

POLITICS, LAW AND SOCIAL THOUGHT

Contact Information

Politics, Law and Social Thought

<https://politics.rice.edu/>

116 Humanities Building
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Peter C. Caldwell

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Politics, Law and Social Thought (PLST) is an interdisciplinary minor open to all undergraduate students at Rice from all backgrounds. Its task is the study of political ideas in their philosophical and historical contexts as well as with regard to their effects on constitutional law and social and political practices.

The central focus of the minor is political theory, taken in a wide sense to mean the theory and philosophy of how polities form, function, and fail. The minor has a strong orientation toward works of political, legal, and social philosophy, understood in their historical context. Politics, Law and Social Thought is a program of study that enables Rice students to engage successfully with the “big” political questions relevant to contemporary society in a global setting: Why democracy? What are the foundations of law? What is political liberty? What is political citizenship? Are states necessary? How do normative political and social orders come into existence? Is there a philosophical justification for human rights?

The Politics, Law and Social Thought interdisciplinary minor is an initiative of the Schools of Humanities and Social Sciences, administered by the School of Humanities.

Minor

- [Minor in Politics, Law and Social Thought \(https://ga.rice.edu/programs-study/departments-programs/humanities/politics-law-social-thought/politics-law-social-thought-minor/\)](https://ga.rice.edu/programs-study/departments-programs/humanities/politics-law-social-thought/politics-law-social-thought-minor/)

Politics, Law and Social Thought does currently not offer an academic program at the graduate level.

Director

Peter C. Caldwell

Humanities Faculty Director, Law, Justice and Society Scholars

Shannon LaBove

Professors

Dominic C. Boyer
Peter C. Caldwell
Steven G. Crowell
Luis Duno-Gottberg
Christian J. Emden
David W. Leebron

Melissa J. Marschall
Donald Ray Morrison
George Sher
Lora Wildenthal
Harvey E. Yunis

Associate Professors

Andrea Ballesterio
Gwendolyn M. Bradford
Julie Fette
Aysha Pollnitz
William Suarez-Potts

Assistant Professors

Sophie Esch
Vida Yao

Professor in the Practice

Steven W. Lewis

Lecturers

Shannon LaBove
Rudy Ramirez
Robert Werth

For Rice University degree-granting programs:

To view the list of official course offerings, please see [Rice's Course Catalog \(https://courses.rice.edu/admweb!/SWKSCAT.cat?_action=cata\)](https://courses.rice.edu/admweb!/SWKSCAT.cat?_action=cata)

To view the most recent semester's course schedule, please see [Rice's Course Schedule \(https://courses.rice.edu/admweb!/SWKSCAT.cat\)](https://courses.rice.edu/admweb!/SWKSCAT.cat)

Politics, Law and Social Thought (PLST)

PLST 238 - SPECIAL TOPICS

Short Title: SPECIAL TOPICS

Department: Politics Law Social Thought

Grade Mode: Standard Letter

Course Type: Internship/Practicum, Lecture, Laboratory, Seminar

Credit Hours: 1-4

Restrictions: Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.

Course Level: Undergraduate Lower-Level

Description: Topics and credit hours may vary each semester. Contact department for current semester's topic(s). Repeatable for Credit.

PLST 301 - MODERN POLITICAL THOUGHT: MACHIAVELLI TO RAWLS

Short Title: MODERN POLITICAL THOUGHT

Department: Politics Law Social Thought

Grade Mode: Standard Letter

Course Type: Lecture

Credit Hours: 3

Restrictions: Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.

Course Level: Undergraduate Upper-Level

Description: Introduction to political theory and political philosophy from the Renaissance to the present: Machiavelli, Hobbes, Pufendorf, Montesquieu, Kant, Hegel, Constant, Mill Marx, Nietzsche, Weber, Habermas, and Rawls. Topics include human rights, political power, citizenship, democracy, the modern state. Required core course for minor in Politics, Law, and Social Thought.

PLST 302 - CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL THEORY

Short Title: CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL THEORY

Department: Politics Law Social Thought

Grade Mode: Standard Letter

Course Type: Lecture

Credit Hours: 3

Restrictions: Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.

Course Level: Undergraduate Upper-Level

Description: Introduction to contemporary political theory. Topics include freedom, democracy, empire, citizenship, human rights, radical democracy, protest and civil disobedience, multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism, postcolonial political thought, transnational and global governance.

PLST 303 - HOW DEMOCRACY FAILS

Short Title: HOW DEMOCRACY FAILS

Department: Politics Law Social Thought

Grade Mode: Standard Letter

Course Type: Seminar

Credit Hours: 3

Restrictions: Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.

Course Level: Undergraduate Upper-Level

Description: Course examines the conditions under which democracies and republics can fail. Draws on political theory, constitutional debates, and historical examples. Topics include: constitutional crises, states of emergency, popular sovereignty, populism, nationalism, revolution, political violence, civil disobedience, post-democracy, illiberal democracy, and neoliberalism.

PLST 305 - INTRODUCTION TO LAW

Short Title: INTRODUCTION TO LAW

Department: Politics Law Social Thought

Grade Mode: Standard Letter

Course Type: Lecture

Credit Hours: 3

Restrictions: Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.

Course Level: Undergraduate Upper-Level

Description: Course introduces students to the U.S. legal system and provides them with a preview of the first year of law school, including the basic principles of Tort, Contract, Criminal, and Criminal Procedure Law. Additionally, the class will teach students how to conduct appellate argument and to write briefs. Mutually Exclusive: Cannot register for PLST 305 if student has credit for COLL 201.

PLST 316 - DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL THEORY IN ANCIENT GREECE

Short Title: DEMOCRACY & POLITICAL THEORY

Department: Politics Law Social Thought

Grade Mode: Standard Letter

Course Type: Lecture

Credit Hours: 3

Restrictions: Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.

Course Level: Undergraduate Upper-Level

Description: The Greeks created political society and studied political society in order to understand and improve it. One particular form of political society, democracy, reached its pinnacle in Athens. We shall attempt to understand how ancient Greeks thought about politics from the rudimentary beginnings in Homer to the complex, incisive arguments of Aristotle. Cross-list: CLAS 316.

PLST 330 - RACE AND THE LAW: HOW LAWS AND INSTITUTIONS HAVE PERPETUATED RACISM AND SUPPORTED PROGRESS

Short Title: RACE AND THE LAW

Department: Politics Law Social Thought

Grade Mode: Standard Letter

Course Type: Seminar

Credit Hour: 1

Restrictions: Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.

Course Level: Undergraduate Upper-Level

Description: This course is intended to introduce students to legal frameworks of analysis and sources of law pertaining to issues of racial equality. We will focus on questions such as: How has law been used to perpetuate inequality? How has law made it more difficult to achieve reforms to advance equality? How have law and legal institutions helped advance racial equality and justice? Some of the areas of focus include land use policy and segregation, criminal justice, education, environmental disparities and voting. Readings will include both secondary sources (books, scholarly pieces and popular media) and legal materials (primarily Supreme Court decisions).

PLST 401 - LEGAL PRACTICUM

Short Title: LEGAL PRACTICUM

Department: Politics Law Social Thought

Grade Mode: Standard Letter

Course Type: Internship/Practicum

Credit Hours: 3

Restrictions: Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.

Course Level: Undergraduate Upper-Level

Description: This course focuses on the public and private practice sectors of the legal profession through a work experience coupled with classroom instruction at Rice. The goal is to expose undergraduates to the field of law through structured on-site experiences, relevant coursework, and professional development opportunities. Students must have completed at least 9 credit hours in a humanities or social sciences discipline for course eligibility. Instructor Permission Required. Mutually Exclusive: Cannot register for PLST 401 if student has credit for HUMA 404/SOSC 405.

PLST 402 - JUDICIAL PRACTICUM

Short Title: JUDICIAL PRACTICUM

Department: Politics Law Social Thought

Grade Mode: Standard Letter

Course Type: Internship/Practicum

Credit Hours: 3

Restrictions: Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.

Course Level: Undergraduate Upper-Level

Description: Students will participate in a semester-long practicum with a sitting judge (federal, or Texas appellate) in Houston. This program is designed to give select Rice undergraduates a broad and practical introduction to what lawyers do in court and how judges and the law clerks who work with them think about the questions they are asked to resolve. Students must have completed at least 9 credit hours in a humanities or social sciences discipline for course eligibility. Instructor Permission Required. Mutually Exclusive: Cannot register for PLST 402 if student has credit for HUMA 401/SOSC 406.

PLST 477 - SPECIAL TOPICS**Short Title:** SPECIAL TOPICS**Department:** Politics Law Social Thought**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter**Course Type:** Internship/Practicum, Seminar, Lecture, Laboratory**Credit Hours:** 1-4**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.**Course Level:** Undergraduate Upper-Level**Description:** Topics and credit hours may vary each semester. Contact department for current semester's topic(s). Repeatable for Credit.

Description and Code Legend

Note: Internally, the university uses the following descriptions, codes, and abbreviations for this academic program. The following is a quick reference:

Course Catalog/Schedule

- Course offerings/subject code: PLST

Program Description and Code

- Politics, Law and Social Thought: PLST

Undergraduate Minor Description and Code

- Minor in Politics, Law and Social Thought: PLST

CIP Code and Description ¹

- PLST Minor: CIP Code/Title: 22.0000 - Legal Studies, General

¹ Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) 2020 Codes and Descriptions from the National Center for Education Statistics: <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cipcode/>