James Vance Elliott

James Vance Elliott had a distinguished career as Professor of Political Science at Tufts University. Elliott was honored on many occasions. In 1975 he received the Leibner Award nomination; in 1976 he received the Alumni Distinguished Service Award, and the Seymour Simches Award at the 1989 honor convocation.

Elliott earned his Bachelor of Science degree from Boston University, became an infantry officer assigned to active duty in the Allied Campaign, Operation Overlord in Northwest Europe. Once he recovered from battle wounds he received in the Rhineland, he returned to Boston University where he earned two Masters Degrees in Government. Elliott then studied for the Doctorate of Philosophy at Harvard. It was while laboring for his doctoral dissertation in 1951 that he was prevailed upon by George S. Miller, Chairman of the Government Department and Dean of Administration, to come to The Hill to help meet the flood tide of enrollment in Government. Elliott devised and launched a number of new courses, concentrated on the development of courses in political thought which encompasses political theory, philosophy, and doctrine from the earliest thinkers to the most recent scholars. He received his Ph.D. in 1954 when he was promoted from Instructor to Assistant Professor. In 1956 he became Chair of The Department of Political Science.

Elliott served at Tufts University for thirty-nine years. He was an Instructor, a Professor, a Chair, an acting-Chair for The Department of Political Science. Elliott taught fourteen different courses, but none more brilliantly than his instruction in political thought. Here his teaching is marked by the scholarly virtues of thoughtfulness, thoroughness, and judiciousness. Elliott long ago chose to devote his career to teaching, advising, University service and leadership in the Department of Political Science. His scholarly works have included many tracts including introductions to major studies in his field and book reviews. The lasting impact of his career at Tufts is the stimulation and generation of knowledge in the arena that is the very heart of higher education, the classroom. James Vance Elliot’s contributions to Tufts University have made this a greater institution.

The James Vance Elliott Political Science Prize

Each year students within The Department are chosen to receive The James Vance Elliott Political Science Prize. The Prize is awarded in the senior year to students majoring in Political Science whose achievements best combine academic excellence with active participation and effective leadership in campus and civic affairs.

Information for the James Vance Elliott biography was obtained through Political Science faculty and from an original document from the Tufts University Archives.