POLI 7000: Professional Development Seminar
Fall 2008

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Course Overview

This course provides a broad overview of the political science profession. We will focus on two major topics: teaching and research. We will examine the various strategies political scientists employ throughout their teaching and research careers. We will ask what makes for a successful political scientist and a successful political science department. We will discuss the role of the faculty member and the department in the University polity.

Throughout the semester, our topics of discussion will be interwoven with guest lectures on teaching and research from department faculty. Moreover, throughout the semester, we will pay particular attention to questions of ethics in the profession.

In the coming weeks, we will discuss such questions as:

What is the purpose of doing research? How do our research efforts fit into the larger body of knowledge? How do individuals evaluate research, for the purposes of publishing, hiring, and promotion decisions? What are the ways in which our discipline can improve our current common practices regarding scholarship?

What are the different ways in which one can successfully develop a research agenda during graduate school that will serve as a springboard to a successful social science career? How (and, more importantly, why) does one make one's work visible to a larger audience?

What employment options exist within and outside of academia for political scientists? How can one shape one's graduate training in order to pursue one's future employment goals?

What are some different philosophies of teaching? What are some of the common problems faced by new teachers in the field? What are some strategies for guiding students as they learn to think critically about politics?

How do disciplines – and the scholars within them – relate to each other in the university setting? What are the advantages – and potential costs – of incorporating the approaches of different scholarly disciplines within one's own scholarship?

Course Evaluation

Students are evaluated on a pass-fail basis. Class participation will form the basis for this evaluation. In most weeks, students will be assigned a small set of readings that will be available electronically on MOODLE.

For a passing grade, students should also attend at least four of the department's research-related events, such as the weekly Friday "brown bags" or the research presentations by candidates interviewing for positions in our department.