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This course is required of all first year students in the Ph.D. program. Any other students must have my permission to register. The course aims to provide a general road map of the discipline of political science and an interpretation of its aims. Since there is no hope of being comprehensive I make no pretension to being so. This course is decidedly *not* neutral - it aims to establish the central role of causal explanation in political science and it offers a specific interpretation of that enterprise. In particular I hope to persuade you that substantive research - whether it involves experiments, empirical observation, ethnographic inquiry, quantitative analysis, or mathematical modeling - remains incomplete unless it is conceptually well founded and theoretically informed. Toward this end we will examine a range of prominent examples of different “varieties” of social explanation from the perspective of the philosophy of science. And we will see that this is an area of enduring and intense controversy. I hope the course will provide some of the background that you need to reach defensible views on matters of explanation, methods, and theory in political science.

Grading:

Participation: The course will be run primarily as a seminar. Given the nature of the undertaking it is imperative that students be *active* participants in class. That means that I expect students not only to keep up with the reading, but also to read with care and to demonstrate this in class discussions. I encourage this effort in the following way. Each week, at the start of class, I ask one student (selected at random) to initiate and help direct the discussion for that day. This will require that she or he be able to summarize and raise critical questions about the major points of the assigned readings. Each student should anticipate being asked to do this more than once during the course of the semester but, as should be clear, you will receive no forewarning of when that will be.

The point of this scheme is that I expect *all* students to be active participants. I expect students to come to class prepared. That means that you should not only have done the assigned reading, you also should have thought about it, and have comments, criticisms, and so forth. Participation is important! The regularity of your participation and especially your willingness to stick your neck out in seminar discussion will constitute 10% of your grade for the course.

_____ : My policy on electronic devices in class (meaning *any* screen connected to silicon chips) is restrictive. *No cell phones, laptops or tablets in class!* This will eliminate the temptation to do things other than contribute to discussion. If you have readings, notes etc on your device, download them for reference prior to class.

Three Take-Home Writing Assignments: The first two will be due in class on Weeks 8 and 12. The third is due on December 15th. Each will require that you write roughly ten to fifteen typed pages in response to one or more questions that I will distribute at the end of class on the preceding Tuesday. I will provide more specific instructions when I distribute the questions. Each of these assignments will account for 30% of your grade.

_____ I frown upon late assignments – and hence will penalize them at a rate of one third of a letter grade per day. (That means if you would normally have made a B+, one day late makes that a B, two days a B-, and so forth.) Fair warning.

_____ I actively discourage your using LaTeX for these assignments – your time is better spent learning how to think analytically and figuring out how to write coherently than wrestling with fancy typesetting. Among the things you don't want to have said of you: "All fur coat, no knickers."

_____ You should be familiar with the College Policies on Academic Honesty. If you are not, the burden is on you to familiarize yourself with those policies. You can find relevant links on line here: <http://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty/>. Ignorance of the law is no excuse.

Over the past several years I have detected at least one student engaged in more or less egregious academic dishonesty in nearly every one of my courses. This is frustrating: such actions are unfair to other students in the class, and they demonstrate incredible disrespect f

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Science, Technology & Democracy.

Nancy Cartwright and Rosa Runhardt

