The Modern Presidency
LASC Categories: HBS, USW
This course will examine the evolution of the presidency. Special attention is given to those presidents who have expanded the office.
Every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

PO-215 State and Local Government
LASC Categories: HBS, USW
Examines sub-national governments and politics in the United States; the structure and problems of these governments.
Every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

PO-216 Political Parties and Interest Groups
LASC Categories: HBS
Examines the organization, functions, and methods of political parties; the role of interest groups in the American political process.
Every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

PO-217 The U.S. Congress
LASC Categories: HBS, CON
The nature and function of the United States Congress, including the complexities of the lawmaking process, Congressional elections, the relationship between individual members of Congress and their constituencies, major issues of public policy, and institutional relations between Congress, the Presidency, and the Judiciary.
Alternating and every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

PO-218 US Constitutional History I
LASC Categories: CON, HBS, USW
The development of constitutional history as seen in decisions of the United States Supreme Court and their effects, from 1789 to 1921. [Cross-listed with HI-218.]
Every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

PO-219 US Constitutional History II
LASC Categories: CON, USW, HBS
Supreme Court decision-making from 1921; Federal-State relations, civil liberties, civil rights, loyalty program, labor, rights of defendants. [Cross-listed with HI-219.]
Every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

PO-220 European Politics
LASC Categories: HBS, GP
This course provides a comparative study of European government and politics, with a focus on major countries such as Great Britain, France, Italy, Spain, Germany, and Russia. Special emphasis will be placed on learning about the structure of political power within the state and on important institutions that form the link between state and society, such as political parties and interest groups. Diverse nationalistic responses to the European Union will also be considered. [Applicable to the Global Studies Concentration.]
Every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

PO-221 Asian Politics
LASC Categories: HBS, GP
This course provides students with an analysis of selected political systems of the countries of Asia. Students will have the opportunity to learn about major theories in comparative politics, which will be applied to the understanding of countries in the Asian region. Topics will include communist and post-communist transitions, democratization, social movements, and economic reform. [Applicable to the Global Studies Concentration.]
Every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

PO-222 Latin American Politics
LASC Categories: GP, HBS
This course provides a comparative study of the government and politics of contemporary Latin America. It will explore the political systems of various countries, as well as how political dynamics, such as democratization, authoritarianism, and crisis situations, have affected political, economic, and social policies throughout the region. [Applicable to the Global Studies Concentration.]
Every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

PO-223 Political Communication
LASC Categories: TLC
This course will analyze the relationship between citizens’ opinions and the mass media through a focus on political campaign and governmental communication strategy. Specific attention will be given to the history of the relationship between politicians and the media. We will also study political campaign advertisements. We will analyze how political candidates and governments communicate with voters, how they shape their images and manage crises, and ultimately attempt to determine how effective politicians are in influencing public opinion.
Alternating and every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

PO-230 Campaigns and Elections
LASC Categories: HBS
This course examines political campaigns and elections in the United States, with a focus on the candidate nomination and electoral process, campaign structures and strategies, voting, political participation, public opinion, the media, political behavior, and the role of political parties.
Alternating and every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

PO-234 Modern and Contemporary Political Theory
LASC Categories: TLC
This course will focus on how recent political philosophers have responded to questions such as what constitutes liberty, freedom, and justice. In turn, students will be prompted to consider questions such as when is it necessary for government to constrain freedom, and how can conflicts between the rights of the individual and the rights of the community be adjudicated. This class will allow for engagement with these concepts through the works of modern political theorists such as Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, and Arendt, and contemporary political theorists such as Rawls, Nozick, Dworkin, Berlin and Strauss.
Alternating and every 2-3 years. 3 Credits
Every 2-3 years.

liberals and conservatives confront these political questions. reveal challenges to core American values which would shape American women's rights, ethnicity, class, and immigration. These topics will of Republicanism and Democracy, American character, slavery, race, politics. Through a close reading of mainly primary source documents means to better understand the role of political ideology in contemporary This course examines the evolution of American political thought as a "science." No previous experience in math, statistics, or programming is required. Alternating and every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

PO-250 Doing Political Science: an Introduction To Research Methodology
LASC Categories: HBS, QAC
Prerequisites: PO-110
This course introduces students to the research process in Political Science. There will be an emphasis on both quantitative and qualitative methods of generating and analyzing social science statistics and other data in order to answer research questions about the political world around us. In this course students will learn what makes Political Science a "science." No previous experience in math, statistics, or programming is required. Alternating and every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

PO-262 Principles of US Public Policy
LASC Categories: HBS
This course introduces students to how American public policy is formulated and how public policies can be evaluated. These theoretical and structural frameworks are then applied to a series of case studies of public policies to examine the role of politics in how the policy process works and to develop a fuller understanding of the political and ideological debates over contemporary public policy issues such as welfare, social security, health care, education, labor, criminal justice, and the environment. Alternating and every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

PO-264 American Political Thought
LASC Categories: TLC, USW, DAC
This course examines the evolution of American political thought as a means to better understand the role of political ideology in contemporary politics. Through a close reading of mainly primary source documents in political theory spanning the colonial period through the present era, students will critically engage topics such as American iterations of Republicanism and Democracy, American character, slavery, race, women's rights, ethnicity, class, and immigration. These topics will reveal challenges to core American values which would shape American political development. We will also examine how different varieties of liberals and conservatives confront these political questions. Every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

PO-265 Racial and Ethnic Politics
LASC Categories: HBS, USW, DAC
This class will analyze the relationship between the United States government and racial and ethnic groups and explore the way that race is utilized in American politics. We will focus on issues affecting racial and ethnic communities in the United States, the politics behind racial and ethnic classification, and the use of racial and ethnic appeals in American political campaigns. The readings for this course will cover topics such as affirmative action, criminal justice reform, and civil rights. It will offer students an opportunity to analyze political speeches and advertisements that utilize race and ethnicity. Every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

PO-311 Environmental Politics and Policy
LASC Categories: HBS, NSP
Investigation of the factors that determine the formation of public policy on the environment with consideration of the roles played by federal, state, and local regulatory agencies in the United States. Case studies will include global climate change, air and water pollution, energy, land use, brownfields, waste management, endangered species, and population growth. Alternating and every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

PO-312 Health Politics and Policy
LASC Categories: HBS, ICW
Examination of the process and factors that influence formulation, implementation and modification of health policy in the United States. Topics will include health ethics, insurance, finance, prescription drug regulation, Medicare/Medicaid, epidemics, private markets, public interest, distributive justice, and the role of government. Fall and Spring and every year. 3 Credits

PO-313 The Politics of American Education
LASC Categories: DAC
Prerequisites: EN102 or EN202, PO110
This course explores the political issues relevant to the American educational system. The focus of the course will be the contemporary political debates and public policy related to both the American public school system and the system of higher education. We will analyze federal and state educational policy, trace the development of federal involvement in the education system, and explore the current political issues related to the American education system. Special attention will be given to issues of race, sex/gender, and class. Other or on demand and every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

PO-318 Constitutional Law I: Federalism and Separation of Powers
LASC Categories: CON
Prerequisites: PO-110
A critical analysis of key US Supreme Court decisions addressing the horizontal allocation of power among federal government branches and institutions, and the vertical allocation of power between federal and state governments. Attention will also be given to unresolved constitutional issues between the legislative and executive branches, the Massachusetts state constitution, and to the theoretical foundations of the United States Constitution (such as Locke, Montesquieu, and the Federalist Papers). Alternating and every 2-3 years. 3 Credits
PO-319 Constitutional Law II: Civil Liberties And Civil Rights
LASC Categories: CON
Prerequisites: PO-110
This course will provide students with an analysis of law pertaining to civil liberties and civil rights in the United States, with attention also given to Massachusetts. Following the historical development of constitutional law in the United States, we will begin with pre-Civil War law to see how fundamental civil liberties and civil rights have been applied to the states. Alternating and every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

PO-320 Citizen Nation
LASC Categories: CON, TLC, USW, DAC, WAC
Prerequisites: HI-111 or HI-112 and EN-102, EN-202 or EN-250
Explores the history and meaning of citizenship in the United States, including discrimination, rights struggles and changing citizenship criteria. [Cross-listed with HI-320.]
Other or on demand. 3 Credits

PO-322 Nationalism
Examines the theories for nationalism, the development of the modern Nation-state, and its effect on global politics. [Cross-listed with HI-322. Applicable to the Global Studies Concentration.]
Other or on demand. 3 Credits

PO-323 Empire
Prerequisites: HI-103 and HI-104
Theories and models of colonization, the reaction of colonized peoples, and the way historians analyze imperialism from 1400 to 1920's. [Cross-listed with HI-323. Applicable to the Global Studies Concentration.]
Every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

PO-330 Politics of the Middle East I
Prerequisites: one course from HI-104 HI-105 HI-111 HI-112 PO-101 HI-261 or HI-314
Discusses governments and politics of eastern Arab countries, Turkey, Iran, and Israel. International rivalries in the area are also discussed. [Cross-listed with HI-330. Applicable to the Global Studies Concentration.]
Every year. 3 Credits

PO-331 Politics of the Middle East II
Discusses liberation of North African countries from imperialism; politics of independence, nation-building, and international rivalries in the area. Every year. 3 Credits

PO-334 Environmental Crisis and Management in China
LASC Categories: HBS, NSP
Prerequisites: EN-102 or EN-202
This course will examine the history of the relationship between Chinese society and culture, economic development, state power, scientific theories, and the environment. Recent media reports have highlighted a worsening environmental crisis in China while at the same time reporting on China as a new leader in the development of alternative energy sources. This course will trace the political, economic, social, and scientific history behind this environmental crisis, and will evaluate the role of local, regional, and national levels of the government, domestic and international non-governmental organizations, urban and rural activists, scientific studies and discourses, and evolving political ideologies. [Cross-listed with HI-334.]
Every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

PO-338 History of Political Theory I
The development of political thought from the Greeks to the Enlightenment. [Cross-listed with HI-338.]
Other or on demand. 3 Credits

PO-339 History of Political Theory II
The development of political thought from the Enlightenment to the present. [Cross-listed with HI-339.]
Other or on demand. 3 Credits

PO-361 The Rise of the Right: Conservative Politics From Goldwater to Today
LASC Categories: TLC
Prerequisites: EN-102 or EN-202 Take PO-110;
This course will critically trace the development of conservative politics in the United States from the 1960s to today. Students will analyze various influential conservative activists and thinkers like Barry Goldwater and Charles Murray to consider their influence on the political campaigns and strategies of figures like Ronald Reagan, Richard Nixon, and Donald Trump. We will read the texts of key conservative thinkers on welfare, race, and foreign relations to analyze their lasting impact on American politics.
Other or on demand and every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

PO-370 Crisis Politics
Prerequisites: PO-110 or PO-101 (archived)
Analyze the theories regarding the roots of violence, revolution, and terrorism. Special attention will be devoted to violence in America.
Every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

PO-380 American Foreign Policy Since the Cold War
LASC Categories: CON, USW, HBS
Prerequisites: PO-110 or PO-101 (archived) or HI-112 or HI-212
Instruments of American foreign policy; major foreign policy developments since 1947.
Every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

PO-400 Independent Study: Political Science
Special topics for advanced research and study under the guidance of a faculty member.
Fall and Spring and every year. 1-3 Credits

PO-401 Senior Research Seminar in Political Science
LASC Categories: CAP, WAC
Prerequisites: PO-110 and EN-102 or EN-202
A capstone research seminar for Political Science majors in which students integrate their training as political scientists in terms of research, analysis, and evaluation of recent and seminal scholarship in one or more of the major subfields, culminating in a large scale original research paper that uses appropriate methods to answer emerging questions in the discipline.
Alternating and every year. 3 Credits

PO-408 Directed Study: Political Science
Directed study offers students, who because of unusual circumstances may be unable to register for a course when offered, the opportunity to complete an existing course with an established syllabus under the direction and with agreement from a faculty member.
Fall and Spring and every year. 3 Credits

PO-440 Internship in Political Science
Internships in museums, archives, government agencies, etc. Performing a variety of tasks at beginning professional level in cooperating institutions.
Fall and Spring and every year. 1-6 Credits
PO-445 The Kennedy Legacy in American Public Life
This course provides students with an interdisciplinary practicum in areas such as Public History, Museum Studies, Political Science, and Civic Engagement. This immersion in Public History is offered with the Kennedy Institute for the Senate. Features include seminars at the Institute, archival research at the JFK Library, Commonwealth Museum and Archives and other sites. The course provides experiential opportunities with Civic Education staff at the Kennedy Institute, archivists at the JFK Library, and the RFK Children's Action Corps. Annual topics for close analysis include the Peace Corps, the Cuban Missile Crisis, Civil Rights, Health Care, and the Vietnam War. Other or on demand. 3 Credits

PO-450 Special Topics: Political Science
Selected areas of interest to students and instructors. Topic, prerequisites and instructor are announced in advance. Other or on demand. 3 Credits