

Teaching the Political Science-Political Theory Divide: Insights from Course Design for Research Tutorial

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February 4, 2025

Abstract

This paper examines how the enduring “intra-disciplinary” divide between empirical political science and political theory poses challenges for pedagogy in Political Science by examining the high-impact context of introductory research tutorials. Drawing from the author’s teaching and advising experience, it introduces a “baseline” tutorial model in which students are implicitly induced to offer preferences over distinct research approaches before being introduced to their significance, and highlights how the model can create mismatches with negative consequences for educational effectiveness and equity. As an example of how such issues might be overcome in similar teaching contexts, the paper proposes two alternatives to the baseline model: a “pre-tutorial” that postpones subfield assignment until students have had an opportunity to explore basic norms of different research traditions in political science in active-learning settings, and a “combined tutorial” model in which a single tutorial accommodates projects aligned with either tradition. By comparing these alternatives, the paper illustrates how decisions around course design should address the discipline’s inherent pluralism consciously to ensure pedagogical effectiveness and equity. It concludes by discussing more generalizable implications for pedagogy addressing the intra-disciplinary divide and directions for future related research.

1 Introduction

Political Science in American Higher Education hosts two distinct traditions under a common disciplinary roof: empirical political science and political theory. Although the traditions share the aim of studying politics with complementary social scientific and humanistic approaches, they differ sharply in scholarly norms, methods, and questions. For students new to the field or with less exposure to its norms, navigating these distinct scholarly "cultures" can be especially challenging, with troubling consequence for pedagogical effectiveness and equity. Such challenges can be amplified if students are induced to sort themselves across this intra-disciplinary divide before they have enough understanding to discern which approach aligns with their personal interests and inclinations. Early pedagogical lapses in teaching the intra-disciplinary divide effectively may propagate in more advanced coursework and career trajectories in the discipline, with effects that can intersect with students' educational backgrounds.

Drawing upon the author's prior teaching and advising experience, this paper examines how to address this pedagogical challenge in high-impact learning contexts by considering the example of a model introductory tutorial requiring students to commit to a preference-ordering across the field's intra-disciplinary divide. At an early stage, students may approach self-sorting across subfields with some understanding of topical interests, but with limited understanding of what it means to pose and answer a research question following the norms of a research tradition. While the modeled introductory tutorial is itself meant as an opportunity to learn about disciplinary fundamentals useful for this decision, including "skills" based material on topics like how to pose and find evidence on a compelling research question, the design of the tutorial as student self-sorting without support can interact with instructors tendency towards specialization to limit students' active and open-ended socialization to the discipline's pluralism. Resulting mismatches in student assignment are especially likely to impact students with less prior exposure to political science. Furthermore, coming at a high-impact "critical juncture", this inequity may propagate differences in educational background further

into the undergraduate career and beyond through path-dependent effects on effectively identifying and pursuing learning opportunities that match interests.

In response to this challenge, the paper discusses two alternative approaches that improve upon the model tutorial model. The first, the “pre-tutorial” model, takes care to introduce the political science and theory distinction and research norms in each tradition before having students choose a topical tutorial that aligns with students’ more self-reflectively considered preferences. Importantly, this “pre-tutorial” model involves active learning opportunities where students practice and receive feedback on posing research questions in each of the field’s two broad “traditions” with instructor feedback before binding assignment. The second “mixed tutorial” model involves a pre-commitment to a topic, but explicitly allows students to pursue research questions that would fit in either of the disciplines’ broad traditions. This approach still takes care to teach norms and expectations distinct to the traditions of empirical political science and political theory, having students commit to a final project that fits one of the two, but allows this decision to be made part-way through the course and in consultation with an instructor.

Each of these models has advantages over the baseline pre-commitment model, and suitability of one of over the other to a specific teaching program will likely reflect training, resources, and program philosophy. The “pre-tutorial” model will be best suited to settings where instructors are likely to be highly specialized across a political science/political theory distinction, and where teaching philosophy strongly emphasizes a sub-disciplinary divide across this distinction. In these settings, the model ensures advising competency and reinforces socialization about tradition-specific research norms. The “mixed tutorial” model will be best suited where instructors are trained to advise students who are writing papers that fit in each of the two traditions, or potentially at the intersection. These settings may allow teaching staff to teach how the two traditions have distinct norms, while also allowing the students to learn from readings and fellow students on the other side of the divide or exceptionally to be able to work on projects that problematize a sharp positive-normative

divide in a self-aware and rigorous manner with appropriate guidance.

In what follows, Section 2 introduces the background of the intra-disciplinary divide between empirical political science and political theory in Political Science and the challenges it introduces for effective and equitable introductory-level teaching. Section 3 details the baseline introductory research tutorial model, illustrating how requiring students to pre-select into subfield-specific sections exemplify a practical example of these challenges. Section 4 presents two alternative models—the “pre-tutorial” and the “combined tutorial”—and discusses their context specific suitability as means to examine broader questions about effectively and equitably teaching in light of the intra-disciplinary divide. Section 4 concludes by highlighting that the more administrative scope of comparison sheds light on broader themes on pedagogy at the intra-disciplinary divide and how future research can further develop on the paper’s themes accordingly.

2 Background

For historical reasons too complicated to rehearse here, (see for a recent discussion with references (Feldman 2025)) the study of politics as typically practiced in American higher education contains two distinct traditions under the common discipline of Political Science: empirical “political science” (hereafter, political science in lower-case) and the amalgam of scholarship labeled “political theory”. Each tradition is also replete with its own internal diversity. Subfields like comparative, american, and international relations, topical focus, and methodological differences differentiate scholarship in political science. In turn, distinctly normative, historical, and critical research traditions exist in the field of political theory, spanning interpretation of ancient and medieval texts to normative theory on contemporary politics. Exceptional examples of scholarship can also work self-consciously work at the intersection of the two traditions. Nonetheless, differences in norms, methodologies, and scholarly aims are most salient across what might be called the field’s “intra-disciplinary”

divide, with consequences for pedagogy when students' remain agnostic about how their where their own interests might fit within the field's dizzying pluralism.

This paper takes for granted the persistence (and perhaps desirability) of empirical political science and political theory's as disciplinary strange bedfellows, while addressing the challenges this intra-disciplinary divide poses for pedagogy at an introductory undergraduate level when students' prior knowledge on the field cannot be assumed. While some past political theorists have advocated disciplinary secession, and some empirically inclined political science departments have dropped political theory from their offerings by faculty attrition, Political Science as a discipline will remain syncretic or at least "consociational" for the foreseeable future in many teaching departments. Theorists and empiricists alike have also highlighted the benefits of a big-tent discipline that "bridges" scientific and humanistic approaches with the common aim of understanding politics. Studying politics positively "as it is" can inform theorizing on politics past and present normatively "as it should be". Likewise, the conceptual, values-based work under theorists purview can help empiricists question unexamined assumptions and inform which questions are even worth asking. Not just scholars but students can benefit from understanding the differences between these traditions, and their respective strengths. For pedagogical purposes however, this complementarity only highlights how the two traditions act as de facto fields within the discipline with distinct norms and expectations, often taught implicitly in expectation-setting for teaching situations squarely on one side of the divide.

The same implicit understanding cannot be assumed for students new to the discipline, especially when they arrive at it with limited prior background. A student with a sense of a topical interest in "politics" may deduce that a Political Science department would be a good fit when making decisions like selecting an undergraduate major, but may have little sense of whether trying courses labeled "political science" or "political theory" would serve best as a starting point for their learning goals. While students might pick up implicitly on the distinction through trial-and-error, or take for granted the advice of a guidance counselor on

choosing across the intra-disciplinary divide after a cursory meeting, mismatches occurring nonetheless involve unnecessary and potentially inequitably distributed experiences with remedial course correction. Teachers on both sides of the intra-disciplinary divide can likely recall occasions of offering feedback suggesting that an argument or question a student proposes to explore in an advanced undergraduate course or senior thesis would be better explored on the other side of the political/science theory divide, and finding that students have been ill-served by previous learning experiences to understand why.

One key antidote to this pedagogical challenge is requiring political science undergraduates to take an introductory course early in their disciplinary journey that teaches the different norms of political science and political theory directly, especially when students understanding can be reinforced through active learning, guidance, and feedback through evaluation. An example of a course fulfilling this role is a "tutorial" course for early undergraduate political science students, taught at the inflection point when students transition from taking general education classes to exploring subject-specific advanced undergraduate coursework. Against a backdrop where unspoken norms define not only what distinguishes political science from overlapping fields like economics, sociology, or philosophy, but also what delineates subfields and traditions within the field, an early and active learning experience of this sort can offer an opportunity for students to gain confidence in their understanding of Political Science as a discipline and be better equipped to thrive in the discipline regardless of prior educational background.

In practice however, introductory courses that actively teach the political science-political theory divide while allowing students the agency to define their interests across it can be challenging to implement due to the tradition-specific research and pedagogy training of instructors themselves. Academic disciplines, Political Science not excluded, place pressure on graduate students to specialize at early stages. Indeed, teaching staff may have had limited academic opportunities themselves to take stock of the disciplines' internal diversity, leaving them with a limited understanding and thus teaching competence on "the other side"

of the field's internal divisions, especially at the intra-disciplinary water's edge between political science and political theory. For the purposes of an introductory tutorial, while an empiricist can and should be flexible enough to teach research fundamentals beyond their subfield or particular methodological proclivities, and a political theorist to offer basic guidance on students writing on Aristotle, Rawls, or Foucault, capacity to teach across the intra-disciplinary divide cannot be guaranteed.

While a multi-member teaching team for an introductory tutorial course with specialization that spans the political science-theory divide can sort students and teaching responsibilities according to expertise, this practice shifts without addressing the challenges for pedagogical equity and efficiency that the divide introduces. To illustrate this, the following section introduces a baseline tutorial model drawing on the author's prior teaching experience, in which students are induced to self-sort into appropriate sections on the basis of assumed interests. It highlights challenges with this model, before introducing marginal interventions and more comprehensive alternatives that offer students' flexibility in approaching the intra-disciplinary divide.

3 Baseline Research Tutorial Model

This section introduces a baseline introductory tutorial model, designed to acclimate undergraduate students to disciplinary norms in political science through developing a research prospectus with instructor guidance. The model draws from the author's experience teaching a similarly structured course for undergraduate students at a large research university. In this model, students are asked to pre-commit to a preference ordering over a range of topic and subfield-specific tutorials. The early weeks of the tutorial introduces basic disciplinary norms of Political Science in parallel with section-specific topic syllabi. Drawing from the author's experience teaching a version of this model as well as serving as an academic advisor for political science majors entering this course, gaps are highlighted between the model's pedagogical

aim of introducing the discipline through active-learning and the model's shortcomings for effective and equitable teaching in practice, with special emphasis on the model's inducement of preferences over sub-field delineated sections before students are offered an opportunity to explore the significance of the "intra-disciplinary" divide between political science and political theory. Marginal interventions that may offer improvements over the baseline model are discussed while highlighting remaining limitations, motivating the more comprehensive alternative models proposed in the following section.

3.1 Baseline Model

The baseline introductory research tutorial model is designed as a required course for all declared Political Science majors early in students' undergraduate education. Although some students enrolling in this required course may have elected to take subfield-specific introductory survey courses before enrolling in the required tutorial, the tutorial is designed to function effectively as students' first exposure to the discipline at a post-secondary level. Most students taking the tutorial course are encouraged to take advanced undergraduate courses requiring papers on self-defined topics only after finishing this introductory tutorial. The real-world course that the model is based on is staffed with a set of 5-10 graduate instructors whose teaching expertise spans the disciplines' subfields, each of whom develop their own tutorial syllabus.

The syllabi for each section of this tutorial synthesize week-by-week "research skills" modules common to all sections, including introductory material on the basic differences between political science and political theory, and substantive material specific to an instructor-defined topical theme. Material covered over the course of the skills syllabus includes an introduction to the discipline's subfields, the distinction between positive and normative research questions, posing an important and falsifiable research question, review existing literature germane to it, structuring a proposed argument answering it, and choosing a methodological approach to

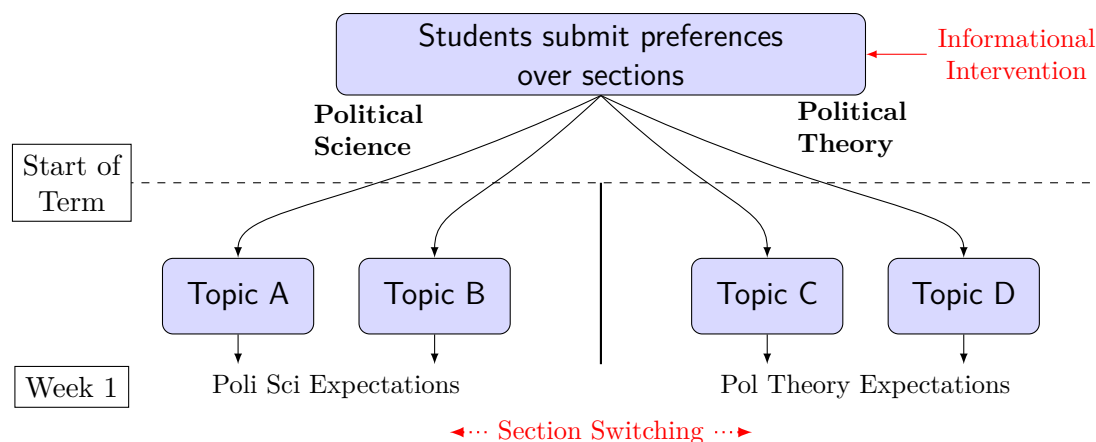


Figure 1: Baseline Model Schematic

defend an argument. Through such material paired with section-specific readings, lectures, and discussions, the course is designed to offer cumulative scaffolding towards a cap-stone research prospectus that fits a section's topical theme. Specifically, in-class and take-home exercises reinforce skills, and two intermediate papers offer feedback on a literature review and methodological analysis plan that jointly comprise the final research prospectus. Tutorial sections span the four major subfields in Political Science: American Politics, Comparative Politics, International Relations, and Political Theory. Although the skills syllabus material is common to the three empirical subfields, political theory sections teach from a separate skills syllabus with similar themes (e.g. posing a question, finding evidence) while reflecting the differences in the research traditions across the intra-disciplinary divide. Figure 1 offers a schematic of this model.

The model's structure so-defined poses problems from the perspective of both pedagogical effectiveness and equity. First, the usefulness of subfield labelling for sorting into an appropriate section will depend on prior exposure to the disciplinary norms of political science. To the extent that there are inequities in the quality and diversity of students' secondary education background in relevant fields, there may be education-background differentiated effects on accurate preference ordering and thus the burden of any impacts caused by a mismatch between students' interests and sectioning decisions. Mechanisms for such effects include

both likelihood of direct differences in exposure to related material at the secondary level, and indirect effects at the more proximate post-secondary level if differences in secondary-level preparedness means some students are less able to choose a major and explore introductory political science courses prior to sectioning for the introductory tutorial. For all students who end up with poorly matched section due to such differences in background, the course's role as a high-impact juncture in students' academic life course can have long-term consequences for adequate preparation to thrive in advanced coursework or further high-impact opportunities like thesis-writing. In the long-term, such differences can propagate to "pipeline" problems in students' preparation for considering further graduate education in pursuit of research and teaching careers both within and across the discipline's research traditions.

3.2 Marginal Adjustments to the Baseline Model

Before turning to more comprehensive alternative approaches that address the baseline model's gaps in effectively and equitably teaching the intra-disciplinary divide, marginal interventions to the model with low implementation costs are worth considering. Two such adjustments are introduced: an informational intervention, and allowing students to switch tutorial sections on a discretionary basis. While both offer clear improvements to the baseline, their limitations in teaching the intra-disciplinary divide while embodying the active pedagogical approach that a tutorial is meant to offer supports a comprehensive solution. Figure 1 includes these adjustments to these adjustments to the baseline schematic in red for illustrative purposes.

A simple informational intervention, like offering a remotely administered explainer on the intra-disciplinary divide, offers benefits over the baseline while remaining limited by its more passive pedagogical approach. In the case of the model setting, an example informational intervention could embed students' sectioning preferences in a survey that has students read or listen to a short explainer on the differences between political science

and political theory before choosing their track. This solution would be relatively simple and inexpensive to implement, while ensuring that students have at least been given basic background information before giving a preference ordering. However, effective uptake of this intervention would be difficult to assess, and may continue to be biased in its legibility. The passivity of the approach also limits opportunities for students to actively learn the intra-disciplinary divide by applying it to their topic of interest with immediate feedback from peers and teaching staff.

Allowing switching for students who come to believe their assignment was sub-optimal helps to mitigate some of the longer-term negative consequences of mismatches, but creates disruptions with practical costs for both students and teaching staff. Permitting switching limits the likelihood of one of the negative potential outcomes from the baseline model: a student realizing after the first few weeks of instruction that they would be better suited for a tutorial on the other side of the intra-disciplinary divide. However, switching presents significant burdens as well, some of which may limit or even counteract any pedagogical benefits. Switching makes it such that students with the least prior background experience a sharp disruption in their rapport with their peers and instructors. After switching, these students may start behind their new group of peers, all of whom would have received a version of the tutorial's introductory weeks with a syllabus and instructor better suited to section-specific goals. Teaching staff in turn would be more likely to experience unanticipated changes to enrollment.

4 Alternative Tutorial Models

The problems presented by the baseline model and the limitations of marginal interventions suggest that teaching the political science-political theory divide effectively and equitably requires course design that takes developing students' active understanding of the divide as a valuable pedagogical goal in itself. Such an approach allows students to meaningfully

explore how their interests in politics would be best explored across the divide with guidance, while minimizing influences from bias or competency gaps attributable to teachers' own disciplinary specialization and socialization. Implementing a tutorial design that achieves these desiderata in practice will involve considering trade-offs introduced by context-specific pedagogical philosophy and resource constraints. To illustrate, this section presents two alternative models to the baseline along with a discussion of their advantages and drawbacks before comparing their context-specific suitability: a "pre-tutorial" model that ensures active-learning on disciplinary basics before sectioning, and a "combined tutorial" model that allows students to pursue either a political science or theory project in a topic-focused setting with guidance from teaching staff with joint competence. The alternatives in this section reflect the author's experience with limitations of the baseline model while teaching, and a provisional attempt to implement a version of the second alternative presented here, the "combined tutorial" model.

4.1 Pre-Tutorial Model

The "pre-tutorial" alternative to the baseline model would delay students' sectioning across the intra-disciplinary divide until after they have had an opportunity to explore its application to their interests through active learning with feedback in a shared "pre-tutorial". In practice, this would involve holding one or even multiple introductory sessions in a pooled setting focused on teaching foundations of the discipline and the differences between its research traditions, before having students express their preference across sections and thus subfields. Special emphasis would be placed on building skills like taking a student's existing topic interests (e.g. "education policy", "the US presidency", "the United Nations"), and comparing and contrasting what research questions could be asked about the topic and with what supporting evidence under each of the field's research paradigms. This session (or multiple sessions) would act as a common "pre-tutorial" before smaller-scale tutorials begin with greater specialization on subject-matter and subfield. Since the baseline model

required teaching this material in the opening weeks of the "skills syllabus" in any case, loss of teaching time compared to the baseline model would be minimal. Figure 2 offers a schematic of this pre-tutorial model, which can be contrasted with the schematic in 1.

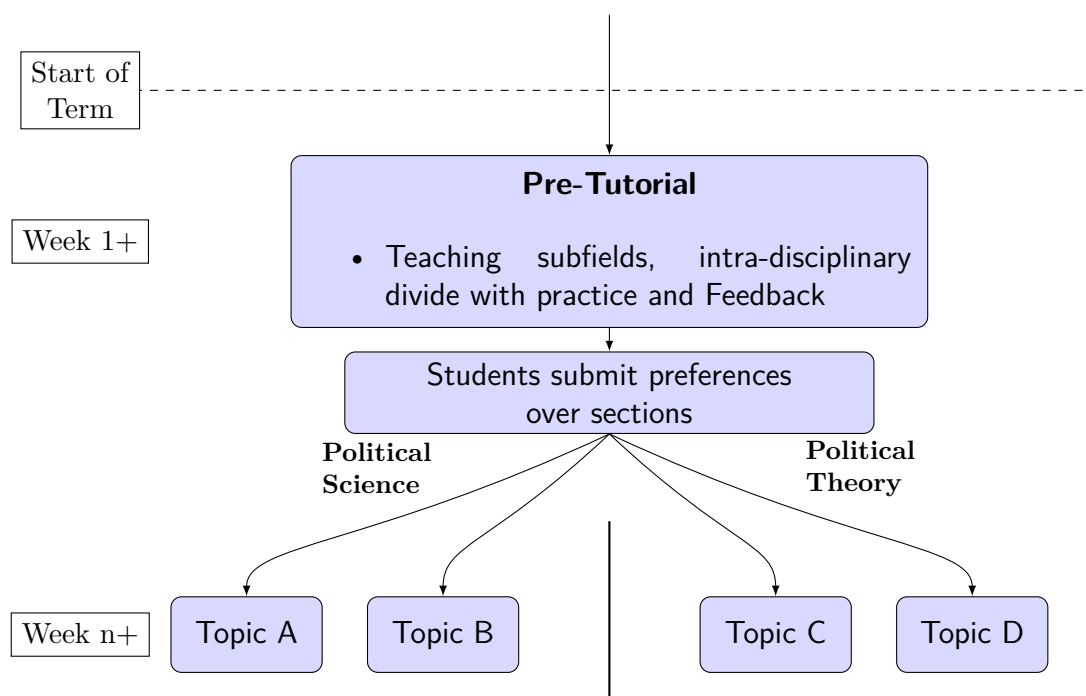


Figure 2: Pre-Tutorial Model Schematic

The model extends upon the intuition of the informational intervention, while replacing a passive intervention followed by sectioning with an active learning intervention whose effectiveness and equitability is easier to monitor. Implementation details are likely to be highly context-dependent, and the pre-tutorial in practice can be conceptualized as lying a continuum with the passive informational intervention rather than a full departure. For example, a virtual session with guided breakout sessions where students workshop how their ideas would translate into a political science or political theory questions could be followed by sectioning before start of the term, allowing students and teachers to begin the term with topic and tradition-specific sections while still embodying the pedagogical intent of the pre-tutorial.

A key advantage of the pre-tutorial over the baseline model is ensuring students can

learn about the differences between the discipline's research traditions in an open-ended setting, while nonetheless ensuring students eventually match with a teacher, peer-group, and syllabus that reinforce tradition-specific norms and expectations. Absent a structured environment where the equal value of the discipline's diverse research traditions is emphasized, messages like "positive and normative questions are distinct, but equally valuable" may ring hollow, especially where teaching staff have their own strong preferences on research practices or feel pressured to simultaneously impart that course expectations will fit squarely on one side of the divide. In the pre-tutorial by contrast, "meta"-level content on the discipline and its internal diversity is taught separately, in turn freeing teaching staff who are more specialized to emphasize the importance research norms specific to their tradition of choice secure in knowing that students made an informed sectioning decision. This alternative model is thus distinct from one where students are allowed to pursue either a political science or political theory question for the duration of the tutorial.

4.2 Combined Tutorial Model

The "combined tutorial" model, in contrast to both the baseline and the "pre-tutorial" alternative, leans into the discipline's pluralism by allowing students to work on a project on either side of the intra-disciplinary divide or even at its intersection in a topic-focused tutorial. While early weeks of tutorial would still impart the distinctiveness of the discipline's research traditions to students and emphasize that expectations will be tailored accordingly, students would have the option to work on a project in either tradition without being forced to change sections. If projects at the intersection are ruled out for pedagogical clarity, this model can include a checkpoint where students are expected to inform a tutorial-leader which of the research traditions they plan to develop a prospectus for, but after having the chance to practice posing research questions on the topic from each of the discipline's traditions. Figure 3 offers a schematic of the combined tutorial, in contrast to the schematic in 1.

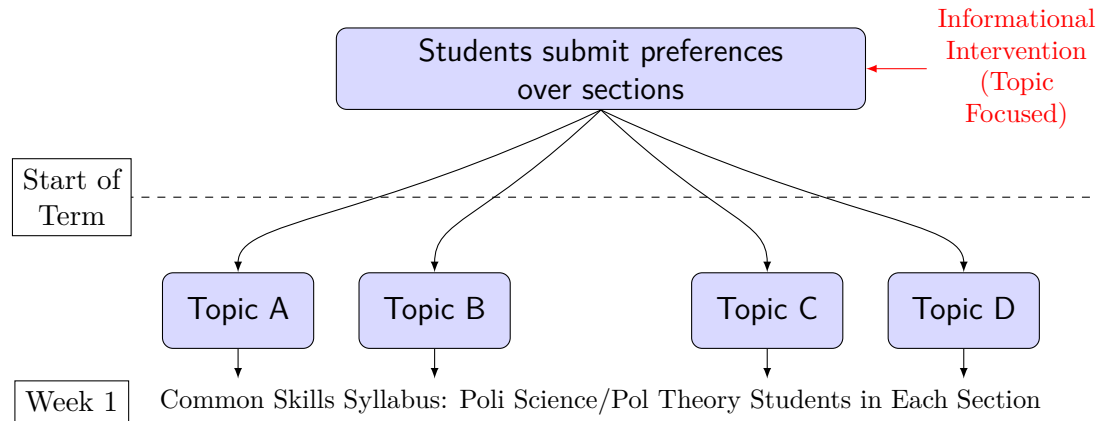


Figure 3: Combined-Tutorial Model Schematic

The combined tutorial's parallels the baseline in sectioning to topic-specific tutorials on the basis of students' pre-term preference-ordering over topics, but embodies and demands a distinctively pluralistic pedagogical approach in its syllabus development and lesson planning. In practice, allowing for intra-disciplinary pluralism for the duration of the tutorial requires adjustments to tutorials' substantive and skills-based syllabi. On the substantive side, readings for a specific topic will require selections for students who are working on either side of the intra-disciplinary divide. To take the example of a US Politics tutorial, a lesson on federalism might offer both excerpts from the "Federalist Papers" and an Annual Review article surveying contemporary empirical research on federalism. Similarly for the tutorial's skill-development goals, care will need to be taken to ensure parallel but distinct skills are offered that lend themselves to coherent lesson-planning. Skills-based themes like "identifying concepts" or "finding evidence" will have common themes for students working on political science and political theory projects and parallels can be drawn between them, but care will need to be taken to impart and develop materials on tradition-specific research norms as well. In early weeks of the course as students explore where their interests lie, common readings might be required for all students covering both political science and political theory approaches, while later weeks may divide readings by tradition and only require those that fit a student's project while leaving space for lecture and discussion on the intersection of the traditions in tutorial sessions. Similarly, groups for peer discussion and feedback

can transition from shared to tradition-specific as students move towards developing a final project.

The combined tutorial offers students the benefits of encountering ideas and sharing discussions with peers across the intra-disciplinary divide on the basis of a shared substantive topic, but demands teaching staff willing and prepared to teach pluralistically. As students' academic paths in the discipline develop, they will likely specialize in coursework that suits their interests across the intra-disciplinary divide. A "combined tutorial" offers unique opportunities for students to approach this juncture for specialization with confidence developed active-learning experiences and peer encounters spanning the discipline's distinct traditions, and with a greater appreciation for the discipline's pluralism. Peer networks may be more likely to include students across the divide with similar substantive interests, and students' understanding of the discipline will be more integrated. To realize such benefits however, teaching staff would need to have prior preparation to confidently offer feedback, guidance, and syllabi at an introductory level while limiting bias toward personal specialization. The likelihood of teachers' own academic socialization being specialized with limited exposure across the intra-disciplinary divide from an early juncture makes finding (or training) qualified teaching staff challenging, a self-reinforcing consequence of the discipline's tendency towards intra-disciplinary separation.

4.3 Assessment of the Alternatives' Relative Suitability

The relative suitability of the "pre-tutorial" and "combined-tutorial" models compared to the baseline will be context-dependent, depending on the pedagogical philosophy, resources, and size of a political science teaching staff.

The pre-tutorial model places minimal burden on teaching staff to rethink course planning or pedagogical philosophy in comparison with the combined model, allowing instructors to lean into areas of expertise and communicate expectations clearly to students' benefit. Instructors should be prepared to collaboratively facilitate active learning on the intra-disciplinary

divide during the pre-tutorial, but tutorials thereafter follow a status quo that reinforces tradition-specific expectations and norms. Importantly, staff will not have to re-think course planning with respect to either substantive content or skills materials, and will avoid being put in the position of teaching material they feel ill-prepared to teach or evaluate. Students in turn will benefit from being able to make a clearly informed choice with the benefit of the pre-tutorial's active learning component, in contrast with the baseline or a simple informational intervention, while also avoiding the potential confusion about the intra-disciplinary divide or extra workload that may come with the combined model. The pre-tutorial model in this sense may be thought of as a form of pedagogical harm reduction for both teachers and students, mitigating negative consequences of the intra-disciplinary divide while avoiding the introduction of new practical burdens accompanying a more integrated approach.

The combined-tutorial offers students an understanding of the intra-disciplinary divide that is deeper and applied to a topic of interest, but may increase the risk of superficial or confusing teaching to students' detriment. If part of the pedagogical intent of teaching the intra-disciplinary divide through active learning is helping students to better understand its application to their own interests, the combined tutorial offers significant benefits on the margin compared to a brief pre-tutorial without the context of the tutorial's topic-specific applications. More generally, a combined tutorial offers students some of the benefits that work on political science and political theory as distinct but complementary enterprises have highlighted at the level of research scholarship. It offers political science students the context to understand what questions may be worth asking and the normative implications of empirics while understanding that these important themes lie beyond the scope of positivism. In turn it helps political theory students to understand areas where normative or interpretive arguments may rely on empirically falsifiable assumptions that existing or future scholarship in political science may be best equipped to adjudicate. With guidance, a longer period topic focused tutorial teaching at the intersection of the intra-disciplinary divide may even

help student better understand what distinguishes the tradition they choose to work from through contrasting examples of topic-specific scholarship. Nonetheless, the combined model when poorly implemented may significantly hinder effective and equitable pedagogy. Even teaching staff trained to teach across the intra-disciplinary divide may be better prepared to teach on one side of it, and some students may find the ambiguity of a self-led approach to identifying with a research tradition and adopting its norms to be challenging, with effects that may be exacerbated by existing background inequities.

Practically, implementing these alternatives effectively may depend on the the tutorial's overall enrollment and the size of its teaching staff, with lower student-to-teacher ratios offering opportunities for hybrids at the intersection. The "pre-tutorial model" can generalize across contexts with multi-member teaching teams including members who span the divide. The "combined-tutorial" model, by contrast, may be particularly suitable with a teaching staff of limited size and unpredictable specialization from year-to-year, where pluralism may be both more necessary to achieve pedagogical goals and easier to implement consistently. Finally, with enough teachers on staff and at least one instructor willing and prepared to teach a "combined" tutorial, the two models can be hybridized: a pre-tutorial section can introduce the field's intra-disciplinary divide and respective research norms, after which students can offer preferences among sections that includes a "combined tutorial" but only as one option among others that fit within a traditional subfield.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

This paper has examined challenges to teaching the political science-political theory divide effectively and equitably through the case study of introductory research tutorials, drawing on the author's experience teaching a similarly structured course. While high-impact tutorials following this model, a critical juncture in students' academic paths in political science, are an important and relevant setting in which to examine these themes , the specific details offered

in this paper in discussing the baseline model and its alternatives are intended to prompt more general consideration of best practices for pedagogy in Political Science given the persistence of what I have termed the "intra-disciplinary divide" between empirical political science and political theory.

Future work following up on this paper focused narrowly on pedagogical practice for tutorials can test the practice-based contentions that this paper has introduced on the relative suitability of models like the baseline and its alternatives using both survey-based and qualitative approaches. To establish basic facts on issues presented by tutorials similar to the baseline, surveys of early undergraduate students can assess understanding of the disciplines' subfields and the field's intra-disciplinary divide before, during, and after a tutorial experience and examine associations with students' prior academic background. Another promising setting for further study would be assessing the value of an information intervention through random assignment to timing in the course of preference ordering. While more experimental approaches lending themselves to comparison of the relative effectiveness of the alternative models themselves could likewise offer valuable insights, special caution would need to be taken to ensure ethical implementations in light of tutorial design for pedagogical equity that this paper has introduced. Furthermore, though this paper offered initial qualitative insights from the author's teaching practice, future more rigorous qualitative study of the paper's themes using methods like structured interviews or focus groups could provide deeper insights into how students understand the divide, the extent to which they felt prepared to make informed tutorial selections, and whether experiences aligned with expectations.

Although the paper might seem focused on evaluating alternatives to a specifically introduced tutorial model, evaluative ambiguities in weighing alternative approaches suggest the importance of future work that examines more fundamental questions on the field's pluralism and its pedagogical implications, especially across its political science-political theory divide. Ignoring such pluralism can lead to situations where one of the tradition's

approach come to dominate pedagogy practice contingent on departmental power politics, or a log-rolling-by-default that has students sort into subfields by the contingency of chance and prior circumstances at the expense of pedagogical effectiveness and equity. The alternative approaches to the baseline tutorial model introduced embody a pedagogical philosophy where the discipline's pluralism offers complementarity that may redound to student's benefit rather than present an awkward disciplinary disjuncture to be swept under the rug, a perspective with applications beyond the scope of any specific pedagogical application.

Building upon this paper and reflecting these broader aims, future work can build upon this paper's agenda by also considering more specific pedagogical best practices to successfully implement syncretic teaching models like the pre-tutorial and combined tutorial models. Ultimately, and appropriately to the topic at hand, addressing these questions will lie beyond the scope of positivist empiricism or normative rumination alone, but instead demands considering how well-examined pedagogical values can be made consistent with rigorous evidence to help political science become an integrated, coherent, and complementary discipline across the intra-disciplinary divide.

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