

POLS 4999 - Senior Capstone Seminar

Spring 2022 (3 credit hours)

Course Description

The goal of the Senior Seminar (Capstone) is to launch students on a culminating academic experience organized around the study of a political science topic of particular interest and relevance. The Seminar is premised on the assumption that students will have a working familiarity with the foundational knowledge in the sub-field(s) relevant to their research project, a mastery of the practical skills introduced in foundation courses and further developed in intermediate courses, and a willingness to engage actively in a rigorous, sustained inquiry into an important topic.

Course Information

Instructor: John L. Phillips Ph.D.

Meets: D2L

E-mail: phillipsj@apsu.edu

Office hours: MWF 2:30-3:30pm; TTh 11am-Noon

Location: CL 143E or [Zoom](#)

Grading

- Senior Exit Exam: 20%
- Review Quizzes: 20%
- Literature Review: 10%
- Draft Policy Paper: 10%
- Policy Paper: 10%
- Discussions: 10%
- Resume: 10%
- Mock Interview: 10%

Required Textbooks

- None!

Course Goals

The course contributes to the mission of the university and the political science program. By taking this course, students will:

1. Develop and display critical reasoning skills.
2. Review and demonstrate knowledge of American Government, Comparative Politics, International Relations, Methods of Research, and Political Theory.
3. Prepare for graduate school and the job market.
4. Acquire an awareness of the diversity of ethical perspectives that can be brought to bear on institutions of governance.
5. Develop and display research and writing skills

Course Objectives

The objectives of the course (and associated course goals) are as follows:

1. Demonstrate the ability to write a persuasive essay defending an original thesis. (1 & 5)
2. Define and put into context key concepts of American politics, including but not limited to: the US Constitution, Federalism, Congress, the Presidency, the Supreme Court, the Bureaucracy, Parties, Interest Groups, Elections, Public Opinion, and Economic Policy (2)
3. Define and put into context key concepts of International Politics, including but not limited to: the history of the state system, key paradigms of international relations theory, levels of analysis, war, diplomacy, economic statecraft, international organizations, international political economy, human rights, and international law. (2)
4. Define and put into context key concepts of Comparative politics, including but not limited to: the state, regime types, comparative political economy, political development, political culture, and electoral systems. (2)
5. Define and put into context key concepts of Methods of Research, including but not limited to: the fundamentals of logic, rational choice theory,

quantitative research designs, qualitative research designs, surveys, measurement, descriptive statistics, bivariate statistics, and multivariate statistics. (2)

6. Define and put into context key concepts of Political Theory, including but not limited to: Ancient, Early Modern, and Contemporary political thought. (2)
7. Prepare and practice for job interviews and graduate school applications (3)
8. Produce a significant piece of scholarship (1-5)

Learning Outcomes

For a comprehensive list of course learning outcomes, please refer to the learning outcomes document in D2L.

Statement of Responsibilities

As a professor, I have the following responsibilities:

1. Prepare materials that help explain and improve your understanding of the readings.
2. Design the class so you can accomplish the objectives listed on the syllabus, including exams.
3. Consider that it is not always your fault if you do not understand the material.
4. Create a mutually respectful class environment.
5. Recognize that sometimes I may design or grade an exam question incorrectly and not get defensive when you politely question my grading.

As a student, you have the following responsibilities:

1. Complete all work on time with proper thought, including readings.
2. Consider that it is not always the professor's fault that you do not understand the material.
3. Treat your classmates and your professor with respect.
4. Ask questions when you do not understand.

Strategies for Success

1. Readings are required, not optional. Doing the readings means reading well enough to understand.
2. Review materials before taking practice exams. Review incorrect answers between attempts at review quizzes.
3. Inasmuch as feasible, look back at the materials from your college career so far.
4. Ask questions of your professor, in class or by e-mail. Your professors here are your resources. Use them.

Statement of Academic Freedom

- Students have the right to engage in polite, reasoned disagreement with the professor and other students with no penalty to their grades whatsoever.
- Everyone has the right to participate in a learning environment that emphasizes mutual respect, tolerance, and free inquiry.
- This class is a forum for critical discussion in pursuit of the truth. Both the professor and students have the right to challenge any beliefs, world-views, ideology, or attitudes, even those that many hold sacred.

FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)

What are the slides and videos for?

There is comparatively little new material being taught in this course. The purpose of the course is to review and solidify knowledge acquired throughout a student's college career.

The material provided are largely for the purposes of review.

What about if I have to miss an exam?

The quizzes can be made up without penalty any time before the Major Field Test.

The Major Field Test can usually be rescheduled if you have to miss it. Please contact Ms. Sage Disney (disneye@apsu.edu) to make arrangements on that front.

Should I take notes?

Note-taking aids retention even when the student doesn't ever review them. I would recommend jotting down notes on things you are more unfamiliar with.

I know other people in the class. Can we do assignments together as a group?

Your essay project is a group project but your other assignments are individual assignments. If you want to get together to study for review quizzes, that could work.

Do you give extra-credit?

There is an extra credit discussion at the beginning of class. Otherwise, instead of extra credit there is some leniency built into the class (multiple attempts at review quizzes, group writing assignments) that will help students who want to do more work get ahead a little bit.

What is the best way to get in touch with you?

I prefer e-mail at phillipsj@apsu.edu. My e-mail goes to my phone so unless your e-mail requires me to look something up, you should get a quick response. D2L mail is also fine, but because it doesn't sync up to my phone, my response time is slower. I will not be on campus until the University allows its faculty back into their offices, so calling my office is not going to reach me this summer. I will be conducting virtual office hours on Zoom and would love to see you on there.

Outside working hours (after 5pm and on weekends), my turn around time will be slower than normal, but I will respond to your communication, I promise.

Can I add you on Facebook?

Sure. I usually accept all student requests at the end of the semester. I enjoy keeping in touch with former students and seeing all the wonderful things you do as you go out into the world. Follow me on Twitter (@PhillipsAPSU) and I'll follow you back.

Will there be a curve on the assignments?

If some errors creep into the quizzes, I will throw out the bad questions. In addition, the major field test is curved to the extent that you do not have to be in the top 10% nationally to get an A.

Otherwise, if everyone does their work to the standard required, everyone can get an A in the class. You are not in competition for a scarce number of As.

If I give you a draft of a paper a week before it's due, will you look at it and give me comments?

There are two built in draft opportunities, but these are graded. If you would like to submit an earlier draft I am open to the idea but it needs to be at least 5 business days ahead of the deadline for the assignment.

Your D2L files won't open for me. Help!

This is where you need the D2L Help Desk. Visit here for common problems and fixes: [Common D2L Problems](#) The IT Help Desk can help with software problems: [IT Help Desk](#) Call [D2L Help](#) for D2L specific issues: 931-221-6625 (available from 8 to 4:30 whenever the university is open)

Where and in what format should I hand in papers?

Papers are due electronically in the dropbox on D2L. There will be a folder for each assignment. Make sure you put your paper in the right folder. Once your paper is dropped, there is no taking it back so make sure it's really done. I will not, as a general rule, accept papers by e-mail. Please double space and use 10 or 12 point font. I suggest Arial or Times New Roman. Please include no identifying markers in the document (no name, I grade the papers blind). Make sure your citations are accurate and properly formatted.

I really need this class to graduate. How can I maximize my chances of passing the class?

On the one hand, this is just like any other class. Read, study, ask questions, take notes and you will likely do well. On the other hand, because it is a capstone, there may be gaps in your education that you will need to work hard to fill if you want to do well. If you think you need more material, please get in touch with me and I will find you the content that you need.

D2L froze during my quiz! I submitted my paper but D2L glitched and it's not there! That discussion post I just hit send on has disappeared! Help!

Bear in mind that I am not tech support. I don't control D2L performance. However, please alert me of the issue. Save your quiz answers often. I can usually retrieve saved answers on a quiz even if your browser crashes. Word documents have timestamps. If I can see that you didn't save the file after the due date, I will accept the essay that didn't make it into the drop box. If I see that you have worked on the paper since the due date, I will reject the paper. (If you lie, I will also report your academic dishonesty to the Dean of Students)

"Dr. Phillips, the syllabus says X, but the course shell says Y. What gives?"

You've caught a mistake. I appreciate you bringing it to my attention. If I seem annoyed, it's not at you but at me for not catching the problem first. As I tweak this course from semester to semester to try and improve it, inevitably errors and inconsistencies creep in. Please let me know when you spot one. Generally speaking, the syllabus always trumps the D2L course shell - or even anything I might say to you. This is not my policy, it's the university's policy.

"Dr. Phillips, where can I see the feedback on my essay/exam/critical review?"

Feedback for essays and critical review essays will be posted as attachments to the Dropbox. Sometimes you might have two attachments: one with a scoring rubric explaining how the essay was scored, and one consisting in your essay with comments in the margins.

Exam feedback is trickier to view. I will sometimes put comments in with specific questions. You will have to go into quizzes, find the exam in question, and then click on the correct "submission view" labeled "Answer Key" to see feedback for each individual question.

“What kinds of academic dishonesty should I watch out for?”

The most common problem is with students unintentionally plagiarizing from course materials (slides, videos, readings) in essays or discussion posts. These sorts of violations can often be reported to the Dean of Students and result in failed assignments (the first time). Second offenses result in automatic failure from the course.

The second most common source of academic dishonesty is the (usually intentional) plagiarizing of internet sources in both essays and discussion posts. These are often easy to identify.

The least common form of academic dishonesty is plagiarism of another student’s paper (usually from a past version of the class) or self-plagiarism from another course.

University Mandated Materials and Disclaimers

Statement of Academic Integrity

Familiarize yourself with the university policy regarding academic integrity. Do not violate it. Any form of cheating will be referred to the Dean of Students and dealt with in accordance with the university policies described here: [University Academic Policies](#).

Other than copying homework assignments off of fellow students and lifting material off the internet (which is intentional misconduct), most academic misconduct is unintentional, particularly in the area of improper citation in your homework, quizzes, and papers. If you are unsure about proper citation, please consult with me. One good source for APA citation guidelines can be found here: [APA Citation Guide](#)

The following is the definition of Academic Misconduct from APSU's Policies and Procedures Manual:

1. Plagiarism. The adoption or reproduction of ideas, words, statements, images or works of another person as one's own without proper attribution.
2. Cheating. Using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or aids in any academic exercise or test/examination. The term academic exercise includes all forms of work submitted for credit or hours.
3. Fabrication. Unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.
4. Facilitation or Collusion. Assisting or attempting to assist another to violate a provision of the institution's student code of conduct regarding academic misconduct.

Students with Disabilities

Any student who has a disability that may affect his/her academic performance is encouraged to make an appointment with me to discuss this matter, or you may contact Disability Services; telephone 221-6230; tty 221-6278; fax 221-7102.

Minors in the Classroom

Minors (any non-student under the age of 18) accompanying staff, faculty, students or visitors on campus are not permitted in the classroom.

Service Animals in the Classroom

Consult Policy 3:007 Animals on Campus for appropriate situations allowing service animals in the classroom.

Caveat

The above schedule and procedures are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances

COVID-19 Syllabus Supplement – UPDATED January 10, 2022 for Spring '22

We should all continue to take steps to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Masks are recommended for all faculty, staff, and students while indoors. To help keep our university community safe, vaccination and boosters are strongly encouraged and readily available, including at APSU's Boyd Health Services. Contact them at (931) 221-7107.

Any student exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 should seek a test. If any student tests positive for COVID-19, or if an unvaccinated student is exposed to someone who has tested positive, that student is required to fill out the COVID-19 Self-Reporting Form and isolate for five days from the onset of symptoms. If fever-free without medication, and if other symptoms are improving, the student can return to normal activities on Day 6. The student is strongly encouraged to wear a mask through Day 10. To help prevent further spread, students who test positive should notify anyone with whom they were within six feet for more than fifteen minutes. Students missing class should email their instructors when possible. The COVID-19 vaccine, booster, and testing are still free and widely available through Boyd Health Services. Visit the APSU Coronavirus Dashboard webpage for more information.

Semester Schedule

Week 1 (Jan. 19-23)

- Read the syllabus
- Watch the introductory video
- Introduce yourself

Week 2 (Jan 24-30): American Government Review

- Complete at least one attempt on each of the 4 review quizzes
- Discussion #1

Week 3 (Jan 31-Feb 6): International Politics Review

- Complete at least one attempt on each of the 4 review quizzes
- Discussion #2

Week 4 (Feb 7-13): Comparative Politics Review

- Complete at least one attempt on each of the 3 review quizzes
- Discussion #3

Week 5 (Feb 14-20): Methods of Research Review

- Complete at least one attempt on each of the 2 review quizzes
- Discussion #4

Week 6 (Feb. 21-27): Political Theory Review

- Complete at least one attempt on each of the 3 review quizzes
- Discussion #5

Week 7 (Feb 28-Mar 6): Old Age and Pension Policy

- Complete assigned readings
- Discussion #6

Week 8 (Mar 7-13) Spring Break**Week 9 (Mar 14-20): Old Age and Pension Policy**

- Complete assigned readings
- Discussion #7

Week 10 (Mar 21-27): Old Age and Pension Policy

- Group Project: Assemble Literature Review
- Discussion #8

Week 11 (Mar 28-Apr 3): Old Age and Pension Policy

- Discussion #9
- Schedule Mock Interview

Week 12 (Apr 4-Apr 10): Old Age and Pension Policy

- Turn in Draft of iOme challenge essay

Week 13 (Apr 11-17): Resume Workshopping

- Submit a copy of job description
- Submit a copy of edited resumé

Week 14 (Apr 18-24): Mock Interviews

- Zoom mock interviews. Time/Dates TBA
- Discussion #10

Week 15 (Apr 25- May 1): Final Paper Due

- Submit final version of iOme challenge essay

