

# Department of Political Science

*Professors:* Geoffrey Vaughan (Chairperson), Bernard J. Dobski (Sabbatical 2025-26), Gregory Weiner (President); *Associate Professor:* Jeremy Geddert (Director of LEX minor); *Assistant Professor:* Brigid Flaherty Staab.

## MISSION STATEMENT

The major is designed to provide a comprehensive grounding in the fundamental principles and problems of a science whose relevance to contemporary life is immediate, yet whose tradition is venerable. Its concern is to help students become liberally educated men and women, rather than narrowly trained functionaries. Nevertheless, it prepares students in more than a general way for successful work in such fields as government service, international affairs, graduate study, journalism, law, teaching, publishing and business. The political science program consists of basic courses, open to all students, and advanced courses for all students except first-year students.

**The basic Political Science courses are:**

- POL 110 Political Issues: The Quest for Justice
- POL 201 American Government
- POL 203 Modern States
- POL 205 Political Philosophy
- POL 207 Peace and War

Selections from these basic courses may be counted toward Foundations Program requirements as well as for credit in a Political Science major or minor. The courses cover the major fields in Political Science, namely:

- American National Government—the constitutional founding, institutions and parties, constitutional law, civil rights, and political thought in the U.S.
- American Public Policy and Administration—political economy, urban politics, and democratic leadership.
- Major Foreign States—the institutions, practices, and traditions of European, Latin American, Asian, and African States.
- Political Philosophy—reflection on political life from Plato and Aristotle to Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Marx, and Nietzsche.
- International Politics—relations of peace and war among states, American foreign policy, and diplomacy.

Students are urged to plan a program of study by selecting from among major and elective courses those appropriate to their personal interests and objectives.

## MAJOR IN POLITICAL SCIENCE (11)

### REQUIRED COURSES

Four (4) intermediate courses, normally taken sophomore year

- POL 201 American Government
- POL 203 Modern States
- POL 205 Political Philosophy
- POL 207 Peace and War

One (1) course from three (3) of the following five (5) areas:

- POL 310–319 American National Government
- POL 320–329 American Public Policy
- POL 330–349 Major Foreign States
- POL 350–359 Political Philosophy
- POL 370–379 International Politics

Three (3) courses from the rest of the departmental offerings at the introductory and upper levels

POL 409 Research Seminar. To be taken in the fall of senior year.

NOTE: All first-year students who think they may major in Political Science or who have an interest in politics are urged to take POL 110 Political Issues: The Quest for Justice or any of the required intermediate courses listed above.

## MINOR IN POLITICAL SCIENCE (6)

Students majoring in other fields may minor in Political Science by planning their program with a departmental advisor.

Of the six required courses, at least three of the following must be taken:

- POL 201 American Government
- POL 203 Modern States
- POL 205 Political Philosophy
- POL 207 Peace and War

For the three additional courses, two must be numbered above POL 207, producing a total of 18 credits of Political Science. The student must earn at least a C average in the courses in Political Science.

## MINOR IN LEX: LAW, ETHICS, AND CONSTITUTIONAL STUDIES (7)

Jointly sponsored by the Departments of Political Science and Philosophy, the LEX minor engages law, ethics, and constitutionalism through those thinkers and texts whose political, philosophical, and legal reflections have shaped the Western intellectual tradition. This minor is designed for those who want to acquire the liberal arts skills essential to professional and personal excellence, as well as to all those who aspire to thoughtful citizenship. For more information, please consult the entry in "Interdisciplinary Programs of Study" and contact the LEX Director, Prof. Jeremy Geddert at [jgeddert@assumption.edu](mailto:jgeddert@assumption.edu).

## RECOMMENDED FOUR-YEAR PLAN FOR THE MAJOR IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

The following is a suggested plan for Political Science majors. For instance, students who are interested in the study of politics are encouraged to take our introductory course (POL 110: Quest for Justice) as early as they can. But that course need not be taken first. Nor is it required for the major. However, all students who plan to major in Political Science should take the intermediate 200-level courses either before or in conjunction with relevant upper division offerings. Both the major and its requirements are flexible enough to accommodate study abroad and students can successfully complete the major with the latest starting point being spring of sophomore year.

### First Year

Fall	Spring
POL 110: Quest for Justice OR any of our intermediate offerings (POL 201: American Government, POL 203: Modern States, POL 205: Intro to Political Philosophy, and POL 207: Peace and War)	POL 110: Quest for Justice OR any of our intermediate offerings (POL 201: American Government, POL 203: Modern States, POL 205: Intro to Political Philosophy, and POL 207: Peace and War)

### Sophomore Year

Fall	Spring
POL 110: Quest for Justice OR any of our intermediate offerings (POL 201: American Government, POL 203: Modern States, POL 205: Intro to Political Philosophy, and POL 207: Peace and War)	POL 110: Quest for Justice OR any of our intermediate offerings (POL 201: American Government, POL 203: Modern States, POL 205: Intro to Political Philosophy, and POL 207: Peace and War)
A student with sufficient experience in the major and relevant 200-level courses could consider 300-level offerings.	A student with sufficient experience in the major and relevant 200-level courses could consider 300-level offerings.

**Junior Year**

Fall	Spring
Students with sufficient experience in the major and relevant 200-level courses should look to our 300-level offerings.	Students with sufficient experience in the major and relevant 200-level courses should look to our 300-level offerings.
Elective 300-level (Fall or Spring)	Elective 300-level (Fall or Spring)

**Senior Year**

Fall	Spring
POL 409: Senior Seminar (Always in the Fall, Wednesdays 2:30-5:00)	Elective 300-level (Fall or Spring)

**ADVISING TIPS FOR THE MAJOR IN POLITICAL SCIENCE**

- Although 11 courses are required for the major, students may take up to 14 Political Science classes.
- Students are encouraged to explore the major by taking POL 110 as early as possible, though it is not a required class.
- 200-level courses (POL 201, 203, 205, 207) do not have prerequisites. Majors must take these 200-level intermediate courses before or in conjunction with relevant 300-level offerings and are thus usually taken during Freshman and Sophomore years. There is no prescribed order in which the 200-level offerings need to be taken.
- More than one 200-level course can be taken at the same time.
- As a general practice, all 200-level intermediate courses are offered every semester.
- POL 350 and POL 358 count towards the minor in Core Texts and Enduring Questions (CTEQ).
- The special topics course (POL 399ST) can, depending on its theme and content, fulfill any of our upper division course requirements. Students should consult with the Department chair.
- Students thinking about pursuing a career in the law may want to consider minoring in Law, Ethics, and Constitutional Studies (LEX), an interdisciplinary minor between Philosophy and Political Science. As a general practice, the four required courses of this seven-course minor are offered every other year.
- The Senior Seminar (POL 409) is only offered during the Fall and only on Wednesdays from 2:30-5:00.
- The Department typically does not accept on-line classes for credit.
- To maintain the academic integrity of the major, transfer courses are approved under strict conditions. Students should consult with the department chair before registering for courses outside the day school of Assumption University.

**TO WHAT CAREERS DOES A MAJOR IN POLITICAL SCIENCE LEAD?**

An education in Political Science affords students the skills, training, and intellectual disposition to effectively pursue a variety of fulfilling vocations. Recent Political Science graduates have begun their careers in the State Department, the FBI, and the White House, as well as in posts throughout our national, state, and local governments. In addition to public service, our graduates also pursue careers in international affairs, graduate study, journalism, media, law, teaching, publishing, and business. The Political Science program consists of basic courses, open to all students, and advanced courses for all students except first-year students.

**COURSE DESCRIPTIONS** 

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**POLITICAL SCIENCE (POL)****POL 110 POLITICAL ISSUES: THE QUEST FOR JUSTICE**

This beginner's course in political science provides an introduction to politics through a critical examination of a full range of political issues and of classic and contemporary texts that illuminate the ongoing human—and American—“quest for justice.” Classic works of political reflection, political literature, speeches and writings by statesmen, as well as contemporary American

political debates on domestic and foreign policy will be analyzed to put the “issues” of politics in a broader and deeper perspective. Counts towards Social Science in the Foundations Program. (Fall, Spring)

Staff/*Three credits*

#### **POL 201 AMERICAN GOVERNMENT**

This course is an introduction to the principles, institutions, and processes of American government. It focuses on our political principles, such as liberty, democracy, and equality, especially as reflected in our government institutions—Congress and the Executive and Judiciary branches—and in our extra-governmental institutions, such as political parties and interest groups. Consideration will also be given to major contemporary issues—free speech, racial and sexual equality, privacy—as expressions of debates over our principles. (Fall, Spring)

Staab/*Three credits*

#### **POL 203 MODERN STATES**

A comparative analysis of major types of ancient and modern political systems, with an emphasis on the Western European liberal democracies of Great Britain and France and on the 20th century experience of totalitarian despotism. Open to all students, this course counts as a Forum course in the Foundations Program. (Fall, Spring)

Geddert/*Three credits*

#### **POL 205 POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY**

This course is an introduction to the nature and place of political philosophy in the political thought and life of Western Civilization. It examines the basic principles of political philosophy according to thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, Machiavelli, and Marx. (Fall, Spring)

Vaughan, Dobski/*Three credits*

#### **POL 207 PEACE AND WAR**

This course examines the role of war in human affairs, especially during the 20th century of “total war,” and at the outset of the 21st century. It considers why no enduring peace was achieved after the two world wars, the characteristics of international politics since the end of the Cold War, and the instruments for maintaining or restoring peace. Major interpretations of world politics are evaluated. This course counts as a Forum course in the Foundations Program. (Fall, Spring)

Dobski, Geddert/*Three credits*

#### **POL 312 THE AMERICAN FOUNDING**

An investigation into the fundamental principles that informed the founding of the American political order and have subsequently oriented the American way of life. In seeking to understand those principles, we also examine the political and philosophical tradition that preceded the founding. (Fall)

Staab/*Three credits*

#### **POL 315 THE JUDICIARY**

This course explores the U.S. judiciary as an institutional force in American politics. Beginning with the foundations of the judiciary and continuing through its prominent position in the interpretation and sometimes formation of policy and law today, the course considers the place courts do and should occupy in the constitutional scheme, how effective they are in producing social change, why their role has changed and how other branches of government react to them. Students will consider major Supreme Court cases and political controversies that illustrate the effect of the federal judiciary on American government.

Staab/*Three credits*

#### **POL 316 CONSTITUTIONAL LAW**

The role of the Supreme Court in the American political system. Constitutional powers and limitations, with primary emphasis on judicial interpretations of the 1st and 14th amendments.

Staab/*Three credits*

**POL 318 CIVIL LIBERTIES**

This course will take up in detail some important problems in the field of civil liberties. These problems will include the meaning and scope of the freedoms of speech and religion, including such issues as seditious speech, obscenity, school prayer, parochial school aid, and free exercise of religion.

Staab/*Three credits*

**POL 321 PUBLIC POLICY**

This course examines selected major contemporary national problems of the U.S. and the federal policies designed to deal with them. Particular problems considered might include poverty, welfare, the economy, education, health, transportation, consumer protection, environmental protection, and energy. It considers the interaction between parts of the government and between government and interest groups, in formulating and executing public policy. It evaluates the thinking of those who have advocated and opposed the expansion of government responsibility for a large range of social action.

Geddert/*Three credits*

**POL 322 POLITICAL ECONOMY**

The purpose of this course is to clarify the tradition of political economy, to understand its foundations and historical permutations, and to study its relationship and pertinence to pressing public policy concerns of our time. The relationship between "political" and "economic" phenomena and analysis will be investigated. The course focuses on the origins of political economy in moral and political reflection rather than in abstract "scientific" considerations. Authors to be studied include Smith, Marx, Keynes, de Jouvenel, Hayek, and Berger. (Fall)

Geddert/*Three credits*

**POL 337 POLITICS OF THE MIDDLE EAST**

The Middle East stands at the crossroads of three continents and three major world religions. For millennia, it has been the source of both hope and conflict. This course will provide historical context on current issues such as religious sectarianism, colonialism, terrorism, ethnic rivalry, revolution, democratic development, and the political economy of oil. It will examine well-known Israeli-Palestinian and Saudi-Iranian conflicts, as well as lesser-known regional rivalries, such as the Russian-backed conflict in Syria. It will also explore intra-regional co-operation, from OPEC to Ba'athist Pan-Arabism and beyond.

Staff/*Three credits*

**POL 338 NATIONALISM AND FASCISM**

This course has as its focus the nation, as a unique form of political organization, and nationalism as the unique movement which gives that form its primary expression. Distinctions will be drawn between moderate and patriotic forms of nationalism and that extreme form known as fascism. It will analyze the rise of major manifestations of nationalism in the 19th and 20th centuries as well as the 21st century challenges posed to the sovereignty of the nation by multinational corporations, intergovernmental organizations, terrorism, transnational bodies (the EU), and even individuals.

Dobski/*Three credits*

**POL 345 POLITICAL MASS MURDER**

Scholars who have studied the 20<sup>th</sup> century say that far more people were killed by their own governments during this time than by foreign enemies in wars. This course examines this phenomenon and compares selected major cases of political mass murder, including the Jewish holocaust, great state induced famines under Stalin and Mao, the killing fields of Cambodia, genocide in Rwanda and Sudan and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia. It considers how outside powers, especially the U.S. and U.N, have responded, when they intervene and how effectively; when and why they refrain from acting; and whether moral principles or international law permit or oblige states to intervene. (Fall)

Dobski/*Three credits*

**POL 350 REPUBLICANISM ANCIENT AND MODERN**

Is it possible for a political community to combine the rule of wisdom and virtue with popular consent? Can such a regime satisfy the need for both stability and energy? To understand why and how republics ancient and modern answered these questions, as well as why some republics succeeded and others failed, students will explore the theoretical and historical texts that illustrate the evolution of this political form. Rising above any particular party, policy, or platform, this course will distinguish the ancient

effort to secure ordered liberty from its medieval and modern counterparts, throwing into specific relief the character of our own republican democracy and the challenges facing its success.

Dobski/*Three credits*

#### **POL 351 CLASSICAL POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY**

Study of the origin and principles of political philosophy in the works of Homer, Herodotus, Thucydides, Plato, Xenophon, and Aristotle. Relevant works by Roman-era philosophers and historians (Cicero, Plutarch, Seneca, Sallust, Tacitus and Livy) may also be studied.

Dobski/*Three credits*

#### **POL 352 EARLY MODERN POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY: MAKING NATURAL RIGHTS**

This course will explore the major philosophers of the period, from Machiavelli to Rousseau. These figures made the modern world through their claim that each individual is best positioned to know what is right for that person. This is the origin of natural rights.

Vaughan/*Three credits*

#### **POL 353 IDEOLOGY AND REVOLUTION**

A study of modern revolutions and their connection to "ideologies" which promise a fundamental transformation of political life. We examine the political history of the French and Soviet Revolutions to understand the originality of ideological revolution as distinct from traditional political revolutions which have had more limited aims. The course also compares totalitarian tyrannies with traditional forms of dictatorship. The anti-totalitarian Revolutions of 1989 in Eastern Europe are also considered.

Staff/*Three credits*

#### **POL 356 MACHIAVELLI: TEACHER OF TYRANTS?**

Is Machiavelli a teacher of tyrants, as so many today like to think? Or is he a benefactor of humanity, responsible for the freedoms that we have come to associate with the modern world? What if the answer to both questions is "yes"? To address these questions, we will engage Machiavelli's enormously influential *Discourses on Titus Livius*, a study that will shed light on his deeply complex presentation of princely politics and classical republicanism.

Dobski/*Three credits*

#### **POL 358 TOCQUEVILLE'S DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA**

Alexis de Tocqueville has been called the greatest observer of democracy and the greatest observer of America. In 1831, Tocqueville spent nine months in America, seeking to understand why democracy had succeeded in America when it had failed in his native France. But *Democracy in America* is more than a vivid, insightful and often humorous chronicle of American culture, one that remains highly relevant today. It is a journey through the possibilities and dangers of democracy. Can we enjoy political liberty without being dragged down to a lowest common denominator? Tocqueville shows us how.

Dobski, Geddert/*Three credits*

#### **POL 371 FOREIGN POLICY AND DIPLOMACY**

This course examines the making and character of the foreign policies of major states in the world today. This study is made against a background consideration of Thucydides' interpretation of relations between states, the nature and development of diplomatic practice, and the impact of modern Western civilization on the contemporary world.

Dobski/*Three credits*

#### **POL 372 AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY**

A study of the policy of the United States regarding important areas and problems in the contemporary world, and the development of the American involvement in foreign affairs from the Roosevelt-Truman era of World War II to the present time. Legalist, moralist, realist and revisionist interpretations of American foreign policy are evaluated.

Dobski/*Three Credits*

#### **POL 376 TERRORISM AND THE MODERN WORLD**

An introduction to modern-day terrorism and the challenges it poses to contemporary political life. This course distinguishes three ways in which terrorism manifests itself in the modern world, capturing the difference between those who see terror as an end in itself, those who use terror as an instrument to achieve political goals, and those who understand terrorism to serve

“otherworldly”, or non-political, ends. Students will examine how these manifestations of modern terrorism vary from each other in their origins, historical development, the justifications they employ, the goals they pursue, and the tactics, targets and technologies that they use.

Dobski/*Three credits*

**POL 377 THE POLITICS OF JUST WARS**

Are “just wars” possible? This class examines reflections on just war thinking at the core of the political, military, religious and philosophic traditions within Western civilization, and how they apply to contemporary reflections on human rights and international law. It begins with military justifications from classical antiquity, moving to the origins of just war theorizing in the early Church, Judaism and Islam. It then weighs the most serious criticisms of the moral and political teachings of the classical and Christian world posed by the “Catholic New Left,” feminist political theory, Islamist terrorism, and the allure of a world without borders.

Dobski, Geddert/*Three credits*

**POL 381 SHAKESPEARE’S POLITICS**

Perhaps transcending the distinction between philosopher and poet, Shakespeare has given the world dramatic portrayals of the most enduring human problems. This course focuses on one of those problems through a careful reading of some of Shakespeare’s British histories. To be more precise, it explores Shakespeare’s portrait of Britain’s development from a tribal kingship under the political and spiritual influence of “Rome” into a constitutional monarchy whose separation of church from state prepared the way for its modern republican character.

Dobski/*Three credits*

**POL 399 SPECIAL TOPIC IN POLITICAL SCIENCE**

Staff/*Three Credits*

**POL 400 INDEPENDENT STUDY**

Open to highly qualified Junior and Senior Political Science majors. Permission of the chairperson is required.

Staff/*Three credits*

**POL 409 RESEARCH SEMINAR: POPULISM, ANCIENT AND MODERN**

Populism and democracy: what is the difference between populism and democracy? Where does republicanism come in? These questions and others will be explored through a variety of readings both contemporary and historical. (Fall)

Vaughan/Dobski/Geddert/*Three Credits*