

PEI DOCTORAL PROGRAMME IN POLITICAL SCIENCE, EUROPEAN POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Academic Year 2015-16

Political Science: the State of the Discipline

Professor Maurizio Cotta

Tuesday: 10-12 am

The course is articulated in two parts. The first part aims at providing an introduction to the main trends in contemporary political science. The second focuses on empirical democratic theory and uses this research area to show how contemporary political science can be translated into practice.

In the first part the course examines the rapid advances of the discipline during the course of the second half of the twentieth century as well as the problems which it had to confront. It is scarcely exaggerated to say that, before 1945, political science was still in a rudimentary state, despite the fact that a number of important 'precursors' had, in the previous centuries, both shown the need to study political activity and begun to do so in what was, however, an "artisanal" manner. Rather suddenly - and in part as a result of the events of the 1930s and 1940s - a burgeoning of ideas occurred after World War 2. From this resulted a breakthrough on the theoretical, methodological and empirical planes: this breakthrough gave political science the basis from which it could become the recognised discipline which it has become to-day.

The burgeoning has taken the form of many books and articles written by what is now a very large community of scholars. Among these, however, a more selective number of publications have constituted the 'beacons' which have directed the work of most of the other political scientists. It is therefore natural that the course on Political Analysis should be in large part devoted to the study of these works as it examines the trends - the 'schools' - which have characterised - and sometimes sharply divided - the discipline.

A list of works which have played such a part - surely not exhaustive, but at any rate including some of the most important studies - is therefore attached to this note.

In the second part the course will discuss some significant developments in the construction of an empirical theory of democracy and show how different strands of political science research (qualitative and quantitative, micro and macro, etc.) have contributed to it.

The course takes place on Tuesdays from 10.00 to 12.00 a.m.

Each session will include one or two short student contributions, typically in the nature of an 'article review'. Students will be expected to write a book review - of about 3 thousand words - to be handed in not later than February 28 and will be evaluated on the basis of their participation in the seminar (50%) and their review (50%).

The list of the books from which students will be able to choose is attached to this note. Anyone who might wish to write a 'review' of a book which is not listed should discuss the matter before December 15.

Outline of the course

First Part: Political Science: basic elements of a map.

I. - October 20: *General introduction. Political science from early beginnings to modern developments. Ancestors, grandfathers and fathers. The rebirth of political science in Europe after World War II.*

II. - October 27: *Politics and its dimensions- Political science problems: micro/macro; short term/long term; quantitative/qualitative; structural/ developmental studies.*

III. - November 3: Conversation with professor J. Blondel (emeritus EUI) *Whither Political Science ?*

IV. - November 10: *The behavioural revolution and beyond. Goals, achievements, limits.*

V. - November 17: *Rational choice and game theory: a new political science or one among other paradigms?*

VI. – November 24: *Neo-institutionalism. A new vision of an old theme ?*

VII. – December 1: *Constructivism*

December 8: Holiday

Second Part: Political Science: Democratic Theory Normative and Empirical aspects.

VIII – December 15: *Democratic Theory I: Birth and developments of an empirical theory.*
Democratic Theory II: Concepts and measures.

IX . – January 12: *Democratic Theory III : The macro approach to regime change and stability*

X – January 19: *Democratic Theory IV: Democracy: what consequences does it make? Democracy beyond national borders.*

XI. – January 26: Course Conclusions