

Course Syllabus

“Modern Political Science”

(2017-2018)

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Contact Hours: 92
Self-study Hours: 98
Number of Credits: 5
Educational Format: Without online-courses.

Course Description, Learning Objectives and Students’ Competencies

Many of the questions that political scientists study are timeless. Who votes for whom, how and why? How do politicians compete for political support and maintain themselves in power? How does the organization of the state shape incentives for investment, corruption, and for policies that promote (or retard) inequality? The answers to these questions are central both to our understanding of real world outcomes - economic growth, poverty, inequality - and to promoting policies to shape them. Despite their obvious importance, however, few of these questions have clear cut answers. As with any science, new findings are constantly released that challenge our understanding of older findings or expand it in new an important ways.

The course is designed for students in the “Applied Politics” and “Politics, Economics, and Philosophy” Masters’ programs in the Political Science Department (41.04.04) and meets the educational standards of the Higher School of Economics for these programs and the curriculum

as of 2018. This course has two major goals. First, it seeks to provide a broad overview of the current state of the literature in several key areas of contemporary Political Science. By the end of the course, students should both understand the state of the art in the discipline, and how this recent work fits into the grand arc of research in Political Science. Second, the course also seeks to provide students with a better understanding of modern methodological tools and research design, as well as how to apply them to developing and critiquing a research agenda. The course places particular emphasis on the potential pitfalls of causal analysis, how to spot them in the works of others, and how to attempt to overcome them in one's own work. By the end of the course, students should have the necessary tools to constructively critique the work of others, as well as an understanding of how to use these tools to design cutting edge research of their own.

As a result, students should:

Know:

- The main research directions of contemporary political science and the basic concepts underlying them
- The major debates in contemporary political science and the arguments underlying them
- The techniques used in modern research design

Be able to:

- to describe the major research directions animating contemporary political science
- to describe and critique the major arguments within these major research directions
- to identify key components of the research design of major works and critique them
- to modify cutting edge techniques to apply them to their own research designs and work

Have:

- the skill to identify unanswered questions and research puzzles in existing research directions
- the skill to critique and evaluate the arguments, research design, and findings of research
- the skill to develop a research design for original work and to choose appropriate techniques for their research question

This course is strongly related and complementary to other compulsory courses in the masters' program (e.g. the Research Seminar, Comparative Political Economy) and provides basic concepts, knowledge, and crucial skills needed for later courses related to political science. The course provides students with the basic skills needed to develop their own research projects, evaluate the research of others, and to successfully complete their masters' thesis.

Prerequisites: None

Language of Instruction: English

Course Type: Compulsory

Content of the Course

1. A Brief History of Political Science and the Modern Problems of Causal Inference

- The first session will briefly discuss the history of political science research and to outline the main areas in which modern political science differs from older traditions. We will then discuss the basic problem of causal inference that animates much of contemporary work and is necessary for properly constructing research designs.

2. Traditional Quantitative and Experimental Research

- The second session will discuss the major challenges of conducting qualitative research, with a special focus on problems of validity and reliability. We will then discuss some of the cutting edge techniques developed to resolve these problems and the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches. Particular emphasis will be placed on recent trends towards experimental and natural experiment-based techniques.

3. Traditional Qualitative and Mixed Methods Research

- The third session will discuss the problems of validity and reliability from the standpoint of qualitative researchers, as well as discuss recent advances in techniques and best practices to help solve these problems in practical research. We will also discuss the advantages and trade-offs inherent in qualitative versus quantitative research designs, as well as how these can be used to compliment each other in mixed methods research.

4. Determinants of Vote Choice

- The fourth session will introduce the basic concepts and arguments behind contemporary literature on vote choice. We will discuss the differences between sociotropic and egotropic theories of voting behavior and how they are operationalized in contemporary research. We will also discuss popular non-economic voting theories of voter support, including those based on ideology and on the ways in which individuals' characteristics (including partisanship) shape how they interpret information.

5. Identity Politics

- The fifth session will introduce the basic concepts and theories that animate contemporary research on the nature of identity and how it shapes political outcomes. We will discuss how these theories are applied to contemporary research on using examples from debates on how identities emerge, how they change, and their influence on political preferences.

6. Patronage Politics and Clientalism

- The sixth session will introduce the concepts of distributive politics and clientalism, as well as popular frameworks for distinguishing between them. It then discusses the strategic calculus of politicians looking to use material benefits to win voters' support and discusses the conditions under which distributive strategies and clientalistic ones can succeed.

7. Political Reform

- Section seven introduces students to the basic debates about how (and when) politicians are able to secure popular support for reform and are likely to implement them. The session begins by introducing rational choice as a theoretical framework useful for understanding how individuals and firms perceive economic policy. It then proceeds to outline the major political restraints on reform and how these shape the coalitions in favor (or opposed) to particular reforms.

8. Democratic Parties, their Influence, and Representation

- The eighth session will discuss the purposes behind parties in democratic systems and the various typologies often used to classify them for research purposes. We will then discuss how parties link politicians to voters and how they aggregate the preferences of voters. We will conclude by discussing how electoral systems condition the ways in which parties represent their voters and evaluating how and when they do so using examples drawn from recent work on gender politics and descriptive representation.

9. Electoral Rules and their Origins

- The ninth session will present basic concepts from modern work on electoral systems and introduce the major classification schemes used. It will then present the basic competing arguments that animate recent debates behind why democratic countries adopt particular sets of electoral rules. We will conclude by discussing some of the consequences of choices over electoral rules for turnout, representation, and inequality.

10. Federalism and Decentralization

- Section ten introduces the concepts of federalism and contrasts it with the more common concept of decentralization. The advantages and disadvantages of federalism are discussed, as are some theories as to why countries choose federal systems. The session ends with a discussion of how and when decentralization efforts succeed in staving off secessionist pressures.

11. Autocratic Survival

- The eleventh section will characterize the differences between autocratic and democratic regimes, as well as the most commonly used typology for distinguishing between different families of autocracy. It will then introduce major theories of democratization (i.e. autocratic collapse) and discuss contemporary arguments about the survival strategies regimes use to stabilize their rule and maintain power.

12. Autocratic Parties, Dominant Parties, and their Purposes

- The twelfth section will discuss the phenomenon of autocratic dominant parties. It will begin by distinguishing them from similar structures and democratic regimes and showing changes over time in their use among the world's autocratic regimes. The lecture will then discuss the major problems that dominant parties are designed to solve in autocratic regimes. Finally the lecture will look at how autocratic parties intersect with the population more broadly by examining their influence on investment and the degree to which they are responsive to (and representative of) the populace as a whole.

13. Bureaucratic Politics and Personnel

- Session thirteen introduces Max Weber's concept of a bureaucracy and explains the governance problems that professional bureaucracies are designed to solve. It then introduces the concept of delegation and discusses the circumstances under which delegation of authority to bureaucrats is helpful or harmful. The session ends with a discussion of various techniques for controlling the bureaucracy and resolving fundamental principle-agent problems between it and political authorities.

14. Political Protests

- The fourteenth section will define collective action and lay out the major forms of coordination failures that make it difficult groups to act together. It will then discuss the different forms of collective action relevant to the literature on contentious politics (including protests) and present three views on why and when protests form. The session will conclude by applying these views to contemporary discussions about popular versus elite mobilization in protests.

15. Institutions, Investment, and Property Rights

- Session fifteenth lays out the core problems and calculus that animate investment decisions by firms and individuals. It then discusses how institutions – human constraints on human interaction – introduce a fundamentally political element to this calculus. Using the Glorious Revolution as an example, it discusses how weak institutions can retard investment and the ways in which they can be strengthened to promote it. Various critiques of North's seminal theory on the role of institutions in the political economy of investment are presented. The session ends with a discussion of how recent work has attempted to untangle the relationship between institutions and the economy using novel research designs.

16. Corruption and Governance

- Session sixteen defines corruption, discusses the major ways in which contemporary work operationalizes the concept, and discusses the trade-offs in popular measures. It then briefly discusses the origins of corruption and conditions which appear to foster it. The session concludes by discussing the effects of corruption on real economies and the ways in which it can distort or enhance outcomes.

17. Business-state relations

- Session seventeen introduces two diametrically ways by which businesses and governments interact. In one model, businesses lobby the government in order to convince it to pass policies. This session discusses the phenomenon, the strategies that firms use, the implications of these strategy for policy, and the ways in which these questions are studied. It then turns to state capture. After introducing the concept, the session discusses how one can identify state capture empirically and the implications of high levels of state capture for firm behavior, taxation and legal systems, and overall economic development.

18. Popular Underpinnings of the Welfare State

- Session eighteen begins by defining social policy and the welfare state, as well as helping students to understand the major dimensions along which social programs tend to differ. It then presents the major theory families that purport to explain individual level support for welfare state policies: income, mobility, insurance, and ideology. These are tied to the overarching question of how individual preferences shape politicians' incentives to adopt (or oppose) particular social policy programs in order to appeal for popular support.

19. Varieties of Capitalism and the Welfare State

- Session nineteen presents the Varieties of Capitalism approach to political economy and discusses its relationship to previous theories attempting to understand how economic systems differ and sustain themselves. It then discusses the two main economic types defined by the approach: coordinated and liberal market economies. The two systems are contrasted and examples are given for how they fundamentally shape economic behavior by both firms and schools. An application is then provided which relates the nature of economic systems to firms' preferences over social policy and their lobbying behavior.

20. Civil War and Violence

- Session twenty defines Civil War and discusses historical trends in the geography and timing of their onset. It then presents the major theories of civil war onset and provides some examples of modern research that attempts to test these theories against each other.

21. Conclusion and Elective Topic

- The concluding lecture will bring together the concepts and topics introduced in the course and briefly discuss how they inform and overlap each other. The remainder of lecture will be used for an elective topic will be chosen by the students after the first exam. This topic will cover an important theme that relates to the research interests of the majority of students, but which they do not feel was adequately covered elsewhere in the course plan. These can include (but are not limited to) topics such as US domestic politics, foreign policy, individual economic preferences, education in politics, gender politics, etc., as well as original suggestions proposed by the students themselves.

Grading

Grades will consist of the following components:

Intermediate Assessments (1)	20% (all together)
Final Exam (1)	20%
Referee Reports (2) and Rewrite (1)	30% (all together)
Research Proposal and Presentation	10%
Participation	10%

Note: Students may be offered extra credit assignment during modules 2 and 3 for participating in experimental research conducted by an NRU - HSE faculty member (in addition to any other benefits offered by the researchers themselves) or by attending scientific conferences and seminars held at HSE related to Political Science. Details will be provided in class once schedules are fixed for the 2017 – 2018 academic

Assessments and Exams: During the third module, students will have an in-class intermediate assessment (see schedule below). There will also be a final exam to be taken in-class at the time designated by the university for the final exam. These assessments will *only* cover material for the module that proceeds it and *are not* cumulative. The main goal of these exams is to ensure that students have understood the readings and the lectures and that they are able to critically evaluate the material both within the context of each week’s topic and the discipline more widely. Details about the format of the exams and preparation advice will be given prior to each. I reserve the right to alter the format of these exams from module to module.

Referee Reports: In order to hone their analytical skills, students will be asked to write several short (2 – 3 pages) briefs critiquing any of the reading assignments for the course. Each brief should primarily tackle one of the course readings and should contain three elements:

1. A very brief (**one paragraph**) summary of the main research question, the main argument, and the types of evidence that the author presents to defend their position.
2. An evaluation of the argument and the evidence. This can be approached through a number of different questions. For each of these questions, it is important to explain why you answer the way you do and to carefully lay out the logic of your objections and suggestions.
 - Does the logic behind the argument make sense?
 - Does the evidence the author presents match the argument (i.e. do they prove what they say they will)? Are you aware of different sources of evidence that could contradict or support the argument? How could the author have made the argument more convincing?
 - How does the piece compare to others assigned for the topic? Are there major disagreements, or does there appear to be consensus?
3. An overall opinion on the piece. Do you find the argument convincing? Why or why not?

Note that the evaluation of the argument should be based on substance, *not* style, and be based on a careful reading of the article. Students are strongly encouraged to make sure that their critiques are not addressed in the article or its supplementary material *or* to explain why the author's attempt to address the critique was insufficient. We will spend a portion of the first week of the course discussing the briefs and talking through some basic strategies for dissecting and critiquing both the arguments and the evidence presented in academic and policy articles, book chapters, and policy briefs. In the first module, students will be asked to submit one report. A rewrite of this report based on instructor feedback will be due the first week of the second module. These will count as two separate reports. In the second and third modules, students will be asked to turn in two reports for each module. Reports for a given week's readings are due before the seminar for that week. Only one brief will be accepted each week.

Research Proposal: One research paper proposal, due on the last day of class. In the first section of the course, we will discuss research strategies and design. The proposal should be between 5-10 pages and identify a theoretical or empirical puzzle worth exploring, present a central argument, lay out hypotheses to be tested, identify appropriate methods for testing the argument, and discuss the potential strengths and weaknesses of the research design. Ideally, this proposal will form the basis of students' masters theses.

To assist in the writing process, students will submit a preliminary assignment: a one-page research proposal describing two or three potential research questions, dependent variable, possible sources of data, etc. for the paper, due at the beginning of the third module of the course.

Participation: Classes will be conducted in a hybrid lecture/discussion format. It is important to complete all readings for each week before class begins. Lectures will primarily focus on situating the assigned reading in pre-existing work and the discussion will mostly be about the theoretical arguments being tested. Seminar sections will go into greater detail on the readings and will be designed to dissect the empirical components of the readings in order to critically evaluate the research design, its strengths, and its weaknesses. Students should come to class with questions on unclear terms, concepts, or events. This is important, since as a rule, if something is confusing for one member of the class, many other students will also find it confusing. Asking questions is therefore critical for a successful class.

The participation component of the final grade is based on our in-class discussions in seminar. Each students' grade will reflect the quality of their answers and contribution to discussions. Students are granted one unexcused absence in each module. Students who expect to be absent during class for a legitimate reason should contact me prior to class to make arrangements and will be accommodated according to university policies. Only absences due to medical or family issues (with appropriate documentation) will be accommodated after the fact. Please feel free to ask about your participation grade at any point in the semester or approach me or my co-instructor with any questions related to it.

Special Needs

Students with special needs of any type should speak with the instructor as soon as possible to arrange for necessary accommodations. These will be handled on a case-by-case basis according to university policy.

Academic Integrity

All work for this course is expected to be students' own and cheating on exams or the use of other's work (words or ideas) without acknowledgment (plagiarism) will not be tolerated. Cases of either will be handled according to university policy and, where appropriate, referred to the relevant university authorities. When in doubt about whether conduct will violate university policy, please do not hesitate to ask me first.

Please be aware that it is often hard to tell the difference between sloppy punctuation or citation practices and intentional plagiarism. It is the responsibility of every student to be aware of proper citation procedures. For students with little experience writing course papers, or those that want to brush up on academic integrity, I would recommend the following resources:

- Roig, M. Avoiding plagiarism, self-plagiarism, and other questionable writing practices: A guide to ethical writing. Available at: http://ori.hhs.gov/education/products/roig_st_johns/index.html
- Stolley, K., A. Brizee, and J. Paiz. "Avoiding Plagiarism". Available at: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/>

Again, I am more than happy to answer any and all questions on topics related to academic integrity. Instructions on preferred citation format, etc. will be provided during our discussion of research paper design.

Sources

0.1 Main Literature List

1. Johnson, J. B. Political science research methods / J. B. Johnson, H. T. Reynolds, J. D. Mycoff. – 6th ed. – Washington: CQ Press, 2008. – 613 с. – На англ. яз. (или более поздние издания)
2. Kegley, C. W. World politics: trend and transformation / C. W. Kegley, S. L. Blanton. – 2013-2014 update ed. – Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2014. – 584 с. – На англ. яз.

0.2 Additional Literature List

1. Roland, G. Transition and economics: politics, markets, and firms / G. Roland. – Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2000. – 400 с.

0.3 Software

Name	Access Conditions
Microsoft Windows 7 Professional Rus	All Software Available from the University's Internal Network (Contract)
Microsoft Windows 10	
Microsoft Windows 8.1 Professional RUS	
Microsoft Office Professional Plus 2010	

0.4 Professional Databases and Internet Resources (electronic education resources)

Name	Access Conditions
ProQuest Ebook Central	Available from the university's internal network (Contract)
Oxford Scholarship Online	Available from the university's internal network (Contract)
Oxford Handbooks Online	Available from the university's internal network (Contract)
JSTOR	Available from the university's internal network (Contract)
Единое окно к образовательным ресурсам [Электронный ресурс]. http://window.edu.ru	

0.5 Material and Technical Support

Classrooms for lectures are equipped to allow for presentations of textual descriptions, figures, and data corresponding to the program for the course and include:

- PC with Internet access (operating system, office software, antivirus software)
- Multimedia projectors with remote control