

# PS129 Understanding Politics

Seminar Leaders: Kai Koddenbrock, Gale Raj-Reichert, Boris Vormann

Course Times: Wednesdays 14:00-17:15 // Location: Lecture Hall and City Visits as announced below

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Office Hours: by appointment

## Course Description

Laying the foundation for the politics track in the Economics, Politics and Social Thought (EPST) program, this class covers three aspects of what an academic engagement with politics presupposes. First, it provides an introduction to key concepts (nation, democracy, power, federalism, institutions, etc.), debates (e.g. state-market relations, subsidiarity, globalization, etc.), and traditions (e.g. (neo-)liberalism, realism, Marxism, etc.) in political science. As such, the class facilitates a deeper understanding of the role of political science as an academic discipline within the broader range of social science traditions. Second, the course explores historical developments of the recent past, providing students with an overview of actors and institutions at various scales within and beyond nation-states as well as the evolution of the global political economy. Finally, the course introduces students to foundational methodological tools and academic skills. In sum, students will gain familiarity with central concepts, debates and theory traditions in political science and its subfields, deepen their understanding of major developments, players and power relationships in recent global political history, and develop foundational methodological skills.

## Requirements

### Required Textbooks

→ Course Reader

→ Richie, Alexandra. 1999. Faust's Metropolis. A History of Berlin. London: Harper Collins.

### Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

### Attendance and Participation requirements

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, one absence from this once-per-week course will not affect the participation grade or require documentation. Beyond that, each further absence will lead to a subtraction of 5 percentage points from the overall participation grade. There is no option of remote participation and electronic devices are not permitted in class. Absences cannot be substituted through extra work. Accommodation letters need to be submitted in the first week of the term and cannot be used retroactively.

Bard College Berlin does not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes (more than four absences), regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

### Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Written assignments (i.e., the four response papers and six logbook entries) that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded by 5 percentage points. For every additional 24 hours, five additional points will be subtracted from the grade. Instructors will not accept essays that are more than 96 hours late.

Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Grades and comments will be

returned to students in a timely fashion. Students are also entitled to make an appointment to discuss essay assignments and feedback during instructors' office hours.

Students receive mid- and end-of-semester grades for their seminar work. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

### Assignments and Grade Breakdown

#### Oral

- Participation 30% (2\*15%)

This seminar involves thoughtful and active participation, based on the readings and the topics covered in the course, in class discussions and working groups. The classroom is a protected space and you should feel free to voice your arguments and comments. Please do not hesitate to address the seminar leaders if you feel that this is not the case.

#### Written

For all written requirements, please indicate your name, the number of the response paper/log book entry, and the date of submission in the header of the document.

Please use Chicago citation and reference style for the bibliography and format your texts in the following way: 1.5-spaced, 12 pt., Times New Roman.

- "Test" response paper

Students will submit one ungraded response (300 words), due on the second session (September 13, 2023). Details will be discussed in our first session, and student assistants will be there to help with any open questions.

- 4 Response papers 40% (4\*10%)

Each student is required to write 4 graded response papers (600 words each) for the sessions of weeks 4, 6, 8, and 10. Response papers need to be submitted per email (as a Word-document) at 6pm on the night before the respective session.

→ Response papers should include a short abstract of the primary texts' main tenets, an analysis (not simply your personal reaction) that embeds the reading in earlier class discussions, and the articulation of one central synthetic question that engages the issues and debates addressed in the reading as a starting point for broader discussion.

- 6 Logbooks for City Visits 30% (6\*5%)

Please bring a small notebook with you during each visit to make notes on the following questions. You must type up a log entry for each visit and submit it by email by the end of the week of the respective visit (noon on Fridays). For each of the six visits, a student must write ca. 400 words and address the following questions:

1. Write about and describe 3 observations you made during the visit, which are relevant and relate to the readings and class discussions. This can be a visual observation, a response or comment made by someone, a question you asked, something you read during the visit, etc.
2. What was something new you learned during the visit as it relates to class discussions and/or the readings. How does this relate to politics and some of the central concepts of political science?
3. What is a question or topic you would like to know more about after this visit (as it pertains to what we are learning in this class)?

## Schedule

Highlighted sessions will be held jointly in the Lecture Hall

Week	Seminar Topic	Requirements
1	<p><b>What is Politics?</b></p> <p>Themes</p> <p>Sept 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Basic definitions in Political Science: Policy, Politics, Polity</li> <li>■ Different understandings of power</li> <li>■ Introduction to the ‘politics program’ and course details</li> </ul> <p>Guiding Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ What is politics? What is power?</li> <li>■ What is Political Science and how does it relate to other social sciences? What are its subfields?</li> </ul> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Hague et al., Key concepts (2016)</li> <li>■ Aristotle, “Politics”, Book VI, Methods of Constructing Democracies and Oligarchies</li> <li>■ Combahee River Collective Statement (1977)</li> <li>■ Foucault, The History of Sexuality (1976)</li> <li>■ Strange, States and Markets (1988)</li> </ul>	
2	<p><b>Nations and States</b></p> <p>Themes</p> <p>Sept 13</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Definitions of nation, state, government</li> <li>■ The idea of equality and democracy</li> <li>■ Transition from feudalism to bourgeois society</li> <li>■ Politics, power, capitalism and the state</li> <li>■ Major concepts (politics, authority, the state, sovereignty, equality, nation, etc.)</li> </ul> <p>Guiding Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ What is a state? When and why did states form?</li> <li>■ What is a nation? Is it modern or perennial?</li> <li>■ When is political authority considered legitimate?</li> <li>■ What is the link between nationalism and democracy?</li> </ul> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Sovereignty (2020)</li> <li>■ Hobbes, The State of Nature and the State of War (1651)</li> <li>■ Weber, Politics as a Vocation (1918)</li> <li>■ Gellner, Nations and Nationalism (1983)</li> <li>■ Mitchell, The Limits of the State (1991)</li> </ul>	Submit 300-word test response paper!
3	<p><b>CITY VISIT: National Formation and Urbanization</b></p> <p>Meet at Humboldtforum</p> <p>Sept 20</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Richie, Faust’s Metropolis (1999), chs. I “History, Myth, and the Birth of Berlin”, II “The Capital of Absolutism” &amp; III “The Emergent Giant”</li> </ul>	Logbook entry due on Friday at noon

4	<p><b>States and Markets</b></p> <p>Themes</p> <p>Sept 27</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The relationship of states and markets</li> <li>■ Corporations, trade, and new divisions of labor</li> <li>■ Market failure, social risks, social policy</li> </ul> <p>Guiding Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ What are markets?</li> <li>■ How do large-scale markets differ from town markets? When do markets fail?</li> <li>■ In which ways do markets depend on states?</li> </ul> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Watch Michael Munger’s <a href="#">lecture on Division of Labor</a></li> <li>■ Wallerstein, <i>The Rise of the Modern State System</i> (2014)</li> <li>■ Evans, <i>Embedded Economy</i> (1995)</li> <li>■ Fulbrook, <i>The Age of Industrialization</i> (2009)</li> </ul>	Response paper 1 due
5	<p><b>CITY VISIT: Unification and Industrialization</b></p> <p>Meet at Technikmuseum</p> <p>Oct 4</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Richie, <i>Faust’s Metropolis</i> (1999), III “The Emerging Giant”, IV “From Revolution to Realpolitik”, V “The Rise of Red Berlin”</li> </ul>	Logbook entry due on Friday at noon
6	<p><b>War and Violence</b></p> <p>Themes</p> <p>Oct 11</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ War as politics</li> <li>■ Different forms of violence: Physical violence, colonial violence, structural violence</li> <li>■ Reasons for war: Great power competition, capitalism, imperialism</li> </ul> <p>Guiding Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Why do states wage war?</li> <li>■ Are there different kinds of violence?</li> </ul> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Clausewitz, <i>On War</i> (1832), chapter 1, 75-89</li> <li>■ WEB du Bois, <i>The African Roots of the War</i> (1915)</li> <li>■ Arendt, <i>The Origins of Totalitarianism</i> (1951), chapter 7</li> <li>■ Fanon, <i>Concerning Violence</i> (1962, in <i>Wretched of the Earth</i>)</li> </ul>	Response paper 2 due
7	<p><b>CITY VISIT: Nazi Berlin</b></p> <p>Oct 18</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Richie, <i>Faust’s Metropolis</i> (1999), chs. VI “Imperial Berlin” &amp; VII “The Road to the First World War”</li> <li>■ Neumann, <i>Frantz Behemoth. The structure and practice of National Socialism 1933–1944</i> (1966), chapter 6, <i>The Theory of Racial imperialism</i> (in the reader)</li> </ul>	Logbook entry due on Friday at noon

\*\*\*Fall Break\*\*\*

Mon, Oct. 23, - Sun, Oct. 29, 2023

8	<p><b>Globalization and global capitalism in the longue durée</b></p> <p>Themes</p> <p>Nov 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Imperialism</li> <li>■ Globalization as a long term set of processes</li> <li>■ North South relations over last 500 years</li> <li>■ Different dimensions (trade, exploitation, culture, etc.)</li> <li>■ neoliberalism; globalization; global politics, ipe</li> <li>■ Capitalism, colonialism, racism</li> </ul> <p>Guiding Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ What is capitalism and does it have to be global?</li> <li>■ What is imperialism?</li> <li>■ What is globalization?</li> <li>■ What uses does a long term/longue durée perspective have</li> </ul> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Arrighi, <i>The Long Twentieth Century</i> (1994), part I</li> <li>■ Narayan, <i>The Wages of Whiteness</i> (2017)</li> </ul>	Response paper 3 due
9	<p><b>Guest Lecture: Dr. Kim Kodzi ‘Unternehmen Weltaneignung’: Hamburg business, Bismarck and German colonialism</b></p> <p>Nov 8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Richie, <i>Faust’s Metropolis</i> (1999), chs. XI “Nazi Berlin – Life before the Storm” and XII “The Second World War”</li> </ul>	Logbook entry due on Friday at noon
10	<p><b>Fordism and the Bretton Woods Order</b></p> <p>Themes</p> <p>Nov 15</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Bretton Woods: Institutions of global governance</li> <li>■ After World War II, ‘Fordism’ arose as a model of mass production in the United States.</li> <li>■ New era of mass consumption in Global North/Western economies</li> </ul> <p>Guiding questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ What global governance institutions emerged after WWII?</li> <li>■ What type of world order did these institutions envision? For whose? Are they still relevant today?</li> <li>■ What were the characteristics of Fordism?</li> </ul> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Harvey, <i>The Condition of Postmodernity</i> (1989)</li> <li>■ Peet, <i>Bretton Woods</i> (2009)</li> <li>■ Jessop, <i>Conservative Regimes and the Transition to Post-Fordism</i> (2013)</li> </ul>	Response paper 4 due
11	<p><b>CITY VISIT: Siemens Stadt</b></p> <p>Nov 22</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Richie, <i>Faust’s Metropolis</i> (1999), chs. XVI “East Berlin” &amp; XVII “The Walled City - West Berlin”</li> <li>■ <a href="https://www.siemens.com/global/en/company/about/history/specials/siemensstadt.html">https://www.siemens.com/global/en/company/about/history/specials/siemensstadt.html</a></li> </ul>	Logbook entry due on Friday at noon

<p>12 Nov 29</p>	<p><b>Neoliberalism and the Rise of Global Production Networks</b></p> <p>Themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ From 1990s onwards increasing global competition, led to replacement of Fordist model of nationalised production with global outsourcing and globalized production models</li> <li>■ The Washington Consensus and its global implications</li> </ul> <p>Guiding Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ What are global production networks? Why did they come about?</li> <li>■ How are governments, companies, workers and consumers featured in global production networks today?</li> </ul> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Coe et al, Uneven Development (2010)</li> <li>■ Coe, Advanced Intro. to Global Production Networks (2021)</li> <li>■ Dicken, The State Really Does Matter (2015)</li> <li>■ Watch Mazzucato, <u>Government – Investor, risk-taker, innovator</u> (2014)</li> </ul>	
<p>13 Dec 6</p>	<p><b>CITY VISIT Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Richie, Faust’s Metropolis (1999), ch. XVIII “The New Capital”</li> </ul>	<p>Logbook entry due on Friday at noon</p>
<p>14 Dec 13</p>	<p><b>Concluding Session: Poly-Crisis and Global Governance</b></p> <p>Themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Governance vs. government</li> <li>■ Poly-crisis: Post-pandemic, climate change, Russian War, energy crisis, and China in the global political economy</li> </ul> <p>Guiding Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ How equipped are international organizations to govern through the different challenges–climate crisis, energy crisis, war, global competition–faced today?</li> <li>■ How effective can multilateral collaboration still be?</li> <li>■ What are the long-term effects of Western dominance?</li> <li>■ What are the implications of the rising powers for the global order, and the role of Germany and the EU therein?</li> </ul> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Watch Tooze, What is the Poly-Crisis? (2023)</li> <li>■ World Economic Forum, The Global Risks Report 2023</li> <li>■ Brand et al., Overcoming Neoliberal Globalization (2020)</li> <li>■ Lopez-Claros et al., Global Governance and the Emergence of Global Institutions for the 21st Century (2020)</li> </ul>	