

POLITICAL SCIENCE 5242 / 4242
POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR: REASON, PASSION, BIOLOGY

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 Class Wednesday 1:30 pm – 4:30 pm
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Short abstract

Does reason or passion drive politicians and citizens to act as they do? Or does the dichotomy between the mind and the heart disguise a more fundamental biological basis to behavior? This class studies the economic, social, psychological, and biological explanations for why and how individuals engage in politics. Topics covered include public opinion, modernization theory, culture wars, bio-politics, and political marketing. Although this material is inherently comparative, we principally want to investigate how it applies in Canada. We also want to carry the research findings forward, to consider how they generate concrete lessons for applied political practice today.

Extended overview:

Is political behavior driven by reason, passion, biology, or some combination of the three? As a first approach, we assume that it is based on rational judgments made through some sort of cost / benefit analysis, and we assume that our calculation of utility is informed by knowledge about public affairs. To test if this assumption operates in practice, we study public opinion, class, partisanship, and “culture wars” in North America.

The second approach is modernization theory, which is the intellectual descendent of structural Marxist and Weberian theory. This approach assumes that societies (and the individuals within them) change socially and psychologically in ways that correspond to change in the structure of the economy. These changes are rational, but they are large-scale, predictable, and independent of human volition.

The third approach assumes that political behavior is based principally on passion, as driven by biology. Research from primatology indicates that much of what people do politically corresponds to their genetic heritage which has its own rational calculus. When research from biology and psychology is applied to political practice, the result is political marketing which is designed to appeal to voters’ emotions. Election campaigns are the height of applied social science in this regard.

Together, these three approaches enable students to reflect in a more profound way on how their own decision-making processes operate and how they arrive at their own personal loyalties. As a result, they become better equipped to become professional practitioners of politics.

UNDERGRADUATE GRADING SCHEME (option to do grad scheme)		DUE
Participation and response to student presentation	10%	throughout
3 analytical papers @ 20% each (2000 words <i>maximum</i>)	60%	throughout
Take home exam assignment	30%	Early April (48 hours)
GRADUATE GRADING SCHEME		DUE
Participation and response to student presentation	10%	throughout
2 analytical papers @ 10% each (2000 words <i>maximum</i>)	20%	throughout
Oral presentation	40%	throughout
Take home exam assignment	30%	Early April (48 hours)

Oral presentation: All graduate students are required to deliver a presentation based on the readings from one week. The oral presentation is the centerpiece of graduate student work in the course; consider it to be equivalent to a major research paper. The presentations should take a decisive stand on the contributions of the readings to our understanding of the particular problem under study for that week and the larger themes of the course more generally. More specifically, the presentations should:

1. Take a decisive stand on the contribution of the readings to understanding politics.
2. Based on the stand you take on the readings, present evidence in support of your position.
3. Extract the research design that underlies the results presented in each reading.
 - a. Evaluate if the research design adequately supports the conclusions presented.
4. Identify and assess the policy implications of the discussion presented.
5. Extract the article's theoretical approach.
 - a. Does the theory or the theoretical approach actually explain what it is supposed to explain?
6. Even if you think the reading is perfect, analysis entails trying to find the weakest points of an argument and probing to see if it is a fatal flaw or not.
7. What contribution do the readings make to our overall understanding of politics?
 - a. Is it an empirical or theoretical contribution?
 - b. Do they complement or compete with previous readings? Are we any further ahead than before?

You will have access to a computer and a projector which you must use. Your presentation will be graded on its ability to communicate intellectually interesting and politically astute insights, not its technical artistry. Learning to present complex information in a visually compelling way is a valuable skill.

The speaking notes must be submitted as part of the assignment. Text need not be in formal essay format; it consists of presentation notes, provided that they are coherent, logical, cleaned up and properly formatted. Please create your speaking notes in the "notes" format of the ppt file. Then submit your notes in that format; it is also possible to submit notes in a separate text file.

One hour of class time is given over to your presentation. Be prepared to speak for approximately 30 minutes. You will address questions and comments from the class for the remainder of the time. The instructor chairs all presentations.

A sign-up sheet will be distributed on the first day. The sign-up sheet corresponds to topics on the syllabus, and you choose to present on a topic scheduled for that day. Students are not responsible for presenting all the material assigned for that day, but you are expected to be familiar with the assigned readings, and to be able to address questions as to how they relate to what you present. Much of the material is quite difficult and explaining the concepts and results accurately to your classmates will take time and effort. The evaluation rubric for the class presentation is appended to this syllabus.

When the presentations are over, the class will be expected to ask **critical and thoughtful questions** about the presentations. At the end of the course, students will grade each other on their attentiveness to each other's work, using a short-version of the oral presentation rubric. This is an anonymous grade that is submitted to the instructor as an advisory grade; the instructor has task of compiling students' evaluations and assigning a final grade.

The **final take-home exam** requires you to synthesize broad course themes in an essay. To synthesize is to bring different aspects of the course material together in a coherent explanation. The question to be posed typically asks the student to address – in all its historical and theoretical complexity- a current "crisis" in the study of politics.

There are **short analytical papers**. Short means short, maximum 2000 words. These papers analyse and critique one or two of the readings assigned for a particular week. No additional research is required (or permitted) beyond the assigned readings. They must be submitted on the class for which the readings are assigned. No credit will be given for papers submitted earlier or later because the point is to have the papers enrich class on that day.

SCHEDULE

Readings are listed below, in order of priority. Begin reading from the top, and make your way down as you engage in the material. Popular journalist accounts are listed first, as an introduction to the topic. Academic journals are listed next, followed by books. Students writing analytical papers, exam papers, and making presentations on the topic are expected to engage deeply in the academic sources. Most items are posted to BLS. Students are NOT expected to do ALL the readings each class.

I. INTRODUCTION

6 January

Question: How to think about doing social science? A four-fold matrix, inspired by Martin Hollis

[Watts, Duncan. 2011. "The human paradox that is common sense," *New Scientist Magazine* issue 2821.](#)

[Brooks, David. 2011. "The unexamined society" *New York Times* 7 July.](#)

Flanagan, Tom. 1998. Chapter 1 "Rational Choice" *Game theory and Canadian politics* Toronto: U Toronto Press.

[Gelman, Andrew & Thomas Basbøll. March 2014. "When do stories work? Evidence and illustration in the social sciences" *Sociological Methods Research* 43:4 547-570.](#)

[Tetlock, Philip. 2015. "Why an Open Mind Is Key to Making Better Predictions"](#)

knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/why-an-open-mind-is-key-to-making-better-predictions Books Podcasts
Research Strategic Management Video Global Focus

[Gelman, Andrew & Thomas Basbøll. June 2013. "To throw away data: plagiarism as a statistical crime" *American Scientist* 101:3.](#)

The craft of visualizing social science

13 January

Question: How to construct and relate knowledge in a visually compelling story?

Brady, Henry. 2011. "The art of political science: Spatial diagrams as iconic and revelatory" *Perspectives on Politics*, 9:2, 311-331

Garr Reynolds, pro-speaker website <http://www.garrreynolds.com/preso-tips/>

Adams, Michael. 2014. Fire and Ice revisited: US, Canada and the myth of converging values. Environics, bbl slides

Bricker, Darrell. 2013. ["The big shift - understanding the new Canadian" Slides and TEDx talk](#)

II. ACADEMIC LINEAGE OF PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH

20 January

Question: Is a democratic public clever enough to get the politicians and the policies that it wants?

[Menand, Louise. 2004. "The unpolitical animal: How political science understands voters," *New Yorker*. August 30.](#)

[Ipsos Mori. 2015. *Understanding society: The perils of perception.*](#)

Zaller, John. 1998. "Monica Lewinsky's contribution to political science" *Political Science & Politics*. 31:2, 182-189.

Zaller, John. 2012. "What nature and origins leaves out" *Critical Review* 24: 4, 2012.

Klein, Ezra. 2014. "Moderate voters are a myth" *VOX*. 8 July.

Druckman, James and Thomas Leeper. 2012. "Is public opinion stable? Resolving the micro/macro disconnect in studies of public opinion: *Daedalus*. 141: 4, 50-68

Edsall, Thomas. 2014. "Nothing in moderation: How ideological moderation conceals support for immoderate policies: a new perspective on the 'disconnect' in American politics." [NYT](#).

Butler, Peter. 2007. *Polling and public Opinion: A Canadian perspective*. University of Toronto Press.

III. RATIONAL AND IRRATIONAL CULTURE WARS OF NORTH AMERICA

A. (Ir)Rational culture wars of North America: class and geography

27 January

Question: How do rich people and poor people sort themselves out politically?

- Brooks, David. 2001. "One nation, slightly divisible," *Atlantic Monthly* Dec.; 288, 5
- Dionne, E. J. 2006. "Why the culture war is the wrong war," *Atlantic Monthly*; Jan/Feb, 297:1, 130-135.
- Bowman, Carl. 2010. "Myth of a non-polarized America" *Hedgehog Review*. Fall, 65-77.
- Gimpel, James & Kimberly Karnes. 2006. "The rural side of the urban-rural gap" *PS: Political Science & Politics* July.
- Gelman, Andrew. 2008. *Red state, blue state, rich state, poor state: Why Americans vote the way they do*. Princeton University Press. [Video presentation](#)
- Feller, Avi, Andrew Gelman and Boris Shor. 2012. "Red state / blue state divisions in the 2012 presidential election," *Forum* 10:4, 127–131.
- Abrams, Samuel & Morris Fiorina. 2012. "The Big Sort" that wasn't: A skeptical re-examination" *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 45:02, 203-210.
- Jacoby, William. 2014. "Is there a culture war? Conflicting value structures in American public opinion" *American Political Science Review*, 108:4, 754-771.
- Pew Research Center Report. *Political polarization in the American public*. 12 June.
- Fiorina, Morris, Samuel Abrams, Jeremy Pope. 2010. *Culture war? The myth of a polarized America*. Longman.
- Abramowitz, Alan. 2010. *The disappearing center: Engaged citizens, polarization, and American democracy*. Yale University Press.

B. (Ir)Rational culture wars of North America: marriage and family

3 February

Question: Do class politics begin in the bedroom?

- Douthat, Ross. 2010. "The Changing Culture War," *New York Times*. December 6.
- [Leonhardt, David. 2015. "Red vs. Blue America on Marriage" *Upshot New York Times*.](#)
- [Cahn, Naomi and June Carbone. 2010. *Red state families vs. blue state families: The family-values divide* Oxford University Press.](#)
- [Wilcox, Bradford and Nicholas Zill. 2015. *Red State Families: Better Than We Knew*. Institute for Family Studies.](#)
- Wilcox, Bradford, Paul Taylor, Chuck Donovan. 2011. *When marriage disappears: The retreat from marriage in Middle America*. Heritage Foundation.
- Murray, Charles. 2012. "The new American divide," *Wall Street Journal*. 21 January 2012
- Gelman, Andrew, 2013. "Charles Murray's *Coming Apart* and the measurement of social and political divisions" *Statistics, Politics, and Policy* 2013; 4:1, 70–81.
- Autor, David and Melanie Wasserman. 2013. *Wayward sons: the emerging gender gap in labor markets and education*. Washington: Third Way.
- [Banks, Ralph. 2011. "The racial gap in marriage: how the institution is tied to inequality," *Atlantic Monthly*.](#)
- Madsen, Richard. 2011. "American Grace: an Interview with Robert Putnam and David Campbell," *Hedgehog Review*, spring, 59-68.
- Putnam, Robert, Carl Frederick, Kaisa Snellman. 2012. "Growing class gaps in social connectedness among American youth," Boston: Harvard Kennedy School of Govt. Saguro Seminar: Civic Engagement in America.

C. (Ir)Rational culture wars of North America: Canadian anomalies or not?

10 February

Question: is it safe to generalize results from American political science to Canada?

- [Cross, Philip and Peter Mitchell. 2014. *The marriage gap between rich and poor Canadians: How Canadians are split into haves and have-nots along marriage lines*. Institute of Marriage and Family Canada.](#)

- Malloy, Jonathan. 2009. "Bush / Harper? Canadian and American Evangelical politics compared," *American Review of Canadian Studies*. 39:4, 352–363.
- Farney, James. 2012. *Social conservatives and party politics in Canada and United States* Toronto: UTP..
- Luong, May. 2008 "Life after teen motherhood" *Perspectives* 13 Statistics Canada — Catalogue no. 75-001-X.
- Wilson, Matthew and Michael Lusztig. 2004. "The spouse in the house: What explains the marriage gap in Canada?" *Canadian Journal of Political Science*. 37:4, 979–99.
- Bean, Lydia. 2014. *The politics of evangelical identity: Local churches and partisan divides in the United States and Canada*. Princeton University Press.

READING WEEK, NO CLASS 17 February

IV. STRUCTURAL THEORIES: MODERNIZATION & POST-MODERNIZATION

24 February

Question: Do the economy and society work together along predictable pathways?

A. PROMISE AND POTENTIAL OF THE WORLD VALUES SURVEY <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/>

Question: is it possible to resurrect classic modernization theory?

- Inglehart, Ronald, "Inequality and modernization" *Foreign Affairs*, 2016, 95:1, 2-10.
- Inglehart, Ronald and Christian Welzel. 2010. "Changing mass priorities: The link between modernization and democracy" *Perspectives on Politics*, 8: 551-567.
- Welzel, Christian. 2014. "Evolution, empowerment, and emancipation: How societies climb the freedom ladder" *World Development*, 64, 33-51. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wIXdRve92gg>
- Weyland, Kurt. 2012. "The Arab Spring: Why the surprising similarities with the revolutionary wave of 1848?" *Perspectives on Politics*. December 10:4 917—934.

B. STRUCTURAL THEORY APPLIED

2 March

Question: is a natural resource economy a curse or a blessing?

- Adams, Julia and Ann Shola Orloff. 2005. "Defending modernity? High politics, feminist anti-modernism, and the place of gender," *Politics & Gender*, 1: 166-182.
- Ross, Michael. 2008. "Oil, Islam, women," *American Political Science Review* 102: 107-123.
- Debate: Oil, Islam, and Women, *Politics & Gender*, 5:4 (December 2009).
- Norris, Pippa, "Petroleum patriarchy? A response to Ross."
- Kang, Alice, "Studying oil, Islam, and women as if political institutions mattered."
- Ross, Michael, "Does oil wealth hurt women? A reply to Caraway, Charrad, Kang, Norris."
- Inglehart, Ronald, Svetlana Borinskaya, Anna Cotter, Jaanus Harro. 2014. "Genetic factors, cultural predispositions, happiness and gender equality" *Journal. Res. Gender Studies*. 4: 32.
- Inglehart, Ronald and Pippa Norris. 2003. *Rising tide: Gender equality and cultural change around the world*. Cambridge University Press.

V. Biology & Politics

A. An evolutionary legacy of morality, altruism, and violence?

9 March

- Buller, David. 2009. "Four fallacies of pop evolutionary psychology." *Scientific American* 300:1, 74-81 (January).
- Hayden, Erika Check. 2009. "The other strand," *Nature* 457:776-79 February 12.
- Johnson, Eric. 2012. "Women and children first." [Interview with Sarah Hrdy](#) *Times Higher Education*. 15 March.
- Joseph Henrich, Robert Boyd, Peter Richerson. 2012. "The puzzle of monogamous marriage" *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*. 367, 657-669.
- Steven Pinker. 2008. "[The moral instinct](#)," *New York Times*. January 13.

- Hatemi, Peter, and Rose McDermott. 2012. "Policing the perimeter: disgust and purity in democratic debate" *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 45, 675-687.
- McDermott, R., Tingley, D., Hatemi, P. 2014. "Assortative mating on ideology could operate through olfactory cues" *American Journal of Political Science*, 58: 997-1005.
- Clark, Gregory. 2014. "Your ancestors, your fate" *New York Times*. 21 February.
- Hrdy, Sarah. 2009. *Mothers and others: The evolutionary origins of mutual understanding*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.

B. Genetic lineage of temperament, ideology, and thence partisanship?

16 March

- Jacobs, Tom. 2010. "A new take on political ideology: An evolutionary psychologist proposes a new framework for understanding the root causes of our political beliefs," *Miller-McLure*. October 26.
- Fowler, James and Darren Schreiber. 2008. "Biology, politics, and the emerging science of human nature." *Science* 322, 912-914.
- Edsall, Thomas. 2013. "Are our political beliefs encoded in our DNA?" *New York Times*. 1 October.
- Oxley, Douglas R., et al. 2008. "Political attitudes vary with physiological traits." *Science* 321:1667-1670.
- Begley, Sharon. 2007. "The roots of fear: The evolutionary primacy of the brain's fear circuitry makes it more powerful than reasoning circuits" *Newsweek*.
- Klofstad, Casey, Rose McDermott, Peter K. Hatemi. 2013. "The dating preferences of liberals and conservatives" *Political Behavior* 35, 519-538.
- Inglehart, Ronald, et al. 2014. Genetic factors, cultural predispositions, happiness, and gender equality" *Journal of Research in Gender Studies*. 4:1. 32-100.
- Exchange in *Perspectives on Politics* 11:2 June 2013.
- John Hibbing. "Ten misconceptions concerning neurobiology and politics."
- Kay Lehman Schlozman, "Two concerns about ten misconceptions."
- Troy Duster, "Emergence vs. reductionism in the debate over the role of biology in politics"
- Beckwith and Corey Morris. 2008. Twin studies of political behavior: Untenable assumptions?
- Anna Jaap Jacobson, "New souls for old."

V. POLITICAL MARKETING

A. Psychology behind political marketing

23 March

- Resource for presentations: Presidential Campaign Commercials 1952-2012 <http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/>
- Westen, Drew. 2011. What happened to Obama? *New York Times*.
- Randall, Kevin. 2015. "Neuropolitics, Where campaigns try to read your mind" *New York Times*. 3 November.
- McDermott, Rose. 2004. "The feeling of rationality: The meaning of neuroscientific advances for political science." *Perspectives on Politics* 2:4, 691-706.
- Fletcher, Joseph and Jennifer Hove. 2012. "Emotional determinants of support for the Canadian mission in Afghanistan: A view from the bridge" *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 45:1, 33-62.
- Cutler, Fred. 2002. "The simplest shortcut of all: Sociodemographic characteristics and electoral choice" *Journal of Politics*, 64:2, May, 466-490.
- Barbara, Michael & Ashley Parker 2012. "Gosh, who talks like that now? Romney does" *New York Times*. 20 Oct.
- Westen, Drew. 2007 The political brain: The role of emotion in deciding the fate of the nation. *Public Affairs*.
- Rothfeder, Jeffrey. 2004. Terror Games *Popular Science*. <http://lustickconsulting.com/>
- Nesbitt-Larking, Paul. 2004. "Political psychology in Canada" *Political Psychology*. 25: 1, 97-114.
- Bendor, Jonathan, Daniel Diermeier, David Siegel, Michael Ting. 2011. "Bounded rationality and elections" *A behavioural theory of elections*. Princeton University Press, 1-22.
- Neuman, Peter, George Marcus, Ann Crigler, Michael MacKuen (Eds.). 2007. *The affect effect: Dynamics of emotion in political thinking and behavior*. Chicago: U of Chicago Press.
- Sears, David, Leonie Huddy, Robert Jervis (Eds.). 2003. *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*. New York: OUP.

B. Political marketing: Putting science to work with technology

30 March

- Singer, Natasha. 2013. "A data broker offers a peek behind the curtain" *New York Times*. 31 August.
- Singer, Natasha. 2012. "You for sale: Mapping and sharing the consumer genome" *New York Times*. 31 August.
- Edsall, Thomas. 2012. "Let the nanotargeting begin?" *New York Times*. 15 April.
- Federico Christopher, Howard Lavine, Christopher Johnston. 2012. "The unexpected impact of coded appeals" *New York Times*. 10 September.
- Pew Research Center. 2014. "Social media and the spiral of silence" *Policy Options*. Nov/Dec, 72.
- Kosinski, Michael, David Stillwell, Thore Graepel. 2013. "Private traits and attributes are predictable from digital records of human behavior" *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 110:15, 5802-5805.
- Lau, Richard, Lee Sigelman, Ivy Brown Rovner. 2007. "The effects of negative political campaigns: A meta-analytic reassessment" *Journal of Politics*. 69: 4, 1176–1209.
- Freedman, Paul, Michael M. Franz, Kenneth Goldstein. 2004. "Campaign advertising and democratic citizenship." *American Journal of Political Science* 48: 723-741.
- Krasno, Jonathan and Donald Green. 2008. "Response to Franz, Freedman, Kenneth Goldstein, Ridout" *Journal of Politics* 70:1, 269-271.
- Ansolabehere, Stephen & Shanto Iyengar. 1996. "The craft of political advertising: A progress report." In Mutz, Sniderman, Brody (Eds.), *Political persuasion and attitude change*. Cambridge U Press. Ch. 4.
- Gillespie, Tarleton. 2013 "The relevance of algorithms." In Media Technologies, ed. Tarleton, Pablo Boczkowski, Kirsten Foot. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Bennett, Colin & Robin Bayley. 2012. Canadian federal political parties and personal privacy protection: a comparative analysis. Prepared for the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada.

C. Political marketing: Canadians go shopping for votes

6 April

- Marland, Alex, Thierry Glasson, Tamara Small. 2014. *Political communication in Canada*. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Marland, Alex and Tom Flanagan. 2013. "Political branding of the Conservative Party of Canada" *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 46:4, 951-69.
- Delacourt, Susan. 2013. *Shopping for votes*. Madeira Park BC: Douglas & McIntyre.
- Kinsella, Warren. 2007. *The war room: Political strategies for business, NGOs, and anyone who wants to win*. Toronto: Dundurn Press.
- Wells, Paul. 2006. *Right side up: The fall of Paul Martin and the rise of Stephen Harper's new conservatism*. Toronto: Douglas Gibson.
- Marland, Alex. 2012. "Political photography, journalism, and framing in the digital age: the management of visual media by the prime minister of Canada" *The International Journal of Press / Politics*: 17. 214-233.
- Alex Marland, Thierry Glasson, Jennifer Lees-Marshment, eds. 2012. *Political marketing in Canada*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

UNIVERSITY REGULATIONS

From the University Calendar: "Students are expected to complete class work by the prescribed deadlines. Only in special circumstances ... may an instructor extend such deadlines." Late papers will be assessed a late penalty at the instructor's discretion. Students who miss a deadline on account of illness are expected to hand in the assignment within one week of their return to class, with a medical certificate, per academic regulations of Dalhousie.

Papers should be submitted directly to the instructor, or the teaching assistant, or in person to the Political Science office between 8:30 am and 4:30 pm on weekdays only. The instructor cannot assume responsibility for papers otherwise submitted.

Students may request accommodation as a result of barriers related to disability, religious obligation, or any characteristic under the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act. Students who require academic accommodation for either

classroom participation or the writing of tests, quizzes and exams should make their request to the Office of Student Accessibility & Accommodation prior to or at the outset of each academic term. Please see www.studentaccessibility.dal.ca for information and to obtain Form A: Request for Accommodation. A note taker may be required to assist a classmate. There is an honorarium of \$75/course/term. If you are interested, please contact OSAA at 494-2836 for more information. Please note that your classroom may contain specialized accessible furniture and equipment. It is important that these items remain in the classroom so that students who require their usage will be able to participate in the class.

INFORMATION ON PLAGIARISM

Proper documentation is required on all writing assignments. Failure to document sources constitutes plagiarism and can result in severe academic penalty. You should keep your rough notes and be prepared to defend your work orally. Consult a writing/style manual for acceptable citation styles.

Any paper submitted by a student at Dalhousie University may be checked for originality to confirm that the student has not plagiarized from other sources. Plagiarism is considered a serious academic offence which may lead to loss of credit, suspension or expulsion from the University, or even to the revocation of a degree. It is essential that there be correct attribution of authorities from which facts and opinions have been derived.

At Dalhousie there are University Regulations which deal with plagiarism and, prior to submitting any paper in a course; students should read the Policy on Intellectual Honesty contained in the Calendar or on the Online Dalhousie website. As a student in this class, you are to keep an electronic copy of any paper you submit, and the course instructor may require you to submit that electronic copy on demand.

Additional Information for Graduate Students

As this is a cross-listed class, the requirements for graduate students are somewhat different from those for undergraduates. The number of and types of assignments are the same, but the expectations for these assignments are considerably higher:

1. In all assignments, graduate students are expected to evince a deeper analytical ability when evaluating readings; to show familiarity with a wider variety of sources; and to articulate a greater complexity of thought, in both verbal and written forms.
2. The writing style for graduate students should illustrate greater sophistication, both in the construction of the argument and in the clarity and lucidity of the writing.
3. Graduate students are expected to be prepared for each seminar; and to read beyond the minimal expectations set out for undergraduates (*i.e.*, more than one primary reading, secondary text, one online article, one student paper). Attendance is crucial. Graduate students should be willing to participate actively in the discussions, rather than waiting to be called upon to speak.
4. At the graduate level, students should show an understanding of the nuances of criticism, ie, how to accomplish an intellectually incisive criticism in a respectful and constructive manner.
5. Research papers for graduate students are generally longer. They should show evidence of good research skills; of the capacity for revision; and of the analytical capability noted in (1) above. Graduate students may choose to tailor their research papers to their thesis work; but please discuss this with me in advance.
6. Graduate students should enjoy their work more thoroughly.

Tips to Article-Writers

Ezra W. Zuckerman, MIT Sloan School of Management February 6, 2008

Over the past several years, I often find that I am giving similar advice or reactions to colleagues and students (or as referee to authors) on how to improve their papers, usually with an eye to improving the paper's likelihood of contributing to the social scientific literature. Since I give this advice often, I thought it might be of some use to compile the advice and post it on my website. Please note that this is by no means a recipe for writing great papers. God knows that if I had such a recipe, I would have an easier time writing great papers myself! And please note that the converse is also true: there are many published articles that violate one or more of these tips. Of course, many published papers are awful. And very good papers sometimes do not get accepted for publication. Consequently, all I can say is that I think these tips generally make for better papers. And what keeps me in this business is the faith that our journals generally publish the better papers and reject the weaker ones, though that faith is often tested. A final note: I plan on updating these from time to time, as I continue to play the mentor / commentator / critic / discussant / referee roles and think of something else that might be useful. Comments (via email) are also welcome.

1. Motivate the paper. The first question you must answer for the reader is why they should read your paper. There is A LOT out there to read and it is very easy to find an excuse not to read a paper. Most people don't even read all the articles published in their field's flagship journals. So if you want your paper to be read, you need to sell the reader on why your paper is so great. The introduction of your paper has to be exciting. It must motivate the reader to keep on reading. They must have the sense that if they keep on reading, there is at least a fair chance that they will learn something new.
2. Know your audience. Since different people get excited about different things, you cannot get them motivated unless you know their taste. And different academic communities/journals have very different tastes for what constitutes an interesting question and what constitutes a compelling approach to a question. (My friend and colleague Roberto Fernandez has an excellent framework for thinking about audiences, known widely at Sloan as "Rows and Columns." I will not go into it here, but the basic idea is that social scientific communities are arrayed by two dimensions, where the "rows" are "phenomena" [e.g., area studies; topics such as entrepreneurship or racial inequality] and the "columns" are disciplines or theories. One key lesson is that one typically needs to choose whether one is aiming for a "row" audience / journal or a "column" audience / journal, and motivate / frame one's paper accordingly. Trying to motivate both row and column simultaneously usually does not work).
3. Use substantive motivations, not aesthetic ones. By an aesthetic motivation, I mean that the author is appealing to the reader's sense that a certain kind of theory or approach should be preferred regardless of its explanatory power (e.g., we should be avoiding "economistic" or "functionalist" or "reductionist" explanations). Sometimes aesthetic motivations work (for getting a paper accepted), but the contribution tends to be hollow because the end of research (figuring out how the world works) is sacrificed for the means (telling each other how much we like certain ideas). Another way of putting this is that we should not like a paper simply because it proudly displays the colors of our tribe.
4. Always frame around the dependent variable. The dependent variable is a question and the independent variables are answers to a question. So it makes no sense to start with an answer. Rather, start with a question/puzzle! (Note that I don't mean the literal dependent variable in the analysis in the paper, but the larger process/pattern that it is supposed to represent).

5. Frame around a puzzle in the world, not a literature. The only reason anyone cares about a literature is because it is helpful in clarifying puzzles in the world. So start with the puzzle. A related point is that just because a literature has not examined some phenomenon, that does not mean that you should. The only reason a phenomenon is interesting is if it poses a puzzle for existing ways of viewing the world. (Too often, I read papers that try to get motivation from the fact that a literature “has not looked at” x, y, or z. So what? There will always be a great deal of unstudied [by academics] phenomena. The question is why that matters.)

6. One hypothesis (or a few tightly related hypotheses) is enough. If people remember a paper at all, they will remember it for one idea. So no use trying to stuff a zillion ideas in a paper. A related problem with numerous hypotheses is that it’s never clear what implications the invalidation of any one hypothesis has for the theory. (Note: the organizations community apparently does not agree with me on this one)

7. Build up the null hypothesis to be as compelling as possible. A paper will not be interesting unless there is a really compelling null hypothesis. If there is no interesting alternative to the author’s argument, why would anyone care about it? Flogging straw men is both unfair and uninteresting.

8. Save the null. Since the null is compelling, it must be right under certain conditions. The author’s job is to explain to the reader that s/he was right to believe x about the world, but that since x doesn’t hold under certain conditions, s/he should shift to belief x’. This helps the reader feel comfortable about shifting to a new idea. Moreover, a very subtle shift in thinking can go a long way.

9. Orient the reader. The reader needs to know at all times how any sentence fits into the narrative arc of the paper. All too often, I read papers where I get lost in the trees and have no sense of the forest. The narrative arc should start with the first paragraph or two where a question/puzzle is framed and lead to the main finding of the paper. Everything else in the paper should be in service of that arc, either by clarifying the question or setting up the answer (including painstakingly dealing with objections). A related tip is:

10. Never write literature reviews. No one likes to read literature reviews. They are boring. So don’t write them. But that doesn’t mean you should ignore “the relevant literature.” To the contrary. You have raised a puzzle about the real world (see tips 3-5). One reason why it is a puzzle is because existing answers are compelling (see point 7), but flawed. So you review the literature not as an end in itself but because you show what is compelling but flawed about existing answers. Any research that does not pertain to that objective can remain unmentioned. (Ok, ok. Some reviewers will demand to see their names or that of their favorite scholars even when their work is essentially irrelevant. And it is usually good to anticipate that. But try to do as little as possible.).