

POLITICS, LAW, AND SOCIAL THOUGHT

Contact Information

Politics, Law, and Social Thought

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

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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 (<https://humanities.rice.edu/>) and Social Sciences, (<https://socialsciences.rice.edu/>) 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.

Program Director

Peter C. Caldwell

Associate Director

Joseph F. Cozza

Professors

Dominic C. Boyer
Elizabeth Brake
Peter C. Caldwell
Ilana Gershon

Luis Duno-Gottberg
Christian J. Emden
David W. Leebron
Melissa J. Marschall
Anthony B. Pinn
George Sher
Sayuri Guthrie Shimizu
Lora Wildenthal
Harvey E. Yunis

Associate Professors

Sophie Esch
Julie Fette
Elizabeth Petrick
Aysha Pollnitz
William Suarez-Potts

Assistant Professors

Laura Correa Ochoa
Nana Osei-Opore

Assistant Teaching Professor

Joseph F. Cozza

Professor in the Practice

Steven W. Lewis

Lecturers

David Donatti
Eileen Huey
Shannon LaBove
Rudy Ramirez

For Rice University degree-granting programs:

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

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 300 - INDEPENDENT STUDY

Short Title: INDEPENDENT STUDY

Department: Politics Law Social Thought

Grade Mode: Standard Letter

Course Type: Independent Study

Credit Hours: 1-4

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

Course Level: Undergraduate Upper-Level

Description: Independent study under the supervision of a PLST faculty member. Hours are variable. Repeatable for Credit. Department Permission Required. 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: RESISTANCE AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

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 may include: freedom, equality, democracy, legitimacy, law, and social justice in the state and beyond; cosmopolitanism, citizenship, and human rights and their relationship to gender, race, and colonialism.

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 306 - THE RIVER AND THE WALL: LAW OF BORDERS AND MIGRATION

Short Title: LAW OF BORDERS & MIGRATION

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: Human history is characterized by movement. As our capacity to move ourselves, goods, capital, services, and information has proliferated, so have walls, militarized borders, detention camps, and deportation. This course explores how law and policy define nation states and construct our identities. Taught by a human rights lawyer, and with the United States as a primary example, we will analyze our past and present and explore possibilities for a global future.

PLST 307 - INTELLECTUAL FOUNDATIONS OF AMERICAN LAW

Short Title: FOUNDATIONS OF AMERICAN LAW

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: This course will trace the development and interaction of the two great concepts of law and justice in Anglo-American legal, political, and social theory with respect to the individual and the state up to the present day. Readings will include primary legal and philosophical texts. We will read what some of the greatest minds in the Western political tradition—particularly the Anglo-American tradition—have thought about the natural condition of man, the justification for a state, the rule of law, the concept of a constitution, and the structure of the institutions and laws of the state to achieve the ends of justice and the common good. We will begin with the foundations of political, constitutional, and legal philosophy in Plato and Aristotle. We will then study the foundations of the common law system, in England, the theory of the social contract, and the foundations of the democratic constitutional republic in England and the United States. We will explore legal reason and contemporary theories of how it should be used to analyze and decide cases justly and to further the common good. If time permits, we may summarize and analyze great constitutional issues as presented in the earliest landmark Supreme Court cases of Chief Justice Marshall. Mutually exclusive with PHIL 373. Credit for PLST 307 cannot be earned if a student has previously taken PHIL 373.

PLST 308 - LAW OF POPULATION**Short Title:** LAW OF POPULATION**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 Law of Population is an in-depth examination of the legal infrastructure governing and influencing population dynamics. Through historical and contemporary case studies, we will explore how U.S. and international courts have responded to social, economic, and ecological conflicts and analyze how their decisions impact our collective and individual futures. This course counts towards the electives requirement for the PLST minor.**PLST 315 - AUTHORITARIAN CONSTITUTIONALISM AND DEMOCRATIC DICTATORSHIPS SINCE 1848****Short Title:** AUTHORITARIAN CONSTITUTIONS**Department:** Politics Law Social Thought**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter**Course Type:** Lecture**Distribution Group:** Distribution Group I**Credit Hours:** 3**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.**Course Level:** Undergraduate Upper-Level**Description:** This communication intensive course examines the notion of the "authoritarian constitutionalism" of states that are authoritarian in practice despite having constitutions that assert principles of liberal democracy. The course will examine the concept both analytically and historically. In the second phase of the class, students will divide into groups to analyze specific examples of authoritarian constitutionalism from the past two centuries, based on primary and secondary sources, which will be presented in visual, oral, and written form.**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 317 - IDEOLOGY AND ITS CRITIQUE****Short Title:** IDEOLOGY AND ITS CRITIQUE**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 course is centered on three core questions: What constitutes an ideology or ideological form of understanding – beyond a set of idea(l)s or principles that form a "false consciousness"? How do (embodied) ideologies work in practice to perpetuate injustices? How can we effectively criticize ideologies without being ideological ourselves?**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 331 - CRIME IN THE U.S.****Short Title:** CRIME IN THE U.S.**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:** This course will cover crime in the United States, such as the war on drugs, dark web forums, murder, and corporate fraud. Students will learn about case law, the legal application of criminal statutes, and the difficulties in application. The course will include guest speakers directly involved in the cases studied.

PLST 332 - SOCIAL MOBILIZATION AND THE POLITICS OF DISORDER**Short Title:** SOCIAL MOBILIZING AND DISORDER**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:** Democratic governments often permit social protests and claim them as evidence of a dynamic and healthy public sphere. But from Indian farmers to Canadian truckers, twenty-first century protests are growing in number, intensity, scale, and volatility. This course examines the changing relationships between social mobilization, protest, and democracy. This course counts towards the electives requirement for the PLST minor.**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, Laboratory, Lecture, Seminar, Independent Study, 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

Department (or 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/>.