

Course Reflection - Value Issues in a Political Economy

PSCI 286 sits in a weird place in my mind. Having just finished, I feel like I've learned a lot more than I did PSCI 105 or other political science courses I've had the misfortune of enrolling in. The main difference between Value Issues and other PSCI courses was my lack of reliance on course materials. What I learned in the lectures and read in each book felt only supplemental to the research I undertook for both the midterm and final. It was my first experience having a long time to outline, plan, and execute a term paper in one of these courses, and while I obviously performed much better than I did in papers I had to write from memory in other courses, a lot of that information feels like it's been retained.

I understand more now how political ideologies can mix and mesh with one another. It's helped me more easily detect strawman arguments, and I can finally make distinctions between two movements I may have previously thought one in the same. Additionally, a complex comparative analysis of politico-economic structure spanning half the semester gave me worldwide context on why and how certain social programs outperform their US counterparts. This extended to a historiographical analysis of the political attitudes influencing these economic trends, and long thought on historical what-ifs and their socioeconomic consequences.

So often the topic of conversation in these kinds of courses comes from a uniquely American perspective. Such is the flaw of our anglo-centric world, but while these viewpoints were considered in PSCI 286, it was presented as a point of juxtaposition from other attitudes worldwide. The context of why and how these attitudes shape policy gives a unique insight into the culture and history of each country we examined, and helped to spark interest against a dwindling motivation to attend Zoom lectures.