

Proposal for the Creation of an Interdisciplinary Studies Major in Political Economy

I feel it is necessary for me to create my own major in Political Economy because although I greatly respect economics for its evaluation of the market system, I am primarily interested in the ways in which economics influences the political and social environments. Reality does not fall neatly into the domains of Politics and Economics. A substantive overlap exists between the two fields, and by combining the two into one comprehensive major I am able to focus on the manner in which macro and micro economic factors interact with domestic and foreign political realities. An example of this interaction is clearly evident in issues pertaining to income distribution and inequality, globalization, international development, and taxation. Political Economy gives unique insights into the study of economic and political behavior. It both challenges theoretical assumptions in economics and explains how political institutions, politics and capitalism are intertwined. I believe an education in economic principles allows one to critically analyze political issues in ways that other fields cannot duplicate. Studying Political Economy as opposed to solely Economics or Politics allows me to cross between the largely academic boundary that separates the two. It also allows for a specific tailoring of courses toward this end that would not be possible by majoring in one field and minoring in the other.

I feel that economics is the single most influential force in the functioning of political and social communities throughout the world and is therefore worthy of study because of its direct effect upon so many lives. Yet, I do not want to emphasize the theory of economics, but rather the way in which economics' influence is experienced. To draw an analogy, while chemistry governs the structuring of all living organisms biologists do not focus their analysis solely upon the chemical-laws that govern species, but rather the way in which the biological phenomenon exist within the given confines of the chemical structure. In this manner, I am interested in studying the way in which the laws of economics govern politics and how political institutions and the political environment respond to changing economic conditions. In essence I do not view economics as the end-all approach to the study of politics but rather as a powerful influence on the political system. I feel a Politics or an International Relations major would be insufficient towards my desired ends because I highly regard the value and insight that a foundation in economics provides and I feel economics' influence is not emphasized enough in these two majors.

The principal theme behind the major is to understand how the exchange of goods equates to power, and how political institutions, the political environment, economic theory and capitalism create a reifying relationship that governs our everyday lives. Such an analysis is sought because I feel it provides the best insight towards understanding the social, political and economic events that govern peoples' lives. I seek such a study because I believe that by understanding these political-economic underpinnings of social injustice I will be best prepared to address the problem in a more effective manner later in life.

Much of the coursework will question what forms political power takes and will provide differing insights towards how a culture is related to its economy and political institutions. This major will primarily focus on modern political and economic thought.

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Additionally, it will take a holistic approach and question how culture, historic precedent, and our cultural understanding of power and economic exchange influence our world views. The course requirements for the Political Economy major are derived primarily from the requirements for the Politics and an Economics majors because the focus of the Political Economy major is on studying economic and political behavior and the ways in which they influence each other. Subsequently, much will be borrowed from these two disciplines. Additionally, anthropology will be emphasized because the fundamental import of Political Economy is the ability to understand how Politics and Economics affect people and societies, and without an anthropological perspective the insight that can be obtained lacks true clarity and applicability.

12 Courses Comprised of the Following:

- Poli 100 *Issues in Politics*
- Econ 200 *Principles of Microeconomics*
- Econ 210 *Principles of Macroeconomics*
- Any 2 upper-level economics courses from the following list:

Econ 310 *Intermediate Macroeconomics*

Econ 340 *Environmental Economics*

Econ 350 *History of Economic Thought*

Econ 360 *International Economics*

- 3 Comparative Politics/International Relations courses from:

Poli 250 History of the International System

Poli 251 Theory of International Relations

Poli 260 Political Economy

Poli 281 Comparative Foreign Policy

Poli 325 International Law and Organizations

Poli 326 International Human Rights

Poli 353 Conflict Management and Resolution

Poli 372 China and East Asia

- 4 Anthropology/Sociology influenced courses that serve as case studies for the affects of Political Economy upon individuals.

Anth 230 Cultures of US-Mexico Borderlands

Anth 360 Globalization and Transnationalism

Soci 350 Consumerism in Context

Hist 218 Progressive Era Reform 1890-1920

Hist 230 Native North America Until 1815

Senior Capstone: The capstone experience will be an independent study based upon the advisor and student's agreed upon topic that will be decided upon in the spring of the student's Junior year. The capstone will be an independent study, where a project will serve as a case study synthesizing the valuable insights of Anthropology, Economics and Politics. It will be heavily anthropological in that it is focusing on the fundamentally 'human' aspect of Political Economy via an ethnographic perspective.

Jan J. King 9/27/07

Signature of Committee Chair:

Ben Lownik

Signature of Student:

Signature of Supervisory Committee Member:

D. C. [Signature]

Signature of Associate Provost:

Ralph Scott 10/2/07

Signature of Supervisory Committee Member:

Note that no fewer than 4 of the above courses must be at the 300 or 400 level.

Justification for the Recommended Coursework:

- Poli 100 *Issues in Politics*-This class serves as a basic introduction towards the study of politics and political variance. The course also introduces students to the concept that political issues can be systematically studied in a variety of different ways and result in differing conclusions. This multi-analysis approach is essential towards approaching any sociological phenomena. By having it as a required course for the major it is assuring that the basic principles of Political Science are introduced in addition to the notion that there is more than one way in which a subject matter can be examined, providing insight into the necessity of theory in the political environment.
- Econ 200 *Principles of Microeconomics*-A firm understanding of microeconomic principles is necessary for understanding the actions of individual economic actors within the political community. Additionally, it serves as a foundation upon which much economic reasoning is founded upon and is therefore necessary for comprehending basic economic notions.
- Econ 210 *Principles of Macroeconomics* – Macroeconomics is essential towards understanding the actions done by states in that much of their foreign and domestic policy is done at the behest of their own economic wellbeing. This course teaches principles that are common in everyday political discourse such as comparative advantage, and Keynesian and Classical economic theories.
- Econ 310 *Intermediate Macroeconomics*- As the name implies, Intermediate Macroeconomics builds upon Econ 210, and subsequently the same rational for its study can be applied here. Intermediate Macroeconomics will offer greater insight into the actions of governments to boost their economies and will go into both greater depth and breadth on economic theory. By partaking in a more intensive study of Macroeconomic theory, one can better understand government actions and can utilize differing insights into what is the best action for a government to take in regards to differing situations.
- Econ 340 *Environmental Economics*-The environmental dilemma today is an economics issue, namely how to get governments to curtail their industrial abuses in order to be less threatening to our collective wellbeing. Environmental Economics is a prime example on how the political wellbeing of a nation is dependent upon international economic cooperation, in that much of the pollution driving our environmental degradation is caused by nations' economic policies. This course seems to be a seamless integration between politics and economics and the way it affects our lives.
- Econ 350 *History of Economic Thought*-This course is a wonderful example as to how politics or economic self-interest can cloud economic thinking. Additionally, by studying classical discourse on economic thinking one can reapply old ideas to the more current theory, or conversely, to embark upon different branches of thought concerning the economy that have since fallen by the wayside.

Furthermore, many of the classical economists were more political theorists, and were concerned with issues often left untouched by modern economics such as class, national interest, and the morality of exchange. Lastly, this course serves as an introduction to classical thinkers who have not only shaped our current understanding of the economy but who also tended to focus upon politics in their discussions fairly often.

- Econ 360 *International Economics*-By studying international economics and the way the pure theory of trade is applied one can both better understand the resulting complexity of global trade and can question whether the theories seem to hold water when compared to their actual application in the real world. Furthermore the emphasis on the international and domestic effects of international trade will provide in a valuable education towards the political dimension of international trade.
- Poli 250 *History of the International System*-This course is key towards understanding how the international system evolved and how nations came to agree upon what constituted sovereignty, international law and diplomacy. These aspects are all essential towards understanding the interrelatedness of the modern economy (in that today's integration is both a cause and effect of the international economic ties that have been fostered over the last three hundred years). Furthermore, by understanding the relationships within the international system one can better understand how politics affects the legislation of economic policy, and industry. Lastly, the international system has been key towards building the modern-day economy through relationships of relative equality (such as the EU) and through unequal relationships (such as between colonies, and latter the Third World, and Western powers) and is therefore necessary towards understanding our present situation.
- Poli 251 *Theory of International Relations*-Without theory, one's understanding of the world is rather limited in that it provides an essential framework through which one can analyze the world. An introduction to IR theory is necessary towards learning how to analyze the varying realities within the IR system. Additionally this course enables the student to focus their analysis upon understanding the role of the state and what its affect upon humanity is or should be. By addressing such an important concept in differing approaches the student is able to view political actions in a whole new light.
- Poli 260 *Political Economy*-As the namesake of the major, the Political Economy course is obviously key to the major. This course serves as an introduction to the interrelatedness between politics, economics and a broad spectrum of issues as varied as religion, history to race.
- Poli 281 *Comparative Foreign Policy*- By analyzing foreign policy one can better understand how governments are proactively and reactively dealing with changing political forces. Much of these changes no doubt will be in regards to

changing economic situations at home and will deal heavily with how governments work for and against the international community.

- Poli 325 *International Law and Organizations*-By studying the international community, and thus the laws and organizations that govern it, a better understanding of the world can be reached. Considering the incredible extent to which nations are complexly interdependent, the need to understand how economics can be both a dividing as well as a unifying force in the governance of this relationship is a must.
- Poli 326 *International Human Rights*-The need to protect and advocate human rights throughout the globe is an imperative moral calling for all beings. Aside from the altruistic importance of the course, often the state or industry are the instigators of human rights abuses, and by understanding the political as well as economic influence in these cases of abuse one can better act to address such failings of humanity.
- Poli 353 *Conflict Management and Resolution* -By understanding what drives nations to come to arms and what brings them to negotiations is oftentimes the result of a greater complexity than a mere grievance. Studying the United Nations influence in promoting economic wellbeing as a way of defending national security is a prime example of how economics is closely tied to the handling of threats. The influence of economics is closely intertwined with much of the subject matter, ranging from dealing with the restructuring of post-war Europe and the communist threat to the insufficient financing of the UN and the cost it extols upon the collective security of all nations. Upon a more philosophical bent, both politics and economics essentially deal with the study of perceived realities with oftentimes the aim of making peoples' lives better, either through personal freedom or greater material wealth. This course studies how these two aims work together as well as how they have worked in sometimes contradictory ways in the international arena.
- Poli 372 *China and East Asia*- It is difficult to discuss Chinese politics without mentioning economics. The fastest growing economy in the world is fueling the next great superpower, and the economic and political affects are already being felt throughout the world. Additionally, the "four Asian tigers" are often held up as models for export-driven economic development and by more closely studying these nations and the soils that have proven so fertile towards economic success, a student can be far more insightful in not only in regards to these nations but also when similar economic policy is suggested for other parts of the world.
- Anth 230 *Cultures of US-Mexico Borderlands* -This course provides an indepth analysis on how economics can play a major role in the governing of people's lives. By analyzing the lives of people such as migrant laborers and Maquiladora workers in light of dramatic political-economic influences, the study of Political Economy is able to incorporate a more human understanding into the complexity of the social world.

- Anth 360 *Globalization and Transnationalism*- This course gives excellent insight into the theoretical and ethnographic representations of globalization and transnationalism that are intrinsically related to today's global, Political Economy. Topics that will be discussed (such as processes of migration, trade, the flow of information, and the concept of place) are important in giving further depth to the discussion on how Political Economy affects the lives of people.
- Soci 350 *Consumerism in Context*- This course offers differing perspectives towards the consumption based culture we currently reside in. By learning to critically analyze fundamental assumptions of "need", the student is able to question the values of the present economic system.
- Hist 218 *Progressive Era Reform 1890-1920*-The studying on how the social and political environments responded to widespread corporate abuse during the Progressive Era is a highly relevant case study on how the affects of a unchecked, capitalist economy affects people's lives.
- Hist 230 *Native North America Until 1815*-By studying how native cultures, based on a relationship of reciprocity with nature, came to transition to a market based economy by the mid 19th century, one is able to contrast how various forms of economies affect cultures. Additionally, the class shows that the transition between economies is not a gentle, embraced change but rather one continually fraught with conflict and polarization. By learning about other cultures and the way they were able to function in a non-capitalist economy, the course allows the student to question the merits of present-day capitalism through a historical lens.