

POLS 371: Governing the Self and Others

COURSE INFO

Instructor: Joel Alden Schlosser

Classroom: Dalton 212A (Bryn Mawr College)

Meeting Times: Fridays, 1:10 - 4 pm

Office hours: Tuesdays, 3 - 5 pm and by appointment (Dalton Hall 100C)

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

What does it mean to call Bryn Mawr or Haverford a self-governing institution? Or to believe that we – citizens of various communities, nations, or states – govern ourselves? These institutions are not alone in invoking self-governance as both ethical and educational; this seminar seeks to reflect deeply about the meanings of self-governance, why we might desire it, and how political institutions, laws, and culture might embody it. We will grapple with the ur-text of collective governance – Rousseau's On the Social Contract – to establish baseline concepts such as the people, sovereignty, and civic freedom. This will lay the groundwork for considering institutional power arrangements that might serve collective flourishing as well as the oppressive or constraining dimensions of these institutions' actual practices: anarchism, democratic governance, and Indigenous alternatives to the hegemonic models. Our overarching objective will be to develop and implement critical vocabulary for understanding and implementing what self-governance might mean, what conditions it requires, and what practices community members and citizens committed to it might enlist to realize its potential for self-development and collective flourishing. We will then use this theory to analyze the history of self-governance in the Bi-Co through archival research culminating in a research design.

PROMISES & PRACTICES

My goal for this course is that your participation energizes, replenishes, and fills you– rather than leaving you depleted and exhausted. Alongside this overarching aim this course seeks to help you to join others as we develop our imagination, creativity, honesty, and openness through earnest inquiry and adventuresome speculation. This will involve discussion, reading, and writing in virtual as well as actual formats. But you will also need to bring playfulness, enthusiasm, and a willingness to try things that I hope will take you to new visions of individual and collective possibility.

Given the subject matter of this course, many of our discussions in class will involve sensitive issues. You may find some of this material upsetting. My hope is that together we can foster an environment of respect and openness conducive to everyone's full and honest participation. Whatever success or pleasure the course might occasion depends in large part on what all of us bring and contribute.

To develop the habits of mind described above as well as to bring the aspirations listed into being, this course will consist in a number of activities:

1. **Energetic and involved discussion.** We will learn political theory by speaking political theory. To learn the difficult concepts and arguments, you need to practice putting them into your own words, explaining them to others, and listening to others' explanations. Excellent discussion requires preparation: review of previous class discussions, taking notes in advance of class meetings, and being present and alert as much as possible during every class meeting. Consistent preparation for class as well as quality and appropriate contributions to class activities form an essential part for realizing the promises of this course. Enrolling in this course signifies your agreement to contribute to the education of your fellow students and to learn from them and your professor in turn. Contributing during class sessions provides an opportunity to practice speaking and the skills of persuasion, as well to listen to, critique, and develop the arguments and analyses of your peers.
2. **Disciplined and careful reading.** The readings for this course will require time, energy, and concentration. This course seeks to develop you as thoughtful, patient, imaginative, and critical readers capable of identifying multiple possible readings, examining assumptions, and ready to interpret different kinds of arguments.
3. **Frequent and varied writing.** This course begins from the premise that reading and writing are deeply intertwined; because writing and understanding develop together, this course asks that you write regularly in conversation with the readings.

RESEARCH PROJECT DESCRIPTION

As a 300-level seminar, this course aims to introduce you to forms of research in political science. To that end, over the course of the semester each of you will learn how to conduct archival research, choosing materials from the Bryn Mawr (or Haverford) archives to analyze the theory and practice of self-governance. Below are the stages of this research process, which will culminate in public presentations of your research designs, to be held in the final week of classes.

Project 1: Research question

Following our initial session with the College Archivist, Allison Mills, you will submit a one-page description of your research question with portions of the archive identified that you plan to examine during the semester.

Project 2: Context of question

After you have returned to the archives for more study, you will write up a 3 - 4 page report on what you have discovered. This should draw on at least five different documents in the archive and include more information about other sources you plan to consult.

Project 3: Theorizing self-governance

Before the Thanksgiving break, you will put your archival research into conversation with the topics of the course, asking how your historical moment speaks to the broader theories of self-governance we have been studying and contributing to the broad conversation about self-governance through your inquiry into the archive.

Project 4: Research Design

Along with your final presentation, you will submit a 10 - 12 page research design that further develops the question, context, theory, and initial discoveries from your archival research. This design should also include a timeline for next steps, such as what further materials you would consult, new potential questions, and so forth. This should be submitted by the end of finals period.

TEXTS

To quote Sarah Ahmed, these are our “companion texts” for the collective inquiry of the course. These books are available for purchase at the Bryn Mawr Bookshop and for checkout from the Bryn Mawr Library. If you are having trouble acquiring these books, please let me know well in advance of our discussion. Please note that (except with explicit accommodation) you must bring print copies of all texts to class meetings.

- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Basic Political Writings (Hackett)
- Francesca Polletta, Freedom Is An Endless Meeting (Chicago)
- Robin Wall Kimmerer, Braiding Sweetgrass (Milkweed)
- Ali Aslam, David W. McIvor, and Joel Alden Schlosser, Earthborn Democracy (Columbia)

EVALUATION

We will use Collaborative Grading for this entire course. During the semester I will give you feedback on your written work; I will also be available to discuss your other contributions to class. You will complete self-evaluations at mid semester and at the end of the semester. In the end of semester evaluation you will suggest your final grade for the course. During finals week, you will meet one-on-one with me to discuss your work across the entire semester as well as your self-evaluations and grade. Based on these documents and our conversation, I will assign an appropriate grade for each course.

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1gnZZmE4lQ8RrH6zSRexDyaR4GhTMvj7Uh4dbRbiso1o/edit>

RESOURCES AND POLICIES

Overview.

I am committed to creating and supporting a classroom community that is inclusive, equitable, and conducive to learning for all students, as well as sensitive to the specific, unique, and unpredictable challenges we will each and all encounter this semester. To this end, I have designed course activities and assignments meant to help you gain and demonstrate understanding of key course content in ways that are flexible and personally meaningful. Our class meetings will include time for group check-ins, and the syllabus includes structured occasions for one on one and small group conferences with me as well.

Academic Support.

I encourage you to reach out to the Academic Support and Learning Resources Specialist to explore effective learning, studying, test-taking, note-taking and time and stress management strategies that are essential to success in this course and college life. Bryn Mawr students can schedule a meeting with Rachel Heiser, the Academic Support and Learning Resources Specialist by calling the Dean's Office at 610-526-5375 or emailing Rachel at rheiser@brynmawr.edu. For more information, please visit [the Academic Support Website](#).

Accommodations.

Bryn Mawr College is committed to providing equal access to students with a documented disability. Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first register with Access Services. Students can call 610-526-7516 to make an appointment with the Director of Access Services, Deb Alder, or email her at dalder@brynmawr.edu to begin this confidential process. (Haverford Students should contact Patty Rawlings at the Office of Disabilities Services, prawling@haverford.edu or 610-896-1290.) Once registered, students should schedule an appointment with me as early in the semester as possible to share the verification form and make appropriate arrangements. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and require advance notice to implement. More information can be obtained at the Access Services website. (<http://www.brynmawr.edu/access-services/>)

Any student who has a disability-related need to record this class first must speak with the Director of Access Services and to me, the instructor. Class members need to be aware that this class may be recorded.

AI.¹

I ask that you complete your work without using AI tools to develop your thinking or revise your writing. Other than spell checking, the only exception to the rule is if your instructor gives explicit instructions and parameters for the use of AI tools. If you submit work that appears to have been written using AI sources, I will ask you to meet with me to discuss your thinking and writing process. If, after this conversation, I conclude it's likelier than not that you did not personally complete an assignment you submitted under your name, I will refer you to the Honor Board in accordance with normal procedures.

The Political Science Department seeks to develop essential skills of inquiry, analysis, argument, and imagination. These skills require practice and reflection without the assistance of AI. While AI can be a useful tool, I believe that a liberal arts education requires learning how to think, research, write, and revise independently and my courses focus on helping students develop these skills themselves.

If you have questions about AI use and/or proper attribution of other people's work, please talk to me.

Library.

I encourage you to use the library resources. If you're curious about a topic, you can always schedule an appointment by emailing library@brynmawr.edu

¹ The following is the policy developed by the Political Science Department at Bryn Mawr College.

Due Dates and Extensions.

If you are unable to attend class or complete an assignment by the due date, I ask that whenever possible you let me know ahead of time and work with me to determine when you will complete the work (from class or assigned). In this situation there will be no grade penalty for late work. If it is not possible to ask ahead of time, I ask that you maintain communication with me as much as possible so that we can work together to determine a good course of action. I encourage those of you who need more than a one-week extension to talk with your Dean to arrive at a practical and workable plan for completing the work.

Integrity.

I am committed to adhering to the standards regarding academic honesty contained in the Bryn Mawr and Haverford honor codes and the values of mutual trust, concern, and respect for oneself and for others upon which the bi-co community depends; I invite all of you to continue the conversation with me and with one another about how we can create the best intellectual community possible.

Moodle.

On our course Moodle site you can find electronic copies of course readings, a copy of the syllabus, and other useful information. Here all of our communications with the entire class will be archived under "Announcements" and course discussions conducted electronically will be archived.

Religious Observance.

While Bryn Mawr does not cancel classes for any religious holidays, it does respect the right of its students to observe holidays that are important to them. Absences around a religious holiday will be excused. I am committed to help you make up work missed because of such absences. If you foresee a conflict with a scheduled activity, please let me know so we can adjust accordingly.

Title IX.

Bryn Mawr/Haverford College is committed to fostering a safe and inclusive living and learning environment where all can feel secure and free from harassment. All forms of sexual misconduct, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, domestic violence, and dating violence are violations of Bryn Mawr/Haverford's policies, whether they occur on or off campus. Bryn Mawr/Haverford faculty are committed to helping to create a safe learning environment for all students and for the College community as a whole. If you have experienced any form of gender or sex-based discrimination, harassment, or violence, know that help and support are available. Staff members are trained to support students in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, and more.

The College strongly encourages all students to report any incidents of sexual misconduct. Please be aware that all Bryn Mawr/Haverford employees (other than those designated as confidential resources such as counselors, clergy, and healthcare providers) are required to report information about such discrimination and harassment to the Bi-College Title IX Coordinator.

Information about the College's Sexual Misconduct policy, reporting options, and a list of campus and local resources can be found on the College's website.

Writing Center.

The Writing Center offers free appointments and experienced peer tutors who are there to help you at any stage of the writing process. The Writing Center is located on the first floor of Canaday Library. You can get more information at [The Writing Center's Website](#).

Your Fellow Classmates.

Your fellow classmates are your best and most available resource for making sure you get the most out of this course. I encourage you to exchange information and contact one another if logistical questions arise, if you have to miss a class and want to know what happened in your absence, or if you want to discuss readings or course topics outside of class. We will be creating an intellectual community together over the course of the semester, and you can contribute to this project by building relationships with one another just as you seek to build a relationship with your professor.

Your Dean.

In case of serious illness, family emergency, or any other situation that requires you to miss class and fall behind on coursework, please contact your dean as soon as possible.

Your Professor.

In addition to scheduled meetings, you are welcome to meet with me during office hours or at an alternative time if necessary. The best way to contact me outside of class is via email.

Zoom.

If it becomes necessary to pivot to online, we will be using Zoom for our synchronous class discussion. Please review the [Zoom Norms](#) for this course.

SCHEDULE

<u>DATE</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>To be prepared before class:</u>
F, 9/6	Introduction Expectation and norms for the course, creating a community of learning Getting into the archive	Syllabus
F, 9/13	Theorizing Self-Governance with Rousseau	<u>Read and prepare to discuss:</u> 1. Rousseau on community, sovereignty, and freedom: pp. (Book I, Chs 1 - 8) of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's <i>On the Social Contract</i>. 2. Rousseau on the legislator and people: pp. 170 - 191 (all of Book II). <u>Homework:</u> Discuss study questions with someone from class prior to our class meeting. Sign up to meet with me on Thurs, 9/12 or Fri, 9/13
F, 9/20		<u>Read and prepare to discuss:</u> 1. Rousseau on government, sovereignty, and civil religion: pp. 191-195, 198-200, 210-211, 214-218. 224-226, 243-251 (Book III, Ch 1, Ch 4, Ch 9, Chs 11-13; Book IV, Ch 1 & Ch 8) 2. Erin Pineda, <i>Seeing Like An Activist</i>, Introduction (on Moodle) 3. Keving Olson, <i>Subaltern Silence</i>, Ch. , pp. 3 - 18 (on Moodle) <u>Homework:</u> 1. Discuss study questions with someone from class prior to our class meeting.

		2. Come with questions and ideas for archival research.
F, 9/27	Getting into the archives! (Class meets in Special Collections Seminar Room on second floor of Canaday Library)	<u>Read and prepare to discuss:</u> 1. JOAN M. SCHWARTZ and TERRY COOK, "Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory" (on Moodle) 2. Blog post on archival organization (on Moodle) <u>Homework:</u> Look at Finding Guide and familiarize yourself with materials.
F, 10/4	Anarchist Self-Governance	<u>Read and prepare to discuss:</u> 1. Emma Goldman's anarchism and critique of rights: Emma Goldman, "What is Anarchism" & "On Women's Emancipation" (on Moodle) 2. Francesca Polletta, <i>Freedom is an Endless Meeting</i>, Chapter 7 <u>Homework:</u> Discuss study questions with someone from class prior to our class meeting.
*M, 10/7	Melvin Rogers Talk and Conversation	<u>Read and prepare to discuss:</u> Melvin Rogers, <i>The Darkened Light of Faith</i> (selections on Moodle)
F, 10/11	No class	*One page on Research Question posted in Moodle Forum by 5 pm, Friday, October 11.
F, 10/11 - F 10/18	Fall Break!	
F, 10/25	Democratic Self-Governance	<u>Read and prepare to discuss:</u> 1. Iris Marion Young, Inclusion and Democracy, Intro and Chapter 1 (on Moodle)

2. Iris Marion Young. "Activist Challenges to Deliberative Democracy" (on Moodle)
3. [Nicholas Burbules, "How Activist Speech Threatens Educational Values"](#)
4. ~~Martin Carcasson and Leah Sprain, "Beyond Problem Solving" (on Moodle)~~

Homework: Discuss [study questions](#) with someone from class prior to our class meeting.

F, 11/1

Read and prepare to discuss:

1. Francesca Polletta, Freedom is an Endless Meeting: Democracy in American Social Movements, Chapter 1
2. Chapter 5: Eleanor, Anja, Hannah, Leyla
3. Chapter 6: Aaniyah, Samia, Hana, Chelsea, Sophie

Homework: Discuss [study questions](#) with someone from class prior to our class meeting.

F, 11/8

Research Check-in

*4 -5 pages on Context due in class for workshopping, discussion

F, 11/15

Indigenous Self-Governance

Read and prepare to discuss:

1. Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, "The Gift of Strawberries," pp. 22 - 32.
2. "Maple Nation: A Citizenship Guide," pp. 167 - 174.
3. "The Honorable Harvest," pp. 175 - 201.
4. "In the Footsteps of Nanabozho: Becoming Indigenous to Place," pp. 205 - 215.

Homework: Discuss [study questions](#) with someone from class prior to our class meeting.

F, 11/22

Earthborn Democracy

Read and prepare to discuss: [Aslam, Mclvor, and Schlosser, *Earthborn Democracy*](#), Introduction (pp. 1-22), Kimmerer sections of Chapter 1 (pp. 47 - 58), and Chapter 3 (113-160)

Homework: Discuss [study questions](#) with someone from class prior to our class meeting.

*Theorizing Self-Governance
Section due by 5 pm on
Wednesday, 11/27

F, 11/29

No Class: Thanksgiving Break

F, 12/6

Practice Final Presentations

Thursday,
December
12

Public Presentations

4 pm in Dalton 119

Sunday,
December
15

Final Dinner

5 pm at Joel's house (120 Saint Pauls Rd,
Ardmore PA)