

News and Views from the Political Science Department

Inside this issue:

SPRING 23

Professor
Sound off 2-3

FALL 23
Political
Science
Course
Offerings 4

Upper Level
Course
Descriptions 4-5

Professor Book
Recommendations 6

Upcoming Events/
Important Dates 7

Upcoming Events
More info 8

Pi Sigma Alpha
Writing Contest 9

LinkedIn Info

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FROM DEPARTMENT CHAIR: Chair's Remarks by Bradley D. Hays

Hello and welcome to the spring. The campus is blossoming with long-awaited colors, and I hope you are enjoying spring. During this season of transition, I want, once again, to thank Professors Ahmed and Thacker for their commitment to the department and its students. Please be sure to wish them well before they depart Union.

As you begin thinking about your fall courses, I want to spotlight Prof. Benegal's first elective offering in the department: PSC 263 US Environmental Policy. The description for the course is in the back of the newsletter along with the descriptions for all of the department's elective offerings.

I want to highlight a special and exciting upcoming event. On May 8th at 5PM, Jeff Sharlet will be delivering a lecture on campus. Sharlet is a leading long-form journalist and expert on religion in America who has a new book out. *The Undertow: Scenes from a Slow Civil War* is an exploration of and meditation on the division that divides the country and its religious and ideological underpinnings. The event is a must-attend for anyone interested in contemporary domestic politics and its future. Jeff also shares a close connection with the political science department. His father, Robert Sharlet, was a long-serving professor in the department who taught classes on Eastern Europe, the Vietnam War,

and human rights. Thanks to Prof. Marso for organizing what will be a memorable event.

Also, I want to encourage you all to attend some of the political science panels, presentations, and posters on Steinmetz Day (May 12th). Each year, our amazing students, often seniors presenting their thesis, present their interesting and engaging research. Sitting in on these presentations is a great way to hear what your classmates have been working on and to spark ideas for future research. It is a highlight of the academic year and I hope you share it with us.

Finally, I want to say a special thanks and congratulations to the class of 2023! This class is particularly special to me since this class has been at Union while I have served as department chair. Much like my wonderful faculty colleagues, you have been supportive of the numerous changes required by COVID, collaborative in thinking about the department and its future, and indulgent when I erred on administrative tasks. Chairing was a privilege and I thank you for your enthusiasm and generosity throughout this time. To the class of 2023, you are inspiring and I look forward to watching you enter the world beyond Union's graying walls to do good and needed work.

**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 Role Models, in Basketball and Politics

by Professor Zoe Oxley

If you know anything about this year's women's college basketball national championship game, you will know about the controversy that erupted after the game. Angel Reese, a supremely talented player on Louisiana State University's team, was heavily criticized for her "you can't see me" gesture delivered to the University of Iowa's supremely talented Caitlin Clark. Almost immediately, Reese's critics were called out for not decrying Clark's use of the same gesture earlier in the tournament. Many rightly pointed out the racist double standard at play, given the vitriol hurled at a black player yet relative silence for a white player's actions.

That storyline sucked nearly all of the media – news and social – focus such that other newsworthy features of the women's tournament received far less attention. The quality of play was superb. Many of the games in the regional finals and the final four were among the best I have ever seen, in my decades of watching college basketball. And I wasn't the only one who got hooked on this year's tournament. The tv audience for the championship game was the largest ever for a women's basketball game, while more people streamed the semi-final and the championship games on ESPN+ than any other college sporting match, men's or women's, streamed on that platform before.

Also lost in the media storm were the athletes' inspiring words for hoops-playing young girls. Speaking of her

performance in the final game as well as against criticism she received all year, Reese said "So this was for the girls that look like me, that's going to speak up on what they believe in. It's unapologetically you. That's what I did it for tonight. It was bigger than me tonight." And on the topic of whether it is appropriate for women to display competitive emotions while playing basketball, Clark had this to say: "I'm just lucky enough that I get to play this game and have emotion and wear it on my sleeve, and so does everybody else. So that should never be torn down... That's how every girl should continue to play."

As role models, Clark and Reese emphasized their behavior. Their messages to young athletes were clear: Play tough. Be fierce. Trash talk. Put your emotions on display. Compete. Be authentically you, and don't apologize for doing so.

On the other hand, in the political domain, role models are often described only by their identity characteristics. This is especially the case when the focus is on encouraging members from traditionally marginalized groups to become active in politics. We know that political interest and engagement increase as political institutions diversify. As more women, people of color, LGBTQ+ people, and younger individuals win election to political offices, more citizens who share these characteristics are inspired to run themselves. As the saying goes, you need to see it to be it.

This identity role model effect is well-documented, yet its impact is limited. The behavior of political leaders also shapes perceptions of who belongs in politics, especially when certain sets of traits and ways of acting

FALL 2023 Political Science Courses



Introductory

- PSC 111: Introduction to US Politics
(Benegal) MWF 1:50PM-2:55PM
- PSC 112: Introduction to Global Politics
(Dallas) MWF 3:05PM-4:10PM
- PSC 113: Introduction to Political Thought
(Cidam) TTH 1:55PM-3:40PM

Research Methods

- PSC 220: Social Data Analysis
(Wiest) MWF 9:15AM - 10:20AM

Political Theory

- PSC 235R: African American Political Thought
(Marso) MW 3:05PM - 4:45PM
- PSC 339: Seminar in Political Theory
Antigones: Feminist Politics of
Refusal
(Marso) T 1:55PM-4:40PM

Comparative Politics

- PSC 248: The Politics of the New Europe
(Hislope) MWF 8:00AM-9:05AM
- PSC 347: Comparative Left Politics
(Hislope) MWF 11:45AM-12:50PM

International Politics

- PSC 258: Strategies of World War II
(Brown) TTH 7:00PM-8:45PM
- PSC 354: Human Rights and Immigration
(Cidam) TTH 10:55AM-12:40PM

U.S. Politics

- PSC 263: US Environmental Policy
(Benegal) MWF 10:30AM-11:35AM
- PSC 286: The Modern Presidency
(Brown) TTH 1:55PM-3:40PM

UPPER-LEVEL COURSE DESCRIPTIONS FOR FALL TERM

PSC 220 - SOCIAL DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction to the research process in political science with an emphasis on the analysis of social science data. Focus on the utility of quantitative data and statistical techniques to answer research questions about the political world.

PSC 235R - AFRICAN AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT

This course will introduce students to the critical and constructive dimensions of African American political thought. We will assess the claims that Black Americans have made on the polity, how they define themselves, and how they have sought to redefine the basic terms of American public life.

PSC 248 - THE POLITICS OF NEW EUROPE

A survey of contemporary European politics including topics such as the emerging European Union, the rise of right-wing movements, growing regional and sectional conflict, patterns of immigration, and debate about the very meaning of Europe.

PSC 258 - STRATEGIES OF WORLD WAR II

This course will examine the interplay between military and political strategies that shaped the course of World War II, with special attention to the European Theater. It is designed to illustrate the nature of strategic thinking, its relationship to tactical thinking, and its real-world constraints. Special attention will be given to the British decision to continue fighting after the French surrender, the Battle of Britain, Hitler's decision to invade Russia, the allied decision to invade North

UPPER-LEVEL COURSE DESCRIPTIONS FOR FALL TERM (cont'd)

PSC 263 - US ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

This course examines the emergence, development, and future directions of environmental policy within the United States. It covers early environmental policy achievements such as the Clean Air Act, the reasons for federal inaction on environmental policy since the 1990s, and new directions for policy action in the 21st century as society understands how to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

PSC 286 - THE MODERN PRESIDENCY

Case studies in Presidential leadership and administrative styles, including those of FDR, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Reagan, Clinton, Obama, and Trump.

PSC 339 SEMINAR IN POLITICAL THEORY ANTIGONES: FEMINIST POLITICS OF REFUSAL

This seminar examines feminist forms of refusals including dissent, strike, interruption, disruption, waywardness, protest, and assembly as they are depicted in ancient texts, and that reappear in contemporary literature, film, and television. Primary figures include Antigone (Sophocles), Medea (Euripides), the women of *The Bacchae* (Euripides) and *Lysistrata* (Aristophanes). After studying each classical text, we jump forward to interpret how classical female figures are continually reinvented and reinserted into new narratives and new histories with vastly varying implications.

As we read ancient plays that show the individual and collective ways women say “no,” we see how female refusal is undermined by interpretations that depict women as crazy, monstrous, or too willful. Our focus will be on reading practices: how do we understand what is at stake in how female figures are painted as powerful, passive, manipulative, cunning, sympathetic, or eclipsed or erased? The archive of refusal we can identify in

ancient texts helps us to see dissent and disruption *today* in literary and visual texts that we may not have otherwise recognized. Throughout the course, we will focus on how political collectivities are formed, how dissent is mobilized and expressed collectively and individually, and how change is initiated and sustained.

PSC 347 - COMPARATIVE LEFT POLITICS

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

PSC 354 - HUMAN RIGHTS AND IMMIGRATION

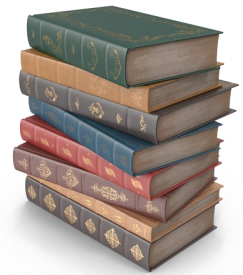
This course explores the tense relation between immigration, nation-states, and human rights. What are the rights of documented/undocumented immigrants? What kind of human rights abuses are these people subjected to? What renders non-citizens so vulnerable to various forms of violence, discrimination, and mistreatment? To what extent can these problems be addressed and remedied by appeals to human rights? In what ways does the contemporary condition of non-citizens reveal the limits, paradoxes, and promises of human rights? In this upper level political science course, we will address these challenging, intriguing, and somewhat disconcerting questions through an interdisciplinary inquiry.

PSC MAJOR RESEARCH REQUIREMENT

PSC Majors are required to take two research-focused courses:

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

Professor Book Recommendations for Summer Reading

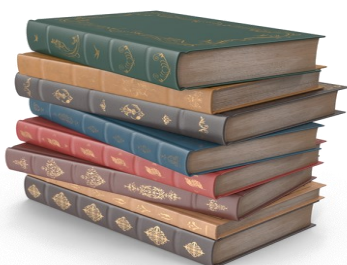


Bradley Hays recommends... *Harlem Shuffle* by Colson Whitehead.

A morality tale in the form of a crime novel, Whitehead spins a page-turner set in Harlem during the early 1960s. His characters, including Ray Carney (a furniture store owner), stay with you long after the novel ends. As with all Whitehead's novels, it is a great read that educates and entertains in equal measure.

Robert Hislope recommends... *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (2010), by Jefferson Cowie.

I'm using this book for my seminar on the 1970s, and it is fantastic; it also won many book awards and prizes. I've been wondering for some time why did the Left abandon class as an organizing concept and embrace identity politics, which has served only to fracture itself? Correlatively, how was it possible for the pro-business Republican Party to win the white working class as its primary social base? Cowie provides answers. He presents a detailed labor history looking at unions, strike patterns, and the rise of a new generation of workers. Plus, he has chapters on music, movies, and TV shows from the 1970s. It's a great read and highly informative.



Lori Marso recommends... *Middlemarch* by George Eliot.

My 26-year-old daughter and I just finished a two person "reading group" for *Middlemarch*. Over 700 pages long, and set in a small 19th century English town, it is not your typical "beach read." But my daughter and I loved it and it sparked many great conversations. It's shockingly contemporary in surprising ways, and it's so much fun to talk to others who have read it. The best thing: it casts a reflective and relaxing mood, perfect for long summer days.

Zoe Oxley recommends... *The Likeness* by Tana French

To solve a murder case, the lead detective takes on quite an unusual undercover assignment, pretending to be the (still fully alive) victim. As with all of the books in French's Dublin Murder Squad mystery series, *The Likeness* is an atmospheric crime procedural with deep psychological elements but without fully complete resolutions.

Strom Thacker recommends... *The Prize* by Geoffrey M. Cooper.

Cooper is a former colleague of mine from BU who turned to writing academic thrillers in his retirement. *The Prize* is a gripping stand-alone tale of academic theft and espionage. Starting with *Nondisclosure*, the rest of his books are a series pairing a department chair and an FBI agent to investigate a series of crimes (some of which they are the targets of) in academic settings. Great reads, all!

UPCOMING EVENTS /IMPORTANT DATES

Mark your calendar!

- Fri. May 5th** - Pi Sigma Alpha Essay Contest
Submission deadline
- Mon. May 8th** - Jeff Sharlet Lecture
The Undertow: Scenes from a Slow Civil War
5PM O'Brien 117
- Fri. May 12th** - The 33rd Annual Steinmetz Symposium
- Thurs. May 18th** - Pi Sigma Alpha Banquet and Induction Ceremony
College Park Hall C108 (invitation only)
- Thurs. June 1st** - Civic Confidence Presentation
4:30PM-5:30PM, Nott Memorial
- Fri. June 2nd** - Spring Thesis submissions due by noon
- Sun. June 11th** - Commencement Ceremony



Spring Term Senior Thesis Submissions

For those students completing their senior thesis in the Spring term, your submission is due **Friday, June 2nd by Noon**. Students will need to submit a completed thesis evaluation in order to receive a final grade. You will receive evaluation forms from Professor Hays around the 8th week of this term.



CLASS OF 2023
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SO Proud
of You!

JOIN THE SPRING 2023 PSC 220
SOCIAL DATA ANALYSIS CLASS FOR

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A PRESENTATION ON
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★ ★ ★ ★ ★

THURSDAY, JUNE 1, 2023
★ 4:30-5:30PM ★
@ THE NOTT MEMORIAL

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Unioncollegepolisci

Jeff Sharlet

author of

The Undertow: Scenes from a Slow Civil War



Monday, May 8th
O'Brien 117
at 5PM

Jeff is also
the son of renowned Union professor,
the late Bob Sharlet
(Political Science)



An Instant New York Times
Bestseller

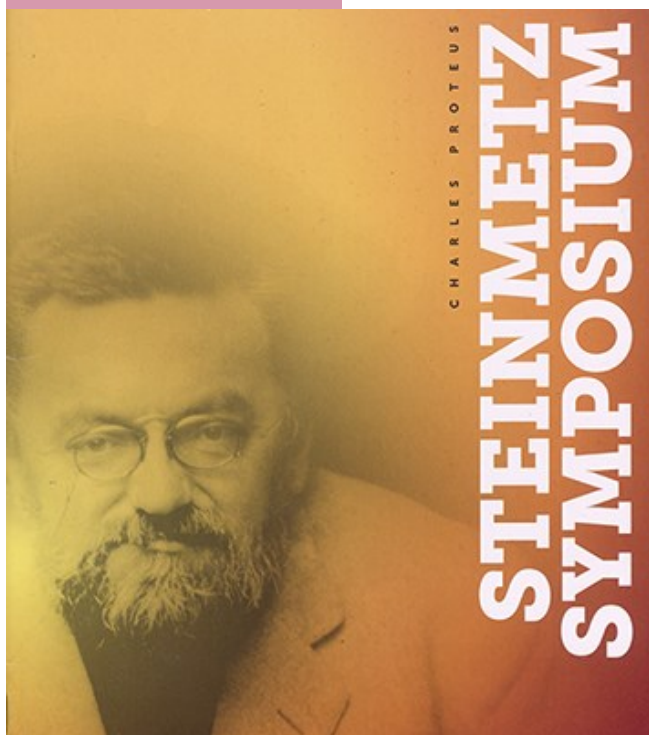
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STEINMETZ SYMPOSIUM

The Steinmetz Symposium is
Friday, May 12th.

We hope all of our students will participate. Please stop by and check out the Political Science majors who are presenting that day! For those not presenting, this is a great opportunity to get ideas for your senior thesis or senior project!



ΠΣΑ PI SIGMA ALPHA

The National Political Science Honor Society

Pi Sigma Alpha is hosting our annual political essay contest! The event is open to the entire campus and the deadline is **Friday, May 5th at 5:00 PM**. 1st place will receive \$100, 2nd place will receive \$75 and 3rd place will receive \$50.

[Pi Sigma Alpha 2023 essay contest questions](#)

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