ETHICS, POLITICS, & ECONOMICS (EP&E)

EP&E 203a / PLSC 452a / S&DS 102a, Introduction to Statistics: Political Science
Jonathan Reuning-Scherer
Statistical analysis of politics, elections, and political psychology. Problems presented with reference to a wide array of examples: public opinion, campaign finance, racially motivated crime, and public policy. QR

EP&E 209a / PLSC 453a / S&DS 103a, Introduction to Statistics: Social Sciences
Jonathan Reuning-Scherer
Descriptive and inferential statistics applied to analysis of data from the social sciences. Introduction of concepts and skills for understanding and conducting quantitative research. QR

* EP&E 215a or b, Classics of Ethics, Politics, and Economics  Boris Kapustin
A critical examination of classic and contemporary works that treat problems of ethics, politics, and economics as unities. Topics include changing conceptions of private and public spheres, the content and domain of individual freedom, and ethical and political limits to the market. Readings from the works of Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke, Smith, Bentham, Mill, Hegel, Marx, Hayek, Rawls, and others. HU, SO

* EP&E 216b, Classics of EPE: African-American Perspectives  Gregory Collins
The purpose of this course is to examine the interdisciplinary subjects of ethics, politics, and economics through the lens of African-American thought and to grasp how African-American thinkers have deepened our understanding of the interaction between race and socioeconomic debates and controversies throughout U.S. history. Far from being a univocal tradition, African-American thought encompasses a rich variety of intellectual perspectives that have critically assessed the impact of slavery, education, capitalism, and religion, among a number of topics, on African-Americans. While the study of American racial relations can include a wide range of topics, our thematic focus remains on the ethical, political, sociological, and economic dimensions of African-American experiences from the eighteenth century to the present day. This inquiry further prompts us to reflect on the various conceptions of liberty, justice, and equality that have informed the Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution and that lie at the core of intellectual discussion over race in American history. HU

The purpose of this course is to explore the intellectual origins of liberalism and conservatism through an EP&E framework. We discuss the tensions between collective wisdom and individual reason in the early modern period and survey the thought of thinkers in the proto-liberal and proto-conservative traditions, such as Thomas Hobbes and John Locke on sovereignty, individual autonomy, reason, and toleration; and Robert Filmer, Richard Hooker, and David Hume on order, custom, and utility. Our main object of inquiry, however, is the intellectual division that emerged between supporters and critics of the French Revolution, the historical event that prompted the modern political identities of liberalism and conservatism. Accordingly, we examine the political, moral, and economic theories of the Revolution; reactions to the
Revolution from Edmund Burke, Joseph de Maistre, and other counterrevolutionaries; critical responses to their reactions, including those from Thomas Paine, Mary Wollstonecraft, and James Mackintosh; and the impact of this debate on the evolution of liberalism and conservatism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Europe and the United States. Class discussions and readings confront liberal and conservative perspectives on human nature; reason; freedom; tradition; individual rights; religion; the Enlightenment; market economies; democratic participation; and equality.


* EP&E 235b / PHIL 457b / PLSC 283b, Recent Work on Justice  Thomas Pogge In-depth study of one contemporary book, author, or debate in political philosophy, political theory, or normative economics. Focus varies from year to year based on student interest and may include a ground-breaking new book, the life’s work of a prominent author, or an important theme in contemporary political thought.  HU

* EP&E 241a / PLSC 415a / SOCY 172a, Religion and Politics in the World  Katharine Baldwin A broad overview of the relationship between religion and politics around the world, especially Christianity and Islam. Religions are considered to constitute not just theologies but also sets of institutions, networks, interests, and sub-cultures. The course’s principal aim is to understand how religion affects politics as an empirical matter, rather than to explore moral dimensions of this relationship.  SO

* EP&E 244a / ECON 449a / PLSC 374a, The Economic Analysis of Conflict  Gerard Padro In this course we apply microeconomic techniques, theoretical and empirical, to the analysis of internal violent conflict, including civil wars, terrorism and insurgencies, its causes and consequences. Topics include forced migration, ethnic conflict, long-term consequences of war and individual choices to participate in violence. Readings comprise frontier research papers and students will learn to critically engage with cutting-edge research designs. Prerequisites: Intermediate econometrics  SO

* EP&E 248b / PLSC 256b, American Political Institutions  Michael Fotos The origins and development of American political institutions, especially in relation to constitutional choice and the agency of persons seeking freedom, equality, and self-governing capabilities as a driver of constitutional change. Key concepts include: American federalism, compound republic, citizenship, social movements, racial justice, and nonviolence.  WR, SO

* EP&E 257a / LAST 251a / PLSC 399a, Political Power and Inequality in Latin America  Ana De La O Overview and analysis of politics in Latin America. The emergence of democracy and the forces that led to the unprecedented increase in inequality in the twentieth century. Topics include institutional design, historical legacies, corruption, clientelism, and violence.  SO
* EP&E 286a / ECON 475a, Discrimination in Law, Theory, and Practice  Gerald Jaynes
How law and economic theory define and conceptualize economic discrimination; whether economic models adequately describe behaviors of discriminators as documented in court cases and government hearings; the extent to which economic theory and econometric techniques aid our understanding of actual marketplace discrimination. Prerequisites: introductory microeconomics and at least one additional course in Economics, African American Studies, Ethnicity, Race, and Migration, or Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.

Many today believe that the model of representative government that we have inherited from its 18th century founders is broken. It is seen as too oligarchic, disconnected, and unresponsive to the demands of 21st century citizens and, as such, no longer fitting the ideal of democracy that it was supposed to render possible in large, industrial societies. In this course we explore possible reforms and alternatives to the existing political and social system from both empirical and normative perspectives. We try to think both beyond representation by looking at new ways in which citizens can directly affect policy-making by either working with or by-passing entirely elected officials, and beyond government itself, by questioning the assumed divide between the political and the economic spheres and interrogating the internal structure and governance of the workplace.

EP&E 295a / PLSC 344a, Game Theory and Political Science  Staff
Introduction to game theory—a method by which strategic interactions among individuals and groups in society are mathematically modeled—and its applications to political science. Concepts employed by game theorists, such as Nash equilibrium, subgame perfect equilibrium, and perfect Bayesian equilibrium. Problems of cooperation, time-consistency, signaling, and reputation formation. Political applications include candidate competition, policy making, political bargaining, and international conflict. No prerequisites other than high school algebra. Political Science majors who take this course may not count ECON 159 toward the major.

* EP&E 297b / ECON 471b, Topics in Cooperative Game Theory  Pradeep Dubey
The theory and applications of cooperative games. Topics include matching, bargaining, cost allocation, market games, voting games, and games on networks. Prerequisite: intermediate microeconomics.

* EP&E 299a / GLBL 299a / PLSC 332a, Philosophy of Science for the Study of Politics  Ian Shapiro
An examination of the philosophy of science from the perspective of the study of politics. Particular attention to the ways in which assumptions about science influence models of political behavior, the methods adopted to study that behavior, and the relations between science and democracy. Readings include works by both classic and contemporary authors.

* EP&E 306a / PLSC 228a, First Amendment and Ethics of Law  Karen Goodrow
This course addresses the First Amendment and freedom of speech, focusing on the ethical implications of restrictions on free speech, as well as the exercise of free speech.
Course topics and discussions include the “fighting words” doctrine, hate speech, true threats, content regulated speech, freedom of speech and the internet, and the so-called “right to be forgotten.” By the end of the course, students recognize the role free speech plays in society, including its negative and positive impacts on various segments of society. Students also have an understanding of the competing interests arising from the First Amendment’s right to free speech, and can analyze how these competing interests are weighed and measured in the United States as compared with other countries. 

* EP&E 312a / PLSC 297a, Moral Choices in Politics  Boris Kapustin  

* EP&E 313a / ECON 209a, Economic Analysis of Law  Robin Landis  
This course is intended to provide an introduction to the economic analysis of law. We examine the economic rationale(s) underlying various legal doctrines of both common law and statutory law, as well as the economic consequences of different legal doctrines. Previous coursework in economics, while helpful, is not a prerequisite for the course.

* EP&E 314b, Political Epidemiology  Gregg Gonsalves  
Political epidemiology is the study of the impact of welfare regimes, political institutions, and specific policies on health and health equity. This course emphasizes the last among these—the effects of specific policies—on health outcomes in infectious diseases and other areas of human health and development. The course takes an issues- and methods-based approach, looking at how to evaluate the effects of political determinants of health (e.g., immigration, education, fiscal and environmental policies) through experimental and quasi-experimental methods, as well as various techniques associated with policy modeling (e.g., Markov models, systems dynamics, microsimulation, spatial models). Prerequisite: Introductory course in statistics; MATH 241 or a similar introductory course in probability is recommended but not required.

* EP&E 317a / AFST 324a / HIST 368Ja / PLSC 324a, Nelson and Winnie Mandela  Jonny Steinberg  
A study of Nelson and Winnie Mandela’s marriage and public careers and the political and philosophical questions the marriage raises. Students examine the Mandelas’ conflicting ideas on race and on the colonial experience and compare them to those of Mohandas Gandhi and Franz Fanon. Students also read recent philosophical work on forgiveness and on violence in order critically to assess the politics of reconciliation that so divided the Mandelas. The course examines the politics of global celebrity and the portrayal of men and women in public media.

* EP&E 325b / PLSC 304b, Business Ethics and Law  Robin Landis  
This seminar is intended to provide frameworks for the analysis of ethical issues that may arise in the context of business decisions, including such aspects as the role of ethics, competing values and interests, and tools for making principled decisions. The course also covers, as appropriate, some aspects of law as they relate to business ethics. Previous courses in philosophy and ethics may be helpful.
* EP&E 328a / PLSC 347a / S&DS 172a, YData: Data Science for Political Campaigns
Joshua Kalla
Political campaigns have become increasingly data driven. Data science is used to inform where campaigns compete, which messages they use, how they deliver them, and among which voters. In this course, we explore how data science is being used to design winning campaigns. Students gain an understanding of what data is available to campaigns, how campaigns use this data to identify supporters, and the use of experiments in campaigns. This course provides students with an introduction to political campaigns, an introduction to data science tools necessary for studying politics, and opportunities to practice the data science skills presented in S&DS 123, YData.

* EP&E 334b / PHIL 455b, Normative Ethics  Shelly Kagan
A systematic examination of normative ethics, the part of moral philosophy that attempts to articulate and defend the basic principles of morality. The course surveys and explores some of the main normative factors relevant in determining the moral status of a given act or policy (features that help make a given act right or wrong). Brief consideration of some of the main views about the foundations of normative ethics (the ultimate basis or ground for the various moral principles). Prerequisite: a course in moral philosophy.

* EP&E 350a / AFST 385a / HIST 391Ja / HLTH 385a / PLSC 429a, Pandemics in Africa: From the Spanish Influenza to Covid-19  Jonny Steinberg
The overarching aim of the course is to understand the unfolding Covid-19 pandemic in Africa in the context of a century of pandemics, their political and administrative management, the responses of ordinary people, and the lasting changes they wrought. The first eight meetings examine some of the best social science-literature on 20th-century African pandemics before Covid-19. From the Spanish Influenza to cholera to AIDS, to the misdiagnosis of yaws as syphilis, and tuberculosis as hereditary, the social-science literature can be assembled to ask a host of vital questions in political theory: on the limits of coercion, on the connection between political power and scientific expertise, between pandemic disease and political legitimacy, and pervasively, across all modern African epidemics, between infection and the politics of race. The remaining four meetings look at Covid-19. We chronicle the evolving responses of policymakers, scholars, religious leaders, opposition figures, and, to the extent that we can, ordinary people. The idea is to assemble sufficient information to facilitate a real-time study of thinking and deciding in times of radical uncertainty and to examine, too, the consequences of decisions on the course of events. There are of course so many moving parts: health systems, international political economy, finance, policing, and more. We also bring guests into the classroom, among them frontline actors in the current pandemic as well as veterans of previous pandemics well placed to share provisional comparative thinking. This last dimension is especially emphasized: the current period, studied in the light of a century of epidemic disease, affording us the opportunity to see path dependencies and novelties, the old and the new.

* EP&E 353b / PLSC 305b, Critique of Political Violence  Boris Kapustin
Methods of conceptualizing political violence that are prevalent in contemporary political philosophical discourse. Use of theoretical-analytical tools to examine the
modes violence assumes and the functions it performs in modern political life as well as the meanings and possibilities of nonviolence in politics. 

* EP&E 356a, Constitutional Law and Business Ethics  Gregory Collins  
This course has three specific aims: 1) Examine influential Supreme Court cases that have had a significant impact on the practice of American business activities; 2) Identify the critical ethical questions that these legal controversies raise about such activities; and 3) Connect these legal and ethical insights to a broader theoretical understanding of the proper role of government in regulating private economic activity. Prerequisites: Familiarity with major theories in the business ethics discipline (virtue ethics, deontological ethics, utilitarianism, natural rights theory) and the U.S. Constitution.

* EP&E 364b / ECON 302b / PHIL 304b, Choice Theory and its Critics  Daniel Greco and Larry Samuelson  
The aim of the course is to build up a sufficiently strong foundation in the philosophy of science to allow students to critically assess the challenge posed to the rational choice framework in social science by evidence of human irrationality. Readings are drawn from philosophy, economics (including behavioral economics), and psychology. Prerequisites: Four courses in a combination of economics, philosophy, and psychology. 

* EP&E 372a / HUMS 263a / PLSC 329a, Thucydides  Daniel Schillinger  
In this seminar, we undertake a careful examination of Thucydides’ so-called History of the Peloponnesian War in its entirety. Central problems include the psychological and structural causes of war, the relation of justice to necessity, the susceptibility of democracy to imperialism and demagoguery, and the experience of war itself. We also engage with the secondary literature on Thucydides. 

* EP&E 375a / PLSC 339a, Liberalism  Mordechai Levy-Eichel  
What is liberalism? And why do arguments about it stand at the epicenter of our political life? Is it a political idea, or is it a philosophy that tries to carve out a space apart from high politics? Is it about rights, or about equality? Is it about freedom and liberty, or laws and regulations? Is it ancient? Is it modern? Can we even define what liberalism means, or does the attempt to do so in some way even miss the point? This class is a historical, philosophical, and political examination of one of the most important and contested ideas in the modern world. We read both critics and advocates of liberalism. We also examine it historically, sociologically, and comparatively, in order to gain a better sense of what it means in practice, and how it differs from the arguments of both its most strong supporters and defenders, and its critics. Special attention is paid to the development of the ethos and examples of liberalism. This course is also a meditation on how to study politics and political theory. What does liberalism mean, and how should we examine it? Where did it come from, and how has it changed over time? 

* EP&E 390a / EVST 212a / PLSC 212a, Democracy and Sustainability  Michael Fotos  
Democracy, liberty, and the sustainable use of natural resources. Concepts include institutional analysis, democratic consent, property rights, market failure, and common pool resources. Topics of policy substance are related to human use of the environment and to U.S. and global political institutions.
* EP&E 421b / PLSC 320b, Ethics, Law, and Current Issues  Karen Goodrow
Examination of how freedom of speech and bias influence the criminal justice system, focusing on wrongful convictions and administration of the death penalty. Understanding the role of potential bias at various levels and the competing interests of protecting speech, due process, and the innocent. Topics include limitations on speech, practical effects of speech, the efficacy of the death penalty, actual innocence, gender/race/economic bias and its effects on the justice system, as well as best practices for improving our sense of justice.

* EP&E 471a, Directed Reading and Research  Bonnie Weir
For individual reading and research unrelated to the senior essay. Students must obtain the signature of the faculty member supervising their independent work on an Independent Study Form (available from the Ethics, Politics, and Economics registrar’s office). This form must be submitted to the director of undergraduate studies at the time the student’s class schedule is submitted.

Introduction to the emerging field of moral cognition. Focus on questions about the philosophical significance of psychological findings. Topics include the role of emotion in moral judgment; the significance of character traits in virtue ethics and personality psychology; the reliability of intuitions and the psychological processes that underlie them.  HU

* EP&E 491a, The Senior Essay  Bonnie Weir
A one-term senior essay. The essay should fall within the student’s area of concentration. If no appropriate seminar is offered in which the essay might be written, the student, in consultation with the director of undergraduate studies, should choose an appropriate member of the faculty to supervise the senior essay. Students must obtain the signature of the faculty member supervising their independent work on an Independent Study Form (available from the Ethics, Politics, and Economics registrar’s office). This form must be submitted to the director of undergraduate studies at the time the student’s class schedule is submitted.

A two-term senior essay. The essay should fall within the student’s area of concentration. The student, in consultation with the director of undergraduate studies, should choose an appropriate member of the faculty to supervise the senior essay. Students must obtain the signature of the faculty member supervising their independent work on an Independent Study Form (available from the Ethics, Politics, and Economics registrar’s office). This form must be submitted to the director of undergraduate studies at the time the student’s class schedule is submitted.

* EP&E 497a / EVST 247a / PLSC 219a, Politics of the Environment  Peter Swenson
Historical and contemporary politics aimed at regulating human behavior to limit damage to the environment. Goals, strategies, successes, and failures of movements, organizations, corporations, scientists, and politicians in conflicts over environmental policy. A major focus is on politics, public opinion, corporate interests, and litigation in the U.S. regarding climate change.  SO