ETHICS, POLITICS, & ECONOMICS (EP&E)

EP&E 203a / PLSC 452a / S&D 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

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 214a 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 216a, 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

EP&E 220b / PLSC 342b, Strategic Models of Politics  Milan Svolik
Introduction to formal political theory including application of rational choice and game theoretic analysis. Key topics and findings include: why voters vote in elections; how candidates choose platforms; why common resources tend to be overexploited; whether the state is needed for public good provision; how electoral systems shape politicians’ and voters’ behavior; whether voters can hold politicians accountable for their performance in office; how constitutions affect politicians’ incentives to compromise; and why countries fight wars.  SO

* EP&E 224b / ECON 465b / GLBL 330b, Debating Globalization  Ernesto Zedillo
Facets of contemporary economic globalization, including trade, investment, and migration. Challenges and threats of globalization: inclusion and inequality, emerging global players, global governance, climate change, and nuclear weapons proliferation. Prerequisite: background in international economics and data analysis. Preference to seniors majoring in Economics or EP&E.  SO RP

* 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 244b / ECON 449b / PLSC 374b, The Economic Analysis of Conflict  Gerard Padro
Since the end of WWII the overwhelming majority of war casualties have been the result of internal conflict. This includes insurgency situations in which foreign powers prop up a weak internal government. In this course we apply microeconomic techniques, theoretical and empirical, to the analysis of internal conflict, 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 microeconomics and 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 250a / PLSC 354a, The European Union  David Cameron
Origins and development of the European Community and Union over the past fifty years; ways in which the often-conflicting ambitions of its member states have shaped the EU; relations between member states and the EU’s supranational institutions and politics; and economic, political, and geopolitical challenges.  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.
EP&E 295a / PLSC 344a, Game Theory and Political Science  Ian Turner
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. QR, SO

* 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 / GBL 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 relationships between science and democracy. Readings include works by both classic and contemporary authors. SO

* EP&E 302a / GBL 259a / HIST 469Ja / PLSC 391a, State Formation  Didac Queralt
Study of the domestic and international determinants of functional states from antiquity to date. Analysis of state-formation in Europe in pre-modern and outside Europe from colonial times to date. Topics include centralization of power, capacity to tax, and contract enforcement. SO

* 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. SO

* EP&E 307a, Culture, Social Norms, and Business Ethics  Staff
Culture is a central concept in the social sciences but it is also one of the most difficult to study. Many argue that culture influences our attitudes and behavior, yet rigorously understanding culture and its implications for behavior and business ethics remains elusive. In the first half of the course, we study some of the most important conceptual literature on culture in the social sciences. We also survey empirical literature to discuss the relevance of culture for socioeconomic, political, and business behavior. In the second half of the course, we examine interventions that, short of upending culture, try to transform some social norms or values of a society or organization in order to improve its members’ behavior (e.g. reducing corruption, increasing social trust). We briefly consider the effects of reforming legal norms, but we devote most of our time to study experimental interventions and case studies aimed at improving behavior and business ethics in the public and private sectors. The class is explicitly interdisciplinary. The goal is to gain exposure to different approaches to study culture and to interventions aimed at changing norms and behaviors. The course includes a few guest lectures from expert practitioners. SO

* EP&E 309a, Democracy Incorporated: Business, Politics, and Ethics  Staff
Until recently, business corporations and the market economy were mostly associated with the promotion of individual freedoms and the advancement of political rights. Technological change, economic deregulation, and market concentration have increased the power of business corporations. This growing power has led many citizens to believe that corporations are now disempowering individuals. How is corporate power used for political purposes? Where should societies draw the line limiting the transformation of economic power into political power? These are the main questions that motivate this course, which investigates the relationship between politics and business. We study how corporations attempt to influence public policy and how political actors seek to shape corporate decisions. We also examine how political institutions and democratic accountability affect government-business relations. Throughout the course, we pay close attention to research design and to the effective communication of research findings. Discussions also emphasize the normative implications of powerful corporations to democracy and democratic theory. SO

* EP&E 312a / PLSC 297a, Moral Choices in Politics  Boris Kapustin
A study of how and why people make costly moral choices in politics. Figures studied include Thomas More, Abraham Lincoln, Nelson Mandela, Václav Havel, and Aung San Suu Kyi. SO

* 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. SO

* EP&E 315a / 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.  SO

EP&E 33b / PLSC 177b, Networks and NGOs in World Politics  Sarah Bush
Non-state actors are increasingly important to world politics. This course introduces students to the variety of non-state actors that are currently influencing our world, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and transnational networks related to advocacy, crime, global governance, and violence. Students develop a working understanding of these actors’ roles in shaping war, peace, human rights, democracy, the global economy, and various other aspects of contemporary global politics.  SO

* 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.  HU

* EP&E 346a / HLTH 420a, Global Health Ethics  Cara Fallon
When a new virus sweeps the globe, how should physicians, governments, and societies respond? What are an individual’s rights and responsibilities in the face of illness, and how do public health organizations prioritize competing claims? How should issues of consent, quarantine, compulsory treatment, and surveillance be managed, and how do these issues change as they transcend geographic borders? This seminar examines critical issues in global health through the method of ethical analysis. The course begins with the foundations for analyzing ethical problems, considering moral and ethical frameworks for health. We examine dilemmas such as quarantines, access to care, and the limits of autonomy, and we delve into critical challenges of vulnerable populations and global inequities. We conclude by analyzing emerging tensions posed by artificial intelligence and digital health technologies. Drawing together global health perspectives and ethical analysis, we consider the principles, trade-offs, and central tensions that inform global health today.  WR, SO

* EP&E 350a / AFST 385a / HIST 391a / HLTH 385, 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 perversely, 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.  SO

* EP&E 355b / 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.  SO

* 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 362b / PHIL 462b, The Morality of Reparations  Stephen Darwall
The history of chattel slavery and its long legacy, even to the current moment, is a history of almost unimaginable injustice. What is the appropriate moral response to this history? This turns out to be a complex and difficult question, or set of questions, which we explore in this course. Some of these are issues of philosophical theory, however, of “nonideal theory,” where the questions concern not what is ideally just, but what responses are called for by historical injustice. But there are also important empirical historical issues concerning the precise character of the injustices and who, and what institutions, were complicit in them. We examine, as best we can, the history of chattel slavery and its long legacy: the white reaction to what Du Bois called “black reconstruction,” racist violence and terror, and decades
of white supremacy, including segregation in all its forms and, most recently, mass incarceration. Ultimately, however, our questions are philosophical. What response does justice require to this history and of whom is it required?


Twenty-first century societies are faced with both threats and opportunities that combine sophisticated computation with politics and international relations in critical ways. Examples include cyber warfare; cyber espionage; cyber crime; the role of social media in democratic self-governance, authoritarian control, and election "hacking"; cryptocurrencies; and mass surveillance. This course examines the political challenges wrought by massive increases in the power of computational and communication technologies and the potential for citizens and governments to harness those technologies to solve problems. It is co-taught by one faculty member in computer science and one in political science. No previous programming experience required. Meets with CPSC 310. Students may earn credit for CPSC 210/PLSC 369 or for CPSC 310; not for both. Prerequisite: Internet literacy.

* **EP&E 380a / PLSC 313a, Bioethics, Politics, and Economics** Stephen Latham

Ethical, political, and economic aspects of a number of contemporary issues in biomedical ethics. Topics include abortion, assisted reproduction, end-of-life care, research on human subjects, and stem cell research.

* **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 478a / PHIL 450a, The Problem of Evil** Keith DeRose and Miroslav Volf

The challenge that evil’s existence in the world poses for belief in a perfectly good and omnipotent God. The main formulations of the problem of evil; proposed ways of solving or mitigating the problem and criticism of those solutions. Skeptical theism, the free-will defense, soul-making theodicies, and doctrines of hell.

* **EP&E 480b / PHIL 465b, Recent Work in Ethical Theory** Stephen Darwall

A study of recently published works on ethics and its foundations. Issues include the grounds of normativity and rightness and the role of the virtues.

* **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.