

Professors Sound Off

An increased number of nations are recognizing the Palestinian State as free and independent within its borders. Do you believe there could be an official independent State of Palestine in the near future? Why or Why not?

I don't believe there will be a fully sovereign and independent state of Palestine established any time in the near future. There are a variety of major hurdles the effort faces, but by far the most critical relates to the need for the major western powers to be fully supportive of the endeavor. As their support in turn depends upon a reasonably uniform commitment on the part of Israel, something which seems remote at best given their current policies and rhetoric, I unfortunately must conclude that the current impasse will continue into the foreseeable future.

–Prof. Watson

I do believe an official independent state of Palestine will eventually emerge, and one thing that is helping this process along is indeed the increasing number of states recognizing Palestine. In Latin America, seven countries have done so just this month (January). They are Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela. Paraguay and Peru are expected to follow soon. This is very encouraging. No longer is Latin America under the absolute control of the USA, so its states can finally forge their own independent foreign policies and contribute to the resolution of problems around the globe. This is important because the USA has proven itself utterly incapable of taking a balanced approach to the issue and offering any kind of solution.

–Prof. Hislope

I do not think an official independent state of Palestine will emerge in the near future. Past efforts have been unsuccessful, and I do not think that enough has shifted in the region's political environment to expect a different outcome at this time.

–Prof. Xydias

Establishing two viable states on decent terms is an important and "realistic" political goal. As a thought experiment, imagine for a moment the "impossible." Imagine a single territory bounded by the Mediterranean, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Egypt governed by a single, democratic state that distributes equal rights of citizenship to the entire population within this territory. Now ask yourself what would have to be done to make this possible--and consider what would happen if enough people tried to do so. . .

–Prof. Scherer

What do you believe will be the greatest challenge faced by the Obama Administration now that Republicans hold the majority in the House of Representatives? Why?

The biggest challenge faced by President Obama will be budgetary disputes with House Republicans. In February the president submits a budget request to Congress. When the president's party is the same as the party that controls Congress, the president's budget is usually tinkered with a bit, but not substantially altered. While President Obama and the Democratic Senate may have similar budget priorities, the House will likely do much of what it did when the Republican 'revolution' took place after the 1994 Election, which is put up a strong fight with the president over some

spending programs. In 1995, the federal government was temporarily shut down. At that time public opinion supported President Clinton and House Speaker Gingrich et al. backed down. Our country will likely be in a similar situation some time this year. The fiscal conservatives in the House see budget deficits as the number one problem and this will not only affect the yearly budget process but House Republicans may also refuse to raise our debt ceiling. Holding his own in these budget battles will likely be one of President Obama's biggest challenges.

-Prof. Nicholas

Democrats are sometimes marginally better than Republicans on this score, but both are far behind on dealing with one of the big tendencies that has shaped our world over the last 40 years, and which will continue to shape it for the foreseeable future. This is the transformation--some say the erosion--of the public, in its many guises. These include but are not limited to public discourse, public institutions, and public-mindedness. What is and is not possible for the Obama administration in light of Republican numbers in the House is a real question--but it may be important to think about the constraints placed on any and every administration by the larger historical and global frameworks in play. . .

-Prof. Scherer

Meeting for Political Science Juniors

The Political Science department will be holding a mandatory meeting for Political Science juniors on **Thursday, February 24 at 4:00 in Humanities RM 119**. At this meeting, we will discuss your senior thesis, especially the process by which your advisor will be assigned.

Note from the Department Chair

As always, you should find much of interest in this newsletter. Spring term courses, winter term events, faculty updates and views are included, as are announcements of various upcoming events. Happy reading!!

-Prof. Oxley

New Political Science Mini-Term

Interested in presidential politics? Want to learn more about the 2012 presidential nomination? If so, this is the mini-term for you!

Professor Oxley will be directing a mini-term in New Hampshire during winter break 2011. Students will intern for presidential campaigns or other organizations, attend candidate rallies, and otherwise soak up the New Hampshire primary. Stay tuned for more details; information sessions will be held later this term and early in spring term.

Faculty Updates

Prof. Zoe Oxley

My attention has been devoted to a few projects lately. First, I have created a Presidential Primary Mini-Term. This term will occur during winter break 2011 and be located in Manchester, NH. Participating students will intern with campaign organizations and we all will experience the NH primary in the weeks before balloting occurs. It should be very exciting! On the research front, I am putting the final touches on a book chapter about new media and knowledge (due to appear in a book published by Cambridge University Press later this year). Also, at a conference in early March, I will be presenting my findings from a study of media coverage of women in state executive election contests.

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Prof. Robert Hislope

PSC 277 Local Political Internships continues to offer interesting internship opportunities for students. For example, this term Sam Rubiner is working at the Center for Community Justice in Schenectady. His work involves finding alternatives to prison for convicted non-violent and first-time offenders of the law. Liz Lehmann is interning in Albany at the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants. Her job involves assisting new immigrants with legal paperwork, schooling, transportation, and a host of other issues. Jon Goldberg, a history major, is working on environmental issues at the Schenectady County Planning Department. Marissa Gordon is doing her internship at the Department of Education's Office of College and University Evaluation. (hisloper@union.edu)

Prof. Guillermina Seri

I'm happy to report that after returning from my first mini-term to Buenos Aires, an intense and fulfilling experience which gave me the opportunity to share my own culture with a wonderful group of Union College students, I have completed a book manuscript and started a writing mini-sabbatical. (serig@union.edu)

Prof. Christina Xydias

I have been hired as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science at Susquehanna University, starting in September 2011. I am enthusiastic about remaining in touch, including writing letters of recommendation for students at Union. If you find that you would like to contact me after I have moved to my new job, please feel free to email me at christina.xydias@gmail.com!

Prof. Matthew Scherer

I'm finishing a book project this term and excited about teaching two upper level courses in the spring: Theories of Political Economy and Contemporary Continental Theory. Both courses will be new--and in

their different ways they will try to address some of the biggest political questions going today in fresh and interesting ways.

(schererm@union.edu)

**Speakers in the Humanities Series
SCCC on Wednesday, Feb.9th**

*"In Harm's Way: Gender, Combat, and
Democratic Citizenship"*

Prof. Christina Xydias

The talk will address women in the U.S. military, women in combat roles, and the recent military advisory panel recommendation for allowing female troops to serve in combat units without restrictions.

New Courses in Political Theory

This spring, Prof. Scherer will be teaching two new exciting courses in political theory. The first is **PSC 230: Theories of Political Economy**. This course explores key texts that shape our thinking about the political economy, beginning with Adam Smith. Questions will include: What is the relation between politics and economics? Between government and economy? How and why is the modern political economy global? What are the origins and implications of political and economic inequality?

The second course is **PSC 334: Contemporary Continental Theory**. Students in this course will examine new approaches to modern political concerns about the power of the state, the possibility of democracy, the importance of language, media and rhetoric, and the connections between knowledge, ethics, religion and politics.

Faculty Accomplishments

Conducting Empirical Analysis: Public Opinion in Action, co-authored by Professor Zoe Oxley, was published by CQ Press in December 2010.

The book focuses on public opinion and provides students with hands-on exercises for analyzing opinion survey data.

Help Union College's Model UN Delegation Prepare for NYC!

Union College is again preparing to participate in the National Model United Nations (NMUN) conference to be held April 17th to the 21st. One of the more important components of this preparation is the running of a 'mock' session at the end of the winter term where the basic aspects of committee work are practiced and students are given a final opportunity to practice their skills before doing the real thing in NYC. The success of this session is greatly dependent on the number of people involved as the more there are, the more realistic the session is.

In that regard Professor Darius Watson would like to invite any interested students to participate in the Union College mock NMUN session to be held **Tuesday, March 8th from 5:30pm to 8:30pm** in the Olin lecture center. Volunteers will be assigned a country to represent and given a basic statement of that country's policy toward the issue being discussed. The rules of procedure will also be reviewed at the start of the session so that the only real requirement of the volunteer's part will be a high level of enthusiasm and a willingness to practice diplomacy for an evening.

If you are interested or need more information please contact Prof. Watson (watsond@union.edu) for further details. Come help Union College continue its award winning tradition at the NMUN conference and be a diplomat for a night!

PSC Major Foreign Experience Requirement

All PSC majors, including ID-PSC majors, need to fulfill a foreign experience requirement. There are two ways to fulfill this requirement:

1. Complete a three course language sequence (only two courses are required if the sequence is begun beyond the first introductory course in the language)
2. Participate on a full-length term abroad (mini terms do not qualify)

Please plan carefully to fulfill this requirement. For many languages, the introductory course is only offered in the Fall Term, so you cannot necessarily begin your language study any time in the year.

UPPER-LEVEL COURSE DESCRIPTIONS FOR SPRING TERM 2011

PSC 230: Theories of Political Economy-Scherer

This course in Modern Political Theory explores key texts that shape our thinking about the political economy beginning with the classical liberal theory of Adam Smith and continuing with some of its many important critics and interlocutors. Questions will include: What is the relation between politics and economics? Between government and economy? What is capitalism? How and why is the modern political economy global? Why do governments and economies repeatedly pass through crisis and failure? What are the origins and implications of political and economic inequality? Readings may include: Smith, Marx, Hayek, Harvey, Klein, Polanyi, Habermas, Foucault.

PSC Major Research Requirement

All PSC majors are required to take two research-focused courses:

- An R course (the R indicates that the course is research-intensive)
- Either a 2nd R course, a seminar or a research methods course (PSC 220, 222 or 223)

PSC Interdepartmental (ID) majors must take one R course to fulfill the research requirement.

Finally, students are strongly recommended to complete this requirement before the end of the junior year, as preparation for the senior thesis.

Spring 2011 Offerings:

PSC 251R American Foreign Policy
PSC 369 US Politics Seminar (Topic: The Obama Administration and the Current State of American Politics)

PSC 251R: American Foreign Policy-Watson

Students will examine the history of U.S. foreign policy, how policy is formulated, and competing perspectives on how best to define and defend the “national interest.” The class will also examine several case studies focusing on the practical development of US foreign policy since the end of WW II. The course will conclude with students being asked to critically apply theoretical and historical concepts and considerations to some of the current dilemma's being faced by the US foreign policy establishment.

PSC 259: Wealth and Power Among Nations-Dallas

An examination of the tensions between developed and developing countries in the global political economy. First, the course

traces the genealogy of thinkers on the issues of development, such as Smith, Marx, Keynes, Modernization theory and Development Economics, as a way to understand the enduring debates within the field. Second, it examines historical transformations in the international economy, such as in trade, global finance and periodic economic crises, in order to understand how the structures and opportunities for developing countries transform. Finally, although there is no focus on any single region of the world, the course touches upon the oil boom in the Middle East in the 1970s, the debt crises in Latin America and Africa in the 1980s, the rise of Japan and the East Asia tigers, and the new giants, China and India.

PSC 263: The Politics of Poverty and Welfare-Nicholas

This course will look at various theories of poverty and inequality and the ideological and policy implications of these theories. Further, the history and political controversies surrounding the establishment and continuation of welfare programs such as Social Security, TANF, Medicare, Veterans benefits, and disability will be examined.

PSC 277: Local Political Internships-Hislope

Places students in internships in local political organizations and in offices in local and state government. Students draw on their internship experience and related academic work to reach a better understanding of the complexities and dynamics of politics and the state or local level.

PSC 334: Contemporary Continental Theory-Scherer

In the latter half of the twentieth century, theorists working in the continental tradition have developed new approaches to modern political concerns about the power of the state, the possibility of democracy, the

importance of language, media and rhetoric, and the connections between knowledge, ethics, religion and politics. Students in this course will grapple with some of the most important figures and theories at the leading edge of this tradition. While this course presumes no background in continental theory, students must be prepared to wrestle with difficult texts, ideas and thinkers. Authors may include: Agamben, Badiou, Butler, Cavarero, Cavell, Deleuze, Derrida, Fanon, Foucault, Ranciere, Zizek.

PSC 345: Contemporary Chinese Politics-Dallas

A survey course on the politics of the People's Republic of China, with an emphasis on state-society relations. After briefly introducing the Republican and state socialist eras, the heart of the course provides a historical and topical overview of the contemporary political and economic reforms in China. It explores topics in both Chinese domestic politics, such as policy-making and bureaucratic politics, the decentralization of power, inequality, village elections, the rule of law and contentious politics, as well as China's integration into the international economy (such as trade imbalances and foreign investment), nationalism and environmental degradation.

PSC 347: Comparative Left Politics-Hislope

A critical exploration of Marxian ideas and a comparative examination of how those ideas were, and are, translated into political practice.

PSC 355: Defense Policy-Brown

An examination of US Defense policy from a strategic stand-point emphasizing long-term strategic components of national power as they relate to defense requirements, the defense-policy making process, strategic thinking generally, current issues in security policy, and long-term outlooks.

PSC 369: US Politics Seminar-Brown

"The Obama Administration and the Current State of American Politics"

This seminar will explore in an historically comparative way the public persona of the president, the Great Party Shift, political polarization and the new savagery in political conduct, the current revolution in campaign finance, the unfolding contest over the creation and distribution of national wealth, and strategic politics in an age of ideology and economic stagnation.

WGS 495: Queer Theory and Politics-Marso and Ogawa

Is "queer" an identity, a critical orientation, a way of life, a political stance? One thing is certain: a queer orientation views the status-quo critically and is unwilling to fit inside any box. In this course, we will read books (both non-fiction and fiction), view films, and explore art that interrogates the multiple meanings of queer. This course counts as the Women's and Gender Studies capstone and also carries Political Science credit. David Ogawa (Art History) and Lori Marso (WGS and PSC) are team teachers.

POLITICAL SCIENCE COURSES: Spring 2011

PSC 111: Introduction to US Politics (Oxley) MWF 9:15AM-10:20AM

PSC 112: Introduction Global Politics (Watson) TTH 1:55PM-3:40PM

PSC 113: Introduction to Political Thought (Xydias) MWF 8:00AM-9:05AM

Theory

PSC 230: Theories of Political Economy (Scherer) TTH 9:00AM-10:45AM

PSC 334: Contemporary Continental Theory (Scherer) TTH 1:55PM-3:40PM

WGS 495: Queer Theory and Politics
(Marso and Ogawa)
TTH 10:55AM-12:40PM

Comparative

PSC 345: Contemporary Chinese Politics
(Dallas) MWF 1:50PM-2:55PM

PSC 347: Comparative Left Politics
(Hislope) MW 3:05PM-4:45PM

International Relations

PSC 251R: American Foreign Policy
(Watson) TTH 10:55AM-12:40PM

PSC 259: Wealth and Power Among
Nations (Dallas) MWF 11:45AM-12:50PM

PSC 355: Defense Policy (Brown) MW
7:00PM-8:45PM

US Politics

PSC 263: The Politics of Poverty and
Welfare (Nicholas) MWF 10:30AM-
11:35AM

PSC 277: Local Political Internships
(Hislope) TBD

PSC 369: US Politics Seminar (Brown) MW
3:05PM-4:45PM