I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

The capstone seminar concludes, or caps, the political science major. The seminar asks students to critically think about, analyze, discuss, research, and write about scholarship in the different political science subfields. There are two principle components of the course:

A. The use of political science concepts and analytical approaches to engage current political events and controversies in each of the four primary sub-fields of the discipline: American Politics, Political Theory, Comparative Politics, and International Relations. Different departmental faculty members will facilitate these discussions.

B. Research in political science. Over the course of the semester, each student will design and execute a research project (with accompanying paper) on the political science subject of their choosing. At the end of the semester, students will present their findings in a formal presentation to departmental faculty and other invited guests.

There is no new material for students to master. There are no exams. The course will succeed only if each student is willing to constructively participate in class discussions.

The capstone seminar is only open to seniors who will graduate by December 2010.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course assesses students’ capabilities with respect to each of the four departmental learning objectives and many of their associated outcomes:

A. Conceptual and Analytical: Students should be able to engage contemporary political events and public policies using the key concepts and analytical approaches from Political Theory, U.S. Government and Politics, Comparative Politics, and International Relations.

B. Inquiry and Research: Students should be able to define, design, and implement significant research projects in political science.

C. Communication: Students should be able to make clear and effective presentations of their work in writing and in public presentations.

D. Professionalism and Citizenship: Students should know, understand, and be able to meet the expectations of professionalism and citizenship.
III. COURSE MATERIALS

We will use journal articles and book chapters assigned by professors and posted on the course Sakai website in this course. It is your responsibility to download, print, and read each of the assigned pieces before coming to class. You must bring marked-up copies of the readings with you to class.

In addition, there are a number of books about the research process on reserve in the library.

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Your course grade will come from the following elements. Each is described in more detail below.

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<th>Research Paper</th>
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<tr>
<td>Research question</td>
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<td>Annotated bibliography</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research prospectus</td>
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<td>Final research essay</td>
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<tr>
<th>Presentation of Research</th>
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<tr>
<td>Prospectus</td>
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<td>Preliminary results</td>
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<td>Final presentation</td>
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<th>Preparation and Participation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Article summaries (LTDs)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
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All written work will be submitted to Turnit.com through the course Sakai site. Copies of student work will be kept to assess departmental learning objectives. Unclaimed student work will be kept for two academic years before being disposed of in a confidential manner.

A. Research Paper

Over the course of the semester, each student will write a 25-30 page research paper that has been revised through several drafts. This paper will address a significant question in political science and will incorporate original analysis (i.e., it is not a summary of other scholars’ findings and ideas). Projects will be evaluated on two criteria: (1) The significance/importance of the project and (2) how well the author executes the mechanics of the research process. (The grading rubric will be posted on the Sakai site.)

Despite covering an entire semester, this class will move quickly. In order to write a successful research essay, you will need to keep up with the interim assignments so that you have time (a) to do the required work and (b) to revise your work in response to the criticism and suggestions you receive. Students who keep up with the course assignments almost always do better than those who do not.

As you work on the project, be sure to consult regularly with me (my office hours are listed at the beginning of this document) and the other departmental faculty members. We are happy to help you decide on an appropriate topic and method, point you to appropriate resources and data, and provide constructive feedback on your work. The more input you seek, the better your paper will be.

1 This question should be related to a topic with which you are already familiar through either (a) a prior research project on the topic or (b) class discussions/lectures. You should not pick a topic that is largely new to you this semester. You do not have enough time to gain the necessary knowledge to succeed in this course if you do so.
Drafts

1. **Research question:** By Monday, January 25, you will write and submit to me, and four of your colleagues, a 3- to 5-page paper describing the research question you hope to investigate in your paper. The draft must include *at least five (5) citations to scholarly articles and/or books*. A well-developed draft will contain each of the following:

- An interesting, significant research question that could make a contribution to our understanding of public policy, political phenomena, political behavior, political institutions, or political theory
- A explicit statement of the research question you will be investigating
- A clear conceptual articulation of the project’s dependent variable
- A clear articulation of any other important concepts that will a part of the project
- A clear, convincing justification for why this project ought to be done, i.e., the contribution the project might make to political science
- Conform to the *Chicago Manual of Style, 15th ed.*  
  **Note:** We use in-text citations with a reference list in the social sciences, not footnotes or endnotes.

2. **Annotated bibliography:** By Wednesday, February 10, you will create and submit to me an annotated bibliography on your research question. The bibliography must contain *at least 13 scholarly journal articles and two (2) books*. You must check the books out of the library and bring them with you to class on the 10th (unless they are electronic books). A well-developed bibliography will:

- Clearly present the research question
- Contain only articles/books that are relevant to the research question asked
- Accurately summarize each article/book in no more than one paragraph (≤ 150 words)
- Clearly state how each work relates to the research project
- Conform to the *Chicago Manual of Style, 15th ed.*

When you submit the annotated bibliography, you must provide written proof that you have discussed your topic with an appropriate faculty member to ensure adequate coverage of your sources.

**Note:** Once you submit your annotated bibliography, you may not change topics for your project.  
Your research question may evolve, but you may not pick a wholly new subject—no exceptions!

3. **Prospectus:** By your assigned prospectus presentation date (either Feb. 17, Feb. 24, or Mar. 3), you will write an 8- to 10-page research prospectus describing the research question, hypotheses to be tested, and the proposed research design for your project. This draft must include *at least 20 citations to scholarly articles and/or books*. A well-developed draft will contain each of the following:

- All of the elements of a well-developed research question draft, though revised based on the comments received
- A thorough and well-reasoned development of your conceptual hypotheses
- An explicit statement of the operational hypotheses you will test in your paper
- Clear operational definitions of the dependent and independent variables
- If writing an empirical paper,
  - A clear statement of your units of analysis
  - A clear statement of the research design you plan to use to answer the research question
  - A clear statement of the data you will use to test your hypotheses (i.e., your cases if you are doing a case study or your primary data set if you are doing a quantitative project)
- If writing an theory paper, a clear statement of your textual sources and theoretical perspective
4. **Final research essay:** By 5:00 PM one week after your assigned final presentation date (April 14, 21, or 28) you will submit a 25-30 page paper (not including your cover page, reference list, or any appendices) that answers your research question using original analysis. This draft must include **at least 20 citations to scholarly articles and/or books.** A well-developed final draft will:

- Have all of the elements of a well-developed research prospectus, though revised based on the comments received
- Clearly describe all the data/sources used in the analysis
- Clearly present the findings (if empirical, using tables, charts, and/or graphs)
- Have substantively (and, if empirical, statistically) significant findings
- Clearly explicate the substantive (and, if empirical, statistical) significance of the findings
- Draw reasonable and interesting conclusions from the findings
- Raise new questions and potential avenues for future research

**Technicalities**

- All essay drafts, including the annotated bibliography, must be typed, double-spaced, written in 12 point Times New Roman font, use 1” margins, and be printed in black ink. (No color!)
- Students must use in-text, parenthetical citations with a reference list (not footnotes or endnotes). Both must conform to the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th ed.
- Your final draft must include a cover page with the title of the essay, your name, the date of submission, and brief abstract of the paper.
- Please do not put graphics on the cover page or use a report cover (plastic or otherwise).
- Number your pages and staple them together.

**B. Presentation of Research**

Each student will give three formal presentations (using presentation software such as PowerPoint) over the course of the semester. The first presentation will cover the research prospectus. During the second, students will present their preliminary findings. Finally, students will present their entire projects in a conference-like setting. Departmental faculty members will attend the first and third presentations to ask questions and offer constructive criticisms of the projects. (*Note: Your final presentation will be recorded to be viewed by those faculty not present the evening of your presentation.*) The rubric for the final presentation is posted on Sakai. If necessary, refer to the RAND guide to giving briefings (on Sakai) for guidance on how to prepare a presentation.

A one-page memo describing the project and its findings is due the Monday before each student gives the final presentation.

Assignments for the first set of presentation days will be made using a random number generator. Subsequent assignments will be made by the instructor on the basis of the topics students’ have chosen. (The goal is to construct thematic panels, much as one would see at a conference.) *There will be no late or make-up presentations. If you cannot attend class on your assigned day, it is your responsibility to make arrangements with someone else to exchange dates. Students may exchange presentation days only with the instructor’s prior approval.*

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2 Though not strictly possible, every effort will be made to ensure that the time between presentations is roughly equal for all students.
C. Preparation and Participation

1. LTDs

The course employs the Learning Through Discussion (LTD) method. Before the class meets for the topic tour discussions, each student will prepare a written summary for each of the assigned readings. (There will be a total of eight summaries.) Each summary may be no longer than two typed pages. Students should bring two copies of each summary to class, one to be turned in at the beginning of class and one for their own use during the class.

The LTDs must be typed and printed in black ink. I will not accept handwritten work. LTDs may not be submitted late.

2. Daily Participation

The capstone is a seminar class. Discussion and active engagement are the pillars upon which the course is built. Participation from everyone in the room is crucial. As such, participation constitutes a significant portion of the course grade. Students should do the readings and be prepared to discuss their themes and ideas by the assigned date. Showing up to class is not enough to merit a passing participation grade. Not doing the reading (coming to class unprepared) is equivalent to not showing up—you will be marked as absent for any classes to which you come unprepared.

The following rubric will be used to grade student participation:

A Student frequently participates by contributing incisive questions or insightful observations on the course reading or general topic under discussion. Student does not dominate class discussion. Student is attentive and intellectually engaged and displays a constructive attitude. Student is always prepared for class by having completed the assigned reading and written work. Student asks probing questions of peers during their presentations and provides constructive feedback on their work.

B Student is usually prepared and attentive, but does not consistently contribute to class discussion. Student responds well when asked a question directly but hesitates to volunteer his or her own opinion. Student completes work minimally, but without critical thought, or substantively engaging the course material. Student asks some questions of and provides some feedback to peers.

C Student is seldom prepared, occasionally distracted, or otherwise disengaged. Student may interrupt and/or derail discussion through inappropriate remarks or humor; student may blather on about the subject under discussion, but show no real depth of understanding, or clearly not have done the reading. Student may be overly aggressive, or unable to respond satisfactorily to instructor’s and peer’s questions. Student does not provide much constructive feedback to peers.

D Student engages in intensified “C” behavior. Student occasionally does work from other classes, writes notes (as opposed to take notes), sends text messages, does crossword puzzles, checks cell phone calls, socializes with classmates, or engages in other uncooperative behavior during discussion. Student provides little to no feedback to peers and/or the feedback that is provided is not helpful to the recipients or the class discussion.

F Students who have serious attendance problems or become a detrimental presence in the class will earn a grade of “F” for participation.

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3 An LTD form and example summary are available on the course Sakai site.
V. COURSE POLICIES

A. Attendance

Students are required to attend all class sessions and may miss class only for documented emergencies. Each class session missed, other than during the final presentations, will reduce the participation grade by ten (10) percentage points. *Students who miss one of the final presentation sessions will receive no more than a C for their participation (before any other penalties are applied).*

If you are more than ten minutes late to class, you will be counted as absent for that class session unless you have cleared it with the instructor in advance.

B. Classroom Conduct

It is imperative that we treat each other with civility, respect, and dignity in this class. We will likely discuss topics about which people feel passionately and disagree intensely. We will also be critiquing each others’ work. While both of these activities are part of the academic experience, we must do each in a positive, constructive fashion. *Ad hominem* attacks, disrespectful language, and disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Such behavior violates the Student Code of Conduct, and, if necessary, I will refer offenses to the Office of Judicial Affairs.

C. Course Sakai Site

I consider the Sakai site an extension of the course. Students should enroll in and regularly consult the course Sakai site. In addition to containing all of the course readings, assignments, and forms, I will use the site to make announcements and provide additional guidance, including examples, on assignments. It is your responsibility to make sure that you keep up with any additional course material posted to the site.

D. Computers and Cell Phones

To facilitate discussion, you may not use your computer (except when giving your presentation) or cell phone in this course. Turn them off and leave them in your bag. If your cell phone goes off (either audibly or vibrating) or if you are observed using your cell phone during class, you owe the class cookies or some other treat during the next class session.

E. Communication

While I will do my best to respond in a timely fashion to all student communication, I cannot promise that you will receive a response within 24 hours. I generally watch my email between the hours of 6:30 AM and 9:00 PM, Monday through Friday, and only sporadically over the weekend.

F. Late Assignments

All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the due date. Drafts of the research question, annotated bibliography, or research prospectus may not be submitted late *except in the case of a documented emergency*. Late drafts will be recorded as a zero (0) in the grade book, though I will still provide feedback if requested.

Final papers will be penalized one full letter grade per 24-hour period that they are late. If you know that you will not be present on the day an assignment is due, it is your responsibility to ensure that I receive the assignment on time.
G. Submission of Assignments

All work must be submitted in *hard copy* and electronically. I will not accept work by email except for purposes of ensuring an assignment is submitted on time. Students who email assignments must also submit a hard copy within 12 hours or the assignment will be considered late. Drafts must also be submitted through the Sakai site and will be processed through Turnitin.com Failure to submit a draft electronically will reduce the grade for that assignment by one full letter (e.g., dropping a B to a C).

H. Grading

I will use +/- grades in this course and grade on the following scale: A (100-96), A- (95-90), B+ (89-87), B (86-83), B- (82-80), C+ (79-77), C (76-73), C- (72-70), D+ (69-67), D (66-63), D- (62-60), F (59-0). Failure to submit an assignment will result in a 0 for that assignment. If I assign a letter grade on an assignment, I will use the maximum whole-number value for that grade when calculating your course grade. For example, an “A-” would be recorded as a 95 in the grade book.

Please save a data or hard copy of all work you submit until you receive a grade for the course. Essays occasionally become misplaced, and electronic grade files sometimes become corrupted. It is your responsibility to keep a record of all work submitted to protect yourself against such unfortunate events.

I. Cheating and Plagiarism: University of the Pacific Honor Code

The College of the Pacific holds all of its students to a strict standard of academic integrity. In the case of a suspected violation of the University academic honor code, the faculty member will evaluate the alleged infraction and report it immediately to the chair of the department, the College Academic Affairs office, and the Office of Judicial Affairs, which will begin a formal investigation. *If the Office of Judicial Affairs determines that the student is responsible for the honor code violation, the standard penalty in the College is failure of the assignment and/or the course. In such cases, the student will be prevented from dropping or withdrawing from the course, even if the deadline to do so has not expired. Further disciplinary action may also be taken by the Office of Judicial Affairs.* The full text of the University’s Academic Dishonesty Policy can be found at http://web.pacific.edu/x30642.xml.

J. Students with Disabilities

The University of the Pacific is committed to the goal of providing qualified students an equal opportunity to attain college education regardless of disability. Pacific will make efforts toward meeting reasonable requests for services and accommodations to students with disabilities. To that end, please notify the instructor about any special needs you may require during the first two weeks of the semester. Students requesting accommodations due to a disability should provide the instructor with an accommodations request letter from the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities, Bannister Hall, Room 101, (209) 946-2879, E-mail: ssd@uop.edu, website: http://www.uop.edu/education/ssd.

VI. COURSE SCHEDULE

*The following schedule is subject to revision. Any changes will be announced through the course Sakai site. It is the students’ responsibility to ensure that they are up to date on any changes. All readings are posted on the course Sakai site and should be completed by the class for which they are assigned.*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic(s)/Event(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 13</td>
<td>Introduction to course, setting expectations, and review of library resources Discussion of possible research questions</td>
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Jan. 20  More discussion of possible research questions

Jan. 27  Peer review of research question proposals

*Note: To facilitate the peer review, you must submit your draft no later than 12 PM on Monday, Jan. 25.*

Feb. 3  Political Theory: Whither Patriotism? (led by Prof. Becker)
  • Kateb, “Is Patriotism a Mistake?”
  • Schaar, “The Case for Patriotism”

Feb. 10  International Relations (led by Prof. Klunk)
  • Topic and readings to be determined

*Note: The annotated bibliography is due. Research topics are locked in.*

Feb. 17  Prospectus presentations (20 min. each incl. questions)

*Note: The written prospectus is due on the day you give your presentation.*

Feb. 24  Prospectus presentations (20 min. each incl. questions)

Mar. 3  Prospectus presentations (20 min. each incl. questions)

Mar. 10  No class – Spring Break

Mar. 17  Preliminary results presentations (15 min. each incl. questions)

Mar. 24  Preliminary results presentations (15 min. each incl. questions)

Mar. 31  American Politics: Does Gerrymandering Increase Legislative Polarization? (led by Prof. Smith)
  • Carson, Crespin, Finocchiaro, and Rhode, “Redistricting and Party Polarization in the U.S. House of Representatives”
  • McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal, “Does Gerrymandering Cause Polarization?”

Apr. 7  Comparative Politics (led by Prof. Kim)
  • Topic and readings to be determined

Apr. 14  Final research presentations (30 min. each incl. questions)

*Note: A one-page memo summarizing your project is due the Monday before your presentation. The final draft of your paper is due one week after you give your presentation.*

Apr. 21  Final research presentations (30 min. each incl. questions)

Apr. 28  Final research presentations (30 min. each incl. questions)
SOME ANSWERS TO THE BURNING QUESTION
(What Should Be in My Empirical Research Paper?)

Below is an outline of a typical empirical research paper. It includes topics that every paper should cover and questions that every paper should answer. An average paper will ask a relatively uninteresting (i.e., well understood) question and follow this outline in a perfunctory manner. An above average paper will investigate a more interesting problem, will provide more context, and will more fully engage the reader in the topic. An excellent paper will weave the contents into a coherent narrative that effortlessly takes the reader from an interesting question through an original data analysis with significant findings to an interesting conclusion that raises important avenues for further research. Make yours an excellent paper.

Important notes: (1) If you are unfamiliar with any of the terms used in this outline, please come see me during office hours before the second class meeting. (2) While the outline includes estimated page numbers, the actual number of pages devoted to each section will depend on (a) the your research question and (b) the research design you use. If you are doing a case study, for example, some of the material listed in the “Data & Method” section is more appropriately presented in the “Results” section.

I. Introduction (about 1-2 pages)

- Introduce the topic.
- Introduce the research question—i.e., the “why” question you are trying to answer in the paper. What is the political phenomenon that you want to explain or evaluate?
- Motivate the discussion. What is the significance of your project? Why should someone care about this topic? What will be different if we can answer your why question?
- State the thesis of your argument—i.e., what are your main findings?

II. Literature Review (about 8-10 pages)

- More fully describe your research question.
  - What does the political phenomenon you are trying to explain look like in the real world?
- Situate your project in the existing literature.
  - What theories/perspectives can be used to explain the phenomenon of interest?
  - What are the major concepts? How are they defined? Are they correct? Why or why not?
  - What have other researchers/theorists written about your subject? How have they answered your question in the past? What methods/data have they used?
  - Evaluate the literature: How good are others’ answers? How appropriate are their methods/data?
  - What questions remain unanswered in the literature?
- Derive the hypotheses you will be testing in the paper.
  - Which theories/perspectives will you be using in your paper? Why those and not others?
  - What is your answer(s) to the research question? Why do you think it is right?
  - How does your answer/project differ from those of others? How does it correct a problem or answer a heretofore unanswered question?
  - Provide an explicit statement of the alternative hypotheses being tested in your project. (Note: You should be able to state, but probably will not include in your paper, your null hypotheses.)
III. Data & Method (about 6-7 pages)

- Describe your research design.
  - Are you doing a qualitative (i.e., case) study? Are you performing a survey? An experiment? Are you doing a quantitative analysis of the written record? Which kind of regression are you using?
  - Why did you choose this method? How does the method you chose help you to answer the research question? Why is it better than other possible methods?
- Describe your units of analysis.
- Describe where you got your data.
  - Did you get it from an existing source(s)? If so, explain what that source is. Did you generate the data? If so, explain how you generated the data. Did you use cases? If so, how did you pick your cases? Did you run an experiment? If so, describe the experiment.
- Describe your dependent variable.
  - What is the operational measure for your concept? Why is it a valid measure for your concept? What kind of variable is it (i.e., what level of measurement)? How is it coded? What values can it take?
- Describe your independent variables.
  - What are the operational measures for your concepts? Why are they valid measures for your concepts? What kind of variable is each (i.e., what level of measurement)? How is each coded?

IV. Results (about 8-10 pages, including tables and charts)

- For regression analyses:
  - Describe the distribution of your data. How are each of your variables distributed? What are their mean values? What are the standard deviations? Are there any interesting univariate statistics your reader should be aware of? Are there any interesting bivariate relationships?
  - Describe the results of your regression(s). For each independent variable, what is the estimated coefficient? Is it substantively significant? Is it statistically significant?
  - Describe the real world implications of your findings. What do your estimated coefficients mean in terms of the research question that your are seeking to answer?
  - Describe the overall fit of your model. Is the model statistically significant? What is $R^2$ for your model? What does that mean? What is the MSE? What does that mean?
- For case studies:
  - Explain/describe your case(s) in as much detail as possible.
- Draw conclusions about your hypotheses. Are they confirmed by the analysis? If they are not confirmed, explain why you think that happened. What else might account for the patterns you observe? What do these results mean for our understanding of your phenomenon of interest?

V. Conclusion (about 1 page)

- Restate your research question.
- Summarize your major findings.
- Point to interesting, unanswered questions raised by your research.
QUESTIONS THAT YOU NEED TO BE SURE ARE ANSWERED IN YOUR PAPER BEFORE YOU SUBMIT IT

1. Do you clearly specify the main research question or problem? What is the “why” question?

2. Do you demonstrate the value and significance of your research question and indicate how your research findings will contribute to scientific knowledge about your topic?

3. Do you propose clear explanations for the political phenomena that interest you? What types of relationships are hypothesized? Do you discuss alternative explanations?

4. Are the independent and dependent variables clearly identified? If so, what are they? Have you considered any alternative or control variables? If so, identify them.

5. Are the hypotheses empirical, general, and plausible?

6. Are the concepts in the hypotheses clearly defined? Are the operational definitions given for the variables valid and reasonable? What is the level of measurement for each of the variables?

7. What method of data collection is used to make the necessary observations? Are the observations valid and the measure reliable?

8. Have you made empirical observations about the units of analysis specified in the hypotheses?

9. If a sample is used, what type of sample is it? Does the type of sample seriously affect the conclusions that can be drawn from the research? Do you discuss this?

10. What type of research design is used? Does the research design adequately test the hypothesized relationships?

11. Are the statistics that are used appropriate for the level of measurement of the variables?

12. Are the research findings presented and discussed clearly? Is the basis for deciding whether a hypothesis is supported or refuted clearly specified?

13. Do you discuss the substantive implication of your results in addition to their statistical significance? What are the real-world implications for your findings?

14. What additional questions do you think your work raises?

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