

Textbook Discussion Questions
Chapter 1: Power, Conflict, and Policy

Introduction: What is Political Science?

1. What do political scientists study?
2. How does the text define politics? Do you have an alternative definition?
3. Where does the “science” in the field of political science come in? Give an example of the type of empirical study that political scientists do.
4. What is the methodological approach known as behaviorism? What do political scientists try to achieve with this method?
5. How can a behaviorist study of human behavior be critiqued? How might a political scientist successfully counter this critique?

Political Science in International Studies

1. What is the difference between International Studies and International Relations?

Major Fields

1. Name three of the major subfields of political science. Describe their particular emphases within the field.
2. What is inherently misleading about the subfield, “American politics”? How does the term itself misrepresent what it claims to study?

Comparative Politics

1. What are the two main types of governmental systems described in the text?
2. What does the field of comparative politics teach us about the democratic West’s support for democracies abroad?

International Politics

1. How might you describe the research parameters of the field of international politics, or international relations, as it is also called? What exactly does it study? What is outside the field’s domain?
2. What is policy advocacy? Why do some political scientists criticize those who practice advocacy? Why do policy advocates criticize those who do not practice it? Who do you think is right? Are there any political prescriptions you would like to see implemented?

Idealism/Liberalism

1. What are the primary tenets of liberalism? What does each mean?
2. What is “collective security”? Give a historical example from the book that demonstrates a specific instance of this type of security being created by a group of nations.

Realism

1. How would proponents of *realpolitik* explain realism?
2. Given that political realists assume that states, like people, are power-hungry, how do they explain moments of peacetime in the world?
3. What is a *hegemon*? Give an example.
4. If you were to take up political science, do you think you would identify more with the liberal/idealist camp or the realist camp? Why?