

Welcome to PS 300X!

Dear Students,



I'm glad you've decided to join me for the course PS 300X Ethics and Society. This is a class that combines information about the theories behind the study of society, ethics, philosophy, and politics with how government actually affects our lives. I have now taught this course for over a decade, making improvements along the way, and have found while you all are learning, I too learn something new from you every class.

Please take careful note in the syllabus of the schedules and deadlines and grading policies. I have worked hard to put all the information you need there and in the rest of the Blackboard (Bb) shell so you have what you need up front! Naturally, you are welcome to contact me with any questions and to let me know if any links are broken or there are other errors. I work hard to proofread and update but more can always be done.

Because we may not have the chance to meet while you are taking the course, it will be helpful to share information about one another up front; I've asked you to do this in Lesson 0.

I grew up in five different states and spent several years living in Germany and Austria as a young adult. Many of my years were spent in Texas and that is where I returned to complete my doctoral program at the University of Texas in Austin. I had never been to Alaska before coming to the University of Alaska Fairbanks on a job interview in February 2001. But, the university and the environment of the Interior convinced me to try out the "other largest state."

Let me back up a bit. Although I had no family in the military during high school [my father was a Marine and my brother in the Navy], I attended three different high schools. I did the same with college beginning at Swarthmore in Pennsylvania then transferring to Trinity University in Texas. My *wanderlust* couldn't be satisfied, however, and I moved to Vienna for my junior year of college. Ultimately, I graduated from Trinity University in 1994. I had so many interests that I kept switching my major so when I decided that four years had been enough I added up all my credits in German, Economics, and Political Science and they resulted in a degree in International Studies. I had initially been an International Economics major, but in my third year of school it occurred to me that economic relationships are, as are many other relationships,

shaped by power. If I really wanted to understand “ how the world works” I decided I needed to engage a line of study that looked at power – its creation, uses, and dissolution. This is why I began taking political science courses. I received a Fulbright scholarship in my senior year at Trinity University and spent the following year starting a graduate program in Vienna again. I researched how Austria’s entrance into the European Union would affect its status as one of only three formally neutral counties (along with Finland and Switzerland) at the time.

But the Lower 48 called me home for awhile and in Fall of 1995 I moved to Austin, Texas and spent the next six years completing a graduate degree in Government focusing on American politics, public policy, and political theory. The University of Texas at Austin specialized in “American Political Development” a way of studying our current politics that includes our history. I was privileged to take classes from the great Walter Dean Burnham. Also, there I took part in a special pedagogical program called Supplemental Instruction that essentially taught teachers how to teach students to learn how to learn. In my graduate years I taught supplemental instruction courses to the “killer courses” in political science such as constitutional law, served as a teaching assistant, and managed a correspondence course in political parties. In my last two years, I also taught American Government at Concordia University, a small Lutheran institution. My dissertation work examined transnational local institutions for restoring water quality between Canada and the United States in the Great Lakes. I spent the summers of 1998 and 1999 living in Canada and researching along the Michigan-Ontario border. I earned my Ph.D. degree in 2001.

At the University of Alaska Fairbanks I teach a broad range of courses, but tend to focus on the United States - American Government and Politics, Judicial Process, the American Presidency. In addition, I teach two courses in the UAF core curriculum: Political Economy and Ethics and Society. I recently completed my first sabbatical in 2010-2011 and went back to my wandering ways! I spent the Autumn semester at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire as a Dickey Fellow in Arctic Studies and then moved to Oslo, Norway in the Spring for 6 months as a Fulbright Fellow. Both excursions were rewarding, but I am happy to be back in Fairbanks, Alaska - my home. Recently, I had an opportunity to do professional service in Sweden, so I can now say I have visited or lived in seven of the Arctic nations...OK, not Russia and I was in Denmark, not actually Greenland. I hope to spend time in both of these places in the future. Currently I am working with several graduate students and colleagues and the people in the Northwest Arctic and North Slope boroughs on the *Northern Alaska Scenarios Project*.

Now that I've introduced myself, and at great length (a problem we professors have), let me ask you to do the same—but you're free to sin on the side of brevity. Please send me a few paragraphs about yourself with the information I ask for in Lesson 0.

This Blackboard shell also contains the course syllabus (including course goals, requirements, grading policy) and fairly detailed lesson plans. The lesson plans link the readings to distinct sets of questions that build upon one another so that you develop a solid set of skills to evaluate ethical concerns. The lesson plans are designed to help you complete course objectives without the physical presence of an instructor. If you need assistance, however, I'm only an email message away. This **Autumn semester 2015** I will have regular office hours Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:20-13:00. If you want to stop by please do, otherwise I am happy to arrange a meeting in my office, or on Skype, or a phone appointment, just email and ask to set one up.

MY CONTACT INFORMATION:

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**This letter has been approved by Dr Lovecraft to be used as an example.