

News and Views from the Political Science Department

Fall 2022

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FROM DEPARTMENT CHAIR:

Bradley D. Hays

The fall arrives with the department, much like the season, in a moment of transition. This past spring, Prof. Lobe announced his retirement from Union College. Prof. Lobe is a beloved professor who taught popular classes on Middle East Politics, the Arab-Israeli Conflict, the CIA and the Art of Intelligence, and many others. I know we will miss his wisdom, insight, and humor.

Prof. Lobe led the Term in Washington DC for the past 15 years so his departure means that the department will not be offering the DC Term this academic year. A committee of faculty members is currently reviewing the program with an eye toward renewing and reinvigorating it so that its future offering can be as transformative an experience as it has been for so many students in the past.

The department is also in the process of leading a national search for the new Joseph Board assistant professor of environmental policy. The new faculty position will enable the department to offer more environmentally-themed classes that our students have indicated they are eager to take. Some current students will be a part of this process when the candidates visit campus so please be on

the lookout for these opportunities. Student feedback and insight is invaluable to the hiring process and this input helps shape the future of the department.

And, of course, this is a midterm election year, which brings exciting (and sometimes nerve-wracking) times. The department is running election-related events. Pi Sigma Alpha—the political science honors society—has already held two voter registration drives. Professors Brown and Oxley will be leading a post-election analysis presentation and discussion to be held shortly after the election. (Check your email for more information in the near future.) For those of you planning to cast your vote by mail (absentee or otherwise) but who have not yet requested a ballot, visit the following website to do so: www.vote.org/absentee-ballot/

Have a safe, productive, and enjoyable fall term!

PROFESSOR SOUND OFF

By Professor Bradley D. Hays

On June 24th, I was standing at a bus stop in the Hackney neighborhood of East London when a student turned to me and said, “Prof. Hays, the Supreme Court just overturned *Roe v. Wade*.” I had just spent the last several hours with a group of Union students at St. Joseph’s Hospice listening to the nurses, administrators, and volunteers discuss their care for the dying. This experience was part of the National Health Systems term abroad, which enables students to not only explore the structure of healthcare and its delivery but also different approaches to public health. There on that London street, we were confronting the disjunction of having just experienced an institution where compassion and public health are the central animating principles with our home country effectively rendering a decision that had profound and adverse impacts on women’s reproductive health.

Moreover, the Court’s decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* was not the only decision handed down last term that had striking implications for public health. In *West Virginia v. Environmental Protection Agency*, the Court significantly curtailed the EPA’s (<https://www.cdc.gov/climateandhealth/effects/>) ability to reduce carbon from power plants around the nation. The decision is a blow to the Biden Administration’s aspiration to run the nation’s power grid off of renewable energy sources by 2035. The CDC warns that climate change and corresponding disruptions to “physical, biological, and ecological systems” will result in

“increased respiratory and cardiovascular disease, injuries and premature deaths...changes in the prevalence and geographical distribution of food- and water-borne illnesses and other infectious diseases, and threats to mental health.” But that’s not all! In *New York State Rifle and Pistol Association v. Bruen*, the Court made it much easier to carry a firearm for the purposes of public self-defense. Study after study indicates that proximity to firearms significantly increases violent injury and death. (<https://efsgv.org/learn/type-of-gun-violence/gun-violence-in-the-united-states/>) Existing studies on women’s health, environmental policy, and firearms all indicate that the policy effects of the Supreme Court’s decisions will adversely impact American public health.

While abroad, healthcare professionals regularly asked me to help them understand what the Court was doing. This wasn’t easily done, especially in a casual, five-minute conversation and it never went very well. After I would attempt to contextualize the decisions by explaining judicial politics, rights-based frameworks, and legal hostility to science, the typical response was a wincing shrug and some version of “glad that isn’t our system.” That is when I would wince in return and offer my own shrug. But, being abroad at that moment also provided the opportunity to reflect at a distance. Here are a few thoughts on what to make of *Dobbs* and the Court.

Since the Reagan Administration, the Republican Party has benefitted from the judicialization of abortion politics. Under Reagan, the Republican Party began to formally support overturning *Roe* but there was little national support behind this effort.

**Know a Union
Political Science
Alumnus that is
doing great
things?
Please refer
them to us to
be featured in
the next issue.**

PROFESSOR SOUND OFF (cont'd)

Rather than legislate on an issue that divided social and economic conservatives, the Party tied abortion politics to the courts. The remedy to *Roe* was appointing judges who would strictly construe the Constitution and who would, ostensibly, vote to overturn *Roe*. Eventually, this became tied closely with conservative jurists who espoused an originalist interpretive approach (i.e. interpreting the Constitution through the original public understanding of the provision at issue). Popular majorities have supported abortion rights, especially early in a pregnancy and in special circumstances, so largely avoiding legislating reproductive policies even while voicing a desire for the courts to overturn *Roe* helped the Republican Party maintain its electoral coalition.

Now that *Dobbs* has eliminated this balance, Republicans face the prospect of being held to account for not just *Dobbs* itself but of its policy consequences. Stories like those of a ten-year-old rape victim having to be transported hundreds of miles to a neighboring state to terminate a resulting pregnancy are repugnant and may create a very different political landscape than anti-*Roe* politicians faced previously. We've seen this emerging terrain in both liberal and conservative states. Voters in deeply conservative Kansas overwhelmingly rejected a state constitutional amendment that would have eliminated abortion rights in the state. While we do not yet know the extent of *Dobbs*'s electoral effect, winning in court sometimes leads to electoral defeat.

And what does *Dobbs* mean for the Court itself? In terms of public approval of the Court, it has never been lower. Reversing a precedent that is half a century old and has the

support of 60% of the American people will do that. Of course, *Dobbs* alone didn't do this; the Court has rendered numerous unpopular decisions in the recent past. Layer this on top of the declining commitment to democratic institutions more generally and it isn't terribly surprising that the Court's popularity is underwater. Equally problematic is what the *Dobbs* decision means for adherence to the rule of law. For a century, scholars have raised concerns over the Supreme Court acting like a third legislative chamber and enforcing the priorities of judges rather than those of elected officials. Disciplined adherence to precedent is one vehicle for mitigating these concerns. Ironically, originalism, which dominates constitutional interpretation on the current conservative Supreme Court, was developed to limit judicial discretion but it has since morphed into an ideological movement bent on overturning foundational precedent on civil rights, voting, the regulatory state, etc. While scholars debate whether we should understand *Dobbs* as originalist in methodology, it is clearly originalist in ideology. The takeaway is that, much like parties, Congress, and the executive, the courts are subject to ideological takeover. . Stated differently, while it has been developing for quite some time, the federal judiciary has entered more transparently into ideologically-driven transactional politics to the detriment of its own reputation, rule of law, and, along with it, public health. The Court has helped get us and itself here but it will be up to the emerging generation of young voters, lawyers, and activists to help restore the Court and the damage it has done to our institutions and our health.

Winter 2023 Political Science Courses

Introductory

- PSC 111: Introduction to US Politics
(Wiest) MWF 8:00AM - 9:05 AM
- PSC 112: Introduction to Global Politics
(Thacker) TTH 10:55AM - 12:40PM
- PSC 113: Introduction to Political Thought
(Seri) MWF 9:15AM - 10:20AM

Research Methods

- PSC 223: Critical Comparisons in Politics
(Hislope) TTH 10:55AM - 12:40PM

Political Theory

- PSC 233: Political Theory and Human Rights
(Cidam) MWF 10:30AM - 11:35AM
- PSC 334R: Contemporary Continental Theory
(Cidam) MW 3:05PM - 4:45PM
- PSC 339: Seminar: Political Theory: Feminist Futures
(Marso) T 1:55PM - 4:40PM

Comparative Politics

- PSC 246: Asian Development: Industrialization Beyond the West
(Dallas) MW 7:00PM - 8:45PM
- PSC 247: Human (In)Security in a Comparative Perspective
(Seri) MWF 11:45AM - 12:50PM
- PSC 249: Middle East Politics
(Ahmed) MW 3:05PM - 4:45PM

International Politics

- PSC 397: North-South Relations
(Thacker) TTH 1:55PM - 3:40PM

U.S. Politics

- PSC 361R: Political Psychology
(Oxley) TTH 9:00AM - 10:45AM
- PSC 371: Civil Rights and Civil Liberties
(Hays) MWF 1:50PM - 2:55PM

Internships

- PSC 277: Capital Region Political Internships
(Oxley) Fri 3:00PM - 4:00PM



UPCOMING EVENT

Please Join the Political
Science Department
For a
Post Election
Analysis

More details to come!

FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM

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UPPER-LEVEL COURSE DESCRIPTIONS FOR WINTER TERM

PSC 223 - CRITICAL COMPARISONS IN POLITICS

What does a convincing explanation in political science look like? This course will focus on how to make good comparative explanations in political science. We will explore how to do this by studying and applying key concepts, such as culture, social movements, elites, institutions, hegemony, and the state. This course will help prepare students for writing the senior thesis.

PSC 233 – POLITICAL THEORY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Today, there is hardly any disagreement that we, as human beings, are entitled to a certain set of rights by the mere fact of being human. This almost universal acceptance of human rights has changed the world we live in dramatic ways. Following the aftermath of World War II, we have seen the emergence of innumerable international and nongovernmental organizations that are specifically devoted to the protection of human rights. And yet, despite all these developments, human rights abuses, in different guises, rage on all over the world, including the developed countries of the West. During the course of the term, rather than covering the usual terrain by focusing on the outrageous and blatant human rights abuses undertaken by dictatorial regimes, we will turn our gaze to our own world and critically engage with the human rights issues that plague Western democracies, especially since the beginning of the “global war on terror” following the 9/11 terror attacks. Given how central human rights are to the identity of the democratic West, it is particularly disconcerting to observe increasing number of human rights abuses in countries such as the United States, UK, and various members of the European Union. What can account for this unsettling fact? Are the ongoing human rights abuses a result of an implementation problem bringing to light the inadequacies of the current international human rights regime(s) or are they symptomatic of a deeper problem that goes to the heart of the notion of human rights itself? Do the unprecedented developments in human rights law announce the coming of a new and better world where all people, regardless of their race, gender and citizenship status will benefit from legal protection or is the idea of expanding human rights to whole humanity a

utopian dream that runs the risk of becoming an ideology used by the Western powers to legitimize their new colonial adventures?

PSC 246 - ASIAN DEVELOPMENT: INDUSTRIALIZATION BEYOND THE WEST

How did some Asian countries become the first non-Western countries to achieve high-income status, near elimination of poverty, a highly educated and healthy population, leading edge technology and in some cases robust democracies and even admirably equal distributions of wealth? And how did they come to compete with the West, often on terms set by Western countries, despite the West’s much earlier industrialization, and the vast geographic and cultural distances? Are answers to be found in politics and institutions? Culture? Resources and demography? Historical effects of imperialism? Regionalism? After a brief comparison of pre-modern China and Europe, the course focuses on the ‘miracle’ of Japanese industrialization from the late 19th to early 20th century, as well as Japan’s combination of industrialization and militarization on the road to World War Two. This is followed by post-World War Two Japan and the four Asian Tigers (South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore), before focusing on the return of China since the 1980s, and Southeast Asia within the Asian region. This is a reading intensive course, though no background in Asia, political science or economics is required

PSC 247 - HUMAN (IN) SECURITY IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

With a focus on “the daily lives of ordinary people”, the recent tradition of Human Security redefines safety as “freedom from fear and freedom from want.” At the interface of security, development, and Human Rights grounding democratization, Human Security adopts the perspective of the common citizen, calling for collaboration between states and international and grassroots organizations to prevent and eliminate obstacles undermining people’s autonomy, rights, and development. This course aims, first, to provide students with a solid conceptual and applied knowledge of Human Security. Second, by learning about the deep-seated conditions that hinder people’s safety from fear and from want, students will gain a thicker perspective on the structural challenges for peace and democracy around the world through the eyes of the people on the ground.

UPPER-LEVEL COURSE DESCRIPTIONS FOR WINTER TERM (Cont'd)

PSC 249 - MIDDLE EAST POLITICS

This course is designed to introduce students to the essential political history and dynamics of the Middle East in the 20th century. Students will study the processes through which the states of the contemporary Middle East emerged; the types of political regimes that have evolved in these states; the origins and evolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict; the relationships between Islam and politics; and debates regarding U.S. foreign policy toward the region.

The application of psychological theories to understanding the political attitudes and behavior of individuals (citizens, political leaders) as well as small groups (juries, presidential advisors). Specific topics include stereotypes, personality, social cognition, attitude formation, altruism, emotion, psychoanalysis, groupthink and elite decision-making.

PSC 277 - CAPITAL REGION POLITICAL INTERNSHIPS

This class enables students to become politically active and/or gain political experience by working for elected officials, government agencies, election campaigns, interest groups, non-profit organizations, lobby firms, etc. Students draw on their internship experience and related academic work to reach a better understanding of the complexities and dynamics of politics at the state or local level. Students are permitted to enroll in this course twice, although the course will count toward the Political Science major only once.

PSC 334R - CONTEMPORARY CONTINENTAL THEORY: IN THE STREET: POLITICS OF PROTEST AND DEMOCRACY

As 2019 came to a close, many who looked back on the tumultuous events of the past decade agreed on one thing: the 2010s were a decade of protests. The wave of worldwide protests took millions of people to the streets, where activists, as one commentator aptly puts it, “marched, sat down, sat in, camped out, occupied, filled jail cells, rioted, looted, chanted, petitioned, lobbied and hash tagged.” If the early 2020s, with the racial justice demonstrations that spread all over the United States after the killing of George Floyd and the recent popular uprisings such the one

that is currently taking place in Iran, are any indication protest politics is here to stay. Are such instances of political action dangerous or central to democratic politics? Can spontaneous protests ever create long lasting change? Or are they bound to dissipate? In this class, we will address these questions by engaging with the ongoing debates in contemporary political theory that focus on politics of protest in its various forms, ranging from acts of civil disobedience, spontaneous uprisings, and local resistance struggles to riots. During our explorations, we will also ask: What are the purposes, relevance, and efficacy of street politics as a form of political dissent? What are the political stakes in conceptual disagreements? Does it matter to call one protest an act of civil disobedience another a riot? Who gets to decide? What is the role of the theorist vis-à-vis the political actors on the ground? Is the task of the theorist to provide political actors with conceptual tools that can help them justify their acts? Or is it to guide them in the right direction? Or is it to learn from them so as to find better ways to understand practices of dissent? To address these questions, the course will cover a wide range of reading from foundational texts written by Martin Luther King, Mohandas Gandhi, Henri David Thoreau, and Hannah Arendt to contemporary theorists' interventions into conceptual debates regarding different forms of protest and their analyses of current instances of street politics.

PSC 339 - SEMINAR: POLITICAL THEORY FEMINIST FUTURES

Linking freedom with struggles against all forms of sexual, racist, class, climate, colonial, and imperial violence, we will think about realism and fantasy in feminist futures. As strong forces try to turn back the clock on hard won victories for gender and racial equality, reproductive freedom, and freedom from violence, how can feminist imaginings motivate and guide us? In addition to readings in feminist political theory that map the realist/fantasy tension and help us think about problems and possibilities for resistance, we explore the ways feminist futures are imagined in popular and avant-garde visual culture, and see how women and girls are leading the way.

UPPER-LEVEL COURSE DESCRIPTIONS FOR WINTER TERM (Cont'd)

PSC 361R - POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY

The application of psychological theories to understanding the political attitudes and behavior of individuals (citizens, political leaders) as well as small groups (juries, presidential advisors). Specific topics include stereotypes, personality, social cognition, attitude formation, altruism, emotion, psychoanalysis, groupthink and elite decision-making.

PSC 371 - CIVIL RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES

Considers the protections afforded to individual rights and liberties by the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Topics include freedom of speech and assembly, the right to privacy, religious freedom, equal protection and discrimination, and the due process rights of those accused of crimes. The course proceeds mainly through close examination of Supreme Court cases, considered in their political, historical and legal context.

PSC 397 – NORTH SOUTH RELATIONS

This course examines the fundamental issues that arise out of the relations between the industrialized countries of the global “North” (e.g., the U.S., Europe, Japan) and the developing countries of the global “South,” with an emphasis on the period from the mid-twentieth century to today. Our main focus is on the development of the South, and the ways in which its relationship with the North has affected its development trajectories and outcomes.

REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATING WITH HONORS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

GPA of 3.50 or better in PSC, as well as 3.30 cumulatively

Completion of a PSC seminar with an A- or better [if you do not attain an A- in the seminar, you may still be eligible for honors if your PSC GPA is 3.70 or higher.] Either way, you must complete a seminar.

At least three PSC course grades of A- or better [not including thesis courses].

A grade of A- or higher on the senior project.

Delivery of an oral (not poster) presentation on your senior project at the Steinmetz symposium.

****ID majors must meet the requirements for honors in both departments****



Participating in an internship experience is a great way to learn real world skills while earning your degree!

“Your voice is Important. Make sure you make it count by exercising Your right to Vote.”

POLITICAL INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Are you interested in a local political internship?

If so, enroll in PSC 277!

PSC 277, Capital Region Political Internships, gives students the opportunity to complete an internship during the academic term.

Please email Prof. Oxley at oxley@union.edu if you would like to know more. And please do so soon! Enrollment in the course requires that you first have an internship secured. Prof. Oxley can help you with that.

Our Pi Sigma Alpha members were out getting their fellow classmates registered to vote and distributing information about student’s local

PI SIGMA ALPHA
POLITICAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT

WE WANT
U
TO VOTE



www.vote.org/absentee-ballot/
Get your absentee ballot here!