

POI1101: Introduction to Political Science

Week 02a

← Laptop/Tablet Notetakers Pen and paper notetakers →

Syllabus at: <http://bit.ly/1uejHmf>

Today

- Me
- Syllabus questions?
- Quick review of political science as a whole
- Friday: public goods and collective action
- We'll do the first activity next Friday.
- Laptop/Tablet note takers please send a blank email using your uOttawa email address to pol1101experiment@gmail.com
 - Don't have to if do don't want to. Totally voluntary.

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What is political science?

- *Political science* is the systemic study of government and politics. Differs from political punditry/journalism
- *Government*: a specialized group of individuals, institutions, and agencies that make and enforce public decisions
- *Politics*: a process of conflict resolution in which support is mobilized and maintained for collective action

What is political science?

- In short, political science is the study of **“who gets what, when, and how”**

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Why study political science?

- It's fascinating
 - Prominent individuals, their strengths, weaknesses, foibles and idiosyncrasies.



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Why study political science?



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Study political science?



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Why study political science?

- It's important
 - Political science is about government action and public policies that affect all of us.
 - Cost of education
 - Climate change
 - Roads
 - Drinking laws
 - In short politics is everywhere.

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Approaches to political science

- Institutionalism
 - Legislatures, courts, parties,
- Behaviouralism
 - Individuals, political culture, public opinion, voting
- Public Choice
 - “economics of politics”
- Political Economy
 - Politics as a class struggle

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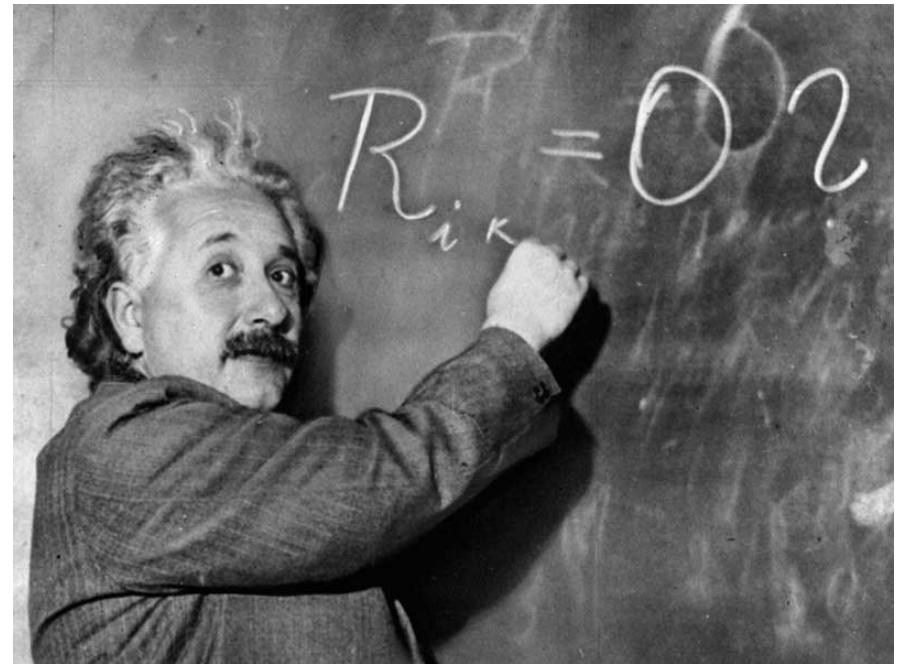
Political Science and its objects



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Is political science scientific?

- Sort of...
- Not like highly mathematical theoretical disciplines like physics and chemistry.



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Is political science scientific?

- A better comparison might be with biology and geology where systemic observation and careful description play an important role.



Fig. 31.—Skulls of *Piperno* viewed laterally, of various sizes. A. Wild *Piperno*, *stans*. B. *Piperno*, *stans*. C. *Piperno*, *stans*. D. *Piperno*, *stans*.

Organization of the discipline

- Political Philosophy
 - Aristotle, Plato, Locke, Kant
- Canadian (national/provincial) Politics
 - Federalism, Constitutionalism, Parties, Elections
- Comparative Politics
 - Institutions, Countries, Method
- International Relations
 - State to state interactions, nuclear proliferation, terrorism

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Fields vs. Streams

- Public Administration
- Public Law
- Political Behaviour
- Research Methods
- Public Policy



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Approach to POL1101

- Rooted in comparative politics with an emphasis on institutions and political behaviour.
- Public goods and collective action

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POI1101: Introduction to Political Science

Week 02b:
Public Goods and Collective Action

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Announcements

- 1. Will send out slides after Friday class
- If you haven't downloaded the syllabus, please do so:
<http://bit.ly/1uejHmf>
 - Important information:
 - Midterm dates etc.
- Will meet with the TAs next week to discuss essay topics. There will be a selection of topics for you to choose from.
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Public Goods

- The concept of public goods, as opposed to private goods can draw a dividing line between the domains of public activity and those of private concerns.



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Public Goods

- Public goods **jointly supplied** (accessible to everyone; non-excludable)
- Public goods are **non-rivalrous** (my consumption of the good does not take away from your consumption of the good)

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Introduce yourself to your neighbour

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Together, come up with an example of a public good

- Describe to me...
 - How it is jointly supplied
 - How it is non-rivalrous

Together, come up with an example of a public good

- Describe to me...
 - How it is jointly supplied
 - How it is non-rivalrous

Contrast this with private goods

- Excludable (I can lock it up, put a fence around it)
- Rivalrous (my consumption/use of the good prevents you from using the good.)

Take five minutes and discuss with
your neighbours...

- Is university education a public or private good?

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Pure public goods?

- Many people think that there is no such thing as a “pure” public good: something that is both completely non-excludable and non-rivalrous
- Here’s where you get the problems.
 - Road is a public good
 - Everybody can benefit/can’t exclude anyone
 - Congestion/Road wear
 - Clean air is a public good
 - Everybody can benefit/can’t exclude anyone
 - Air pollution?
- Need to come up with some way to deal with “externalities” and continuously maintain the public good.

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Different types of public goods

- Network goods
- Pure public goods
- Rival goods

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Network Public Goods

- They can give higher benefits as more people use the good
 - Languages
 - Weights and measures
 - Currencies (US Dollar, Euro, Gold)
 - The internet

They can be provided without significant institutional problems

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Pure Public Goods

- They can be used by more people without reducing other people's utility
 - Advances in knowledge
 - National defence
 - Scotland?
 - Canada?
- They can be provided in the amount desired by the potential users by appropriate institutional means

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Rival Public Goods

- The addition of users can diminish or even eliminate the utility of other users
 - Clean air
 - Water
 - Roads
 - Hospitals
- Rivalry can decrease and congestion can be prevented by private provision or exclusion of some potential users
 - Private health clinics
 - Private universities/education programmes.
- Club goods
 - Involves tolls, fees
 - Highway 407
 - Sirius/XM

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Common Goods

- Very challenging.
- Why?
 - The public goods are rivalrous BUT not excludable
 - Clean air, fresh water, fisheries, forests
- The Tragedy of the Commons
 - Why does the provision and maintenance of common goods fail?
 - Easier to manage in smaller communities
 - Size and collective identity matter

The politics of public goods

- Involves getting people to contribute to the provision of a “good” to ensure it’s continued sustainability.
- Goods come in all sizes
- Happens at all levels of society:
 - Family, school, church, residence, unions
- Myriad of “solutions”
 - Coordination, trust, fear of what comes in the afterlife, coercion, threats, collective good will.

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Think about it.

- Would you pay for national defense if you didn't have to?
- Would you pay university tuition if you didn't have to?
- Do you pay your bus fare, if the driver isn't there?

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What happens if nobody pays?

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So how do you ensure that you get the public goods that you want/need?

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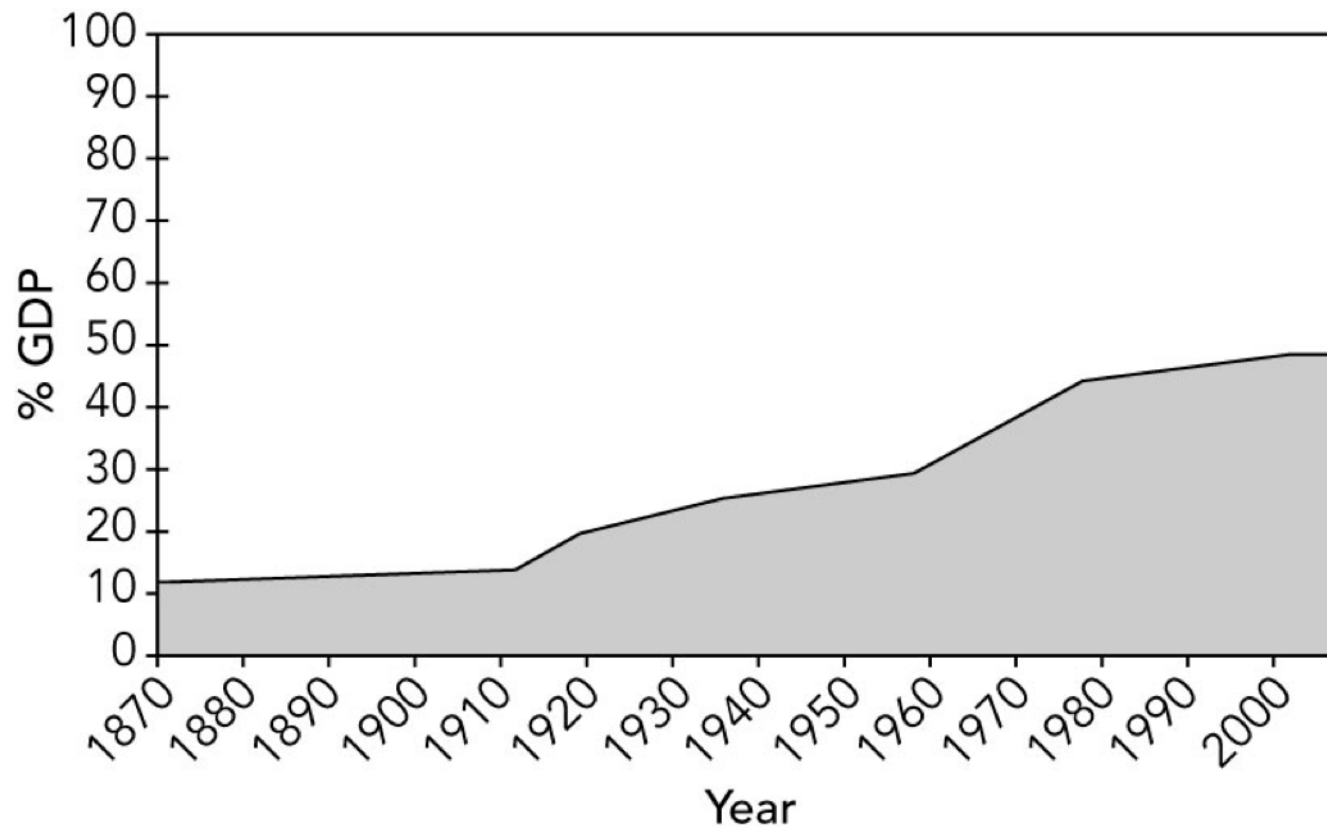
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- Because different people/groups benefit differently from the provision and distribution of public goods, this is where conflict and cooperation emerge:
 - “Why should I pay for public schools, I don’t have children?”
 - “I’m a passivist, why should pay for the national war machine to kill people in a far off country?”
 - I’m elderly and poor, who is going to pay for my medicine?”
 - I’m a single mom, thank goodness for subsidized day care.
 - I used to be a communist, but now that I have a mortgage to pay, I’m fiscally conservative”

Government Expenditures



Note: Public expenditure as percentage of GDP for 17 countries: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States, during the period 1870-2010. Colomer's elaboration with data from Vito Tanzi and Ludger Schuknecht, Public Spending in the 20th Century. A global perspective (2000), updated with data from International Monetary Fund.

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For a midterm...

- Should be able to distinguish between public and private goods
- Should be able to distinguish between different types of public goods.
- Should understand and be able to explain the logic behind the tragedy of the commons
- Should be able to explain how public goods inform political cooperation, competition and conflict.