

## **Notes on Dr. Bickers' Introduction**

The department is working hard to return as close to normalcy as is safely possible. In-person modalities are expected for many classes for the following Spring Semester. However, the circumstances of the pandemic still surround us and flexibility is needed. The Political Science Department will be offering a wide range of modalities in order to best accommodate each of its students. This semester was a new experience for many, and the department is using what it has learned for the Spring. Classes will be put into more clear boxes regarding their modality. If they are labeled to be following a certain modality, then they will follow that modality as much as possible. In particular, if a class has an in-person component, students will be expected to attend class in-person regularly.

## **Notes on Dr. Donovan's Undergraduate Survey**

Undergraduate students filled out a survey on how they felt about the instructional modalities they have experienced.

Survey results:

Different modalities work for different students. No method of instruction was overwhelmingly favored, and each found support. The department is trying to offer a wide range of modalities to students. The department is trying to accommodate the varying learning styles.

What we learned:

1. Different modalities and teaching styles work for different students
2. We need to help get students into the classes that work best for them
3. Once a modality is chosen and announced, we need to stick to it as much as possible. This is important for instructors and students
4. We need to work to improve remote/online delivery in some classes
5. Ongoing communication with our students is important

For example, overall students like synchronous Zoom sessions, but around a quarter of students dislike them, including for reasons of getting "Zoom fatigue" or not having a good internet connection. Similarly, overall students like having recorded lectures that they can listen to on their own time and review if necessary, but around a quarter of students dislike them, including for reasons that it is difficult to manage time and that it is hard to pay attention to recorded lectures. In some cases, students are expressing opposite preferences to us. Which means that there is no one way to improve the experience of students, that what we need is to get students into the classes that work best for them.

## Notes on Dr. Bickers (continued)

To try to make sure students can get into the modalities that work best for them, the department has scheduled classes in each subfield with in-person/hybrid options and remote/online only options. Students should be able to meet degree requirements in modalities that work for them.

All large lectures (most 1000 and 2000 level classes) must be remote or remote/online due to their size. But all of these large classes have a choice of in-person or remote recitation sections. Students should be sure to sign up for the modality that they prefer in these. In-person recitations make up approximately 40% of the recitations, based on demand from the fall semester.

In order to make sure there are in-person and in-person/hybrid options in every subfield, in some cases we had to reduce class sizes. A problem in the fall semester was that we planned in-person classes, but rooms could not be found to accommodate them. This may mean (depending on demand for in-person) that these classes fill up quickly.

## Q & A

**Q:** How do I see what kind of modality a class will use when I am signing up for Spring classes?

**A:** Students can find the general modality of a class in the “course search” function when searching for classes by going to “advanced search” and searching by modality. This can sort classes into “in-person,” “in-person hybrid/remote-online,” “hybrid remote/online,” “remote” or “online.” Students are advised to sort by their preferred mode to see if they can fill out their schedule with those offerings and then try their second preferred mode if they cannot do so.

For more detailed information on class modality, such as whether a class scheduled as “in-person hybrid/remote-online” involves remote or online instruction on the non-in-person days, The Political Science Department website has provided brief descriptions from faculty regarding how many class will be taught. Go to <https://www.colorado.edu/polisci/courses> and click on the “Spring 2021.” To the right of each course you will see a link that takes you to the description. These will continue to be updated as more faculty determine their class plans.

**Q:** Why would one professor teach only Continuing Ed during this time?

**A:** Professors and graduate students are assigned to Continuing Ed for multiple reasons. Continuing Education is helping students that may not near university facilities work on their degree. The pandemic has altered the amount of funding received by the

PSCI Department. By assigning faculty to Continuing Ed, we are better able to continue providing them needed financial support.

Continuing Education has been a growing positive presence for the department. Through the Degree Completion Program, students have the opportunity to finish degrees they had previously been working toward.

**Q:** How have office hours been affected and how are they going to look in the Spring Semester?

**A:** Overall, office hours have been fairly unaffected. However, some professors are witnessing more students attend, while others have seen less. The expectation is that professors host two hours per week, and this appears to be usually met.

**Q:** Why does it feel classes are assigning more work?

**A:** Some students have reported this, while others have claimed there isn't enough work. The fact of the matter is that professors are just as new to these circumstances as the students. Workloads and the length of time needed to complete assignments are still being figured out. The fall semester was a great learning experience for faculty, and the spring semester will build off of this experience.

**Q:** Is it true that the PSCI department is not admitting new graduate students next year?

**A:** The department does not currently know whether it will admit new graduate students in the Fall Semester of 2020. The pandemic has caused cuts to funding that may inhibit the acceptance of new graduate students. This is NOT the case for undergraduate students.