

Introduction to Political Theory

POLI 2060

Classroom: 101 Tureaud

Class Days: Monday-Wednesday-Friday

Class Time: 1230 – 1:20

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Office hours: 2-4 MW & by appointment

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Course Description and Objectives

The purpose of this course is to introduce undergraduates to Western political thought. The intent is not only to satisfy certain historical curiosities or make a leap toward being well-read in the Western political canon, but to investigate the timeless and enduring questions of political philosophy from the pre-Socratic philosophers to the present. The philosophers we study are not merely representatives of their time, but participants in the timeless quest to distinguish truth and error and to become lovers of wisdom. With their insights, we hope to participate in this quest as well.

The primary objective of this course is that students are exposed to great texts in Western political philosophy. We will raise questions concerning justice, the role of virtue, ethics and piety in political order, whether political life is natural, the best regime, and many other issues. One particular focus will be the role of culture, prejudice, and manners “to create in us,” as Edmund Burke stated, “love, veneration, admiration, or attachment” to law and our political institutions. Unique for a political theory course, the students will read two authors often considered part of the conservative tradition (Burke and Scruton), though the course is balanced with an extensive discussion of liberalism using John Locke and a lecture on and frequent references in other lectures to the thought of Karl Marx.

There will be class discussion and likely (and hopefully) disagreement. In arguing for one’s position or against another’s, students must resort to philosophical argumentation, not obvious fallacies (e.g., *ad hominem* and *tu quoque* fallacies) and labels socially useful for denouncing another. Simply calling another position “Marxist,” “far right,” or anything of that sort is insufficient to establish one’s case. Socially powerful language might be justified in the public sphere, but not in the academy. Of course, respect to one another is a basic duty in the academic environment.

As a social science general education elective this course is designed to acquaint you with various view of human nature, as well as how human beings organize themselves into political societies, real and imagined. You will be expected to achieve an understanding of the informing factors of global interdependence, including economic forces, political dynamics, and cultural and linguistic difference. All general education courses are designed to enhance the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that facilitate the improvement of the civic life of communities.

Required Books

The following books are available at the LSU bookstore. You must obtain a copy of these books. For any book marked with ‘**’, an alternative edition (including a digital edition) is acceptable and/or available.

Plato, *Gorgias*, trans. James H. Nichols, Jr. [ISBN: 978-0801485275]

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Robert C. Bartlett and Susan D. Collins [ISBN: 978-0226026756]

Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield, 2nd Edition [ISBN: 978-0226500447]

Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan* ed. Edwin Curley [ISBN: 978-0872201774]**

John Locke, *Two Treatises on Government*, ed. Peter Laslett [ISBN: 978-0521357302]**

Edmund Burke *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Oxford World’s Classics) ed. L. G. Mitchell [ISBN: 978-0199539024]**

Roger Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism* [978-1587315039]**

The following works are available on Moodle:

Sophocles, *Antigone*; David Van Drunen “Precursors of the Reformed Tradition,” *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms*; Martin Luther, *On Secular Authority*; John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*; Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man*; Karl Marx *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*

Grading and Class Requirements

Quizzes: 40% (40 points)

Mid-Term Exam: 30% (30 points)

Final Exam: 30% (30 points)

Quizzes: At least twice per week there will be a quiz given at the beginning of class. These quizzes test whether the student has completed the reading. They are not designed to test an understanding of the text; they test only the completion of the reading assignment. Hence, the questions typically require only short and incontrovertible answers. Examples will be given in the first week of class. The questions are given orally. Most quizzes will have a bonus question.

Students must be prepared to receive the quiz at the beginning of class (12:30). Students will complete the quiz on their own 8 ½ by 11 sheet of paper using a black or blue ink pen. The paper must not be frayed or torn on the edges. Students will write their name and the date on the top right corner.

When the quiz is complete, the student will hand his or her quiz to the student at his or her left, right, front, or back (determined by the instructor) and the student will grade the quiz. Students will grade only one quiz. After the quiz is passed, no one is permitted to change answers. The grader will make no marks other than a mark for a false answer and the overall grade on the top of the paper. The overall grade will be the number of false answers (e.g., -2). If the student gave all correct answers, including for the bonus question, then the score will be positive (e.g., +1).

For the final course quiz grade, each student will receive 40 points plus or minus the balance of his or her quiz scores. Put differently, the student is given 40 points at the beginning of class and his or her quiz scores either add to or subtract from these points. For example, if the balance of a student's quiz scores from throughout the course is "minus 2" (or -2), she will receive 38 out of 40 points. The maximum final score can be up to **45 points**, achieved by correctly answering bonus questions. This means that a student can potentially earn five bonus points toward his overall course grade. **The instructor will drop the bottom three quiz scores.**

The quizzes will be used to record attendance and **there will be no make-ups for any quiz. No question will be repeated for any tardy student.**

Mid-Term Examination: This test will be given in class on Wednesday, October 7. It will contain a combination of objective and essay questions.

Final Examination: This test will cover all assigned material. It will be administered on **Thursday, December 10, 2015 at 12:30 – 2:30.**

There will be no make-ups for the mid-term and final examinations, unless by approval from the instructor or due to severe emergency.

Special lectures: There may be opportunities throughout the semester to earn up to **three** bonus points for attending certain special lectures.

Grading Scale:

A+	= 97 – 100
A	= 93 – 96
A-	= 90 – 92
B+	= 87 – 89
B	= 83 – 86
B-	= 80 – 82
C+	= 77 – 79
C	= 73 – 76
C-	= 70 – 72
D+	= 67 – 69
D	= 63 – 66
D-	= 60 – 62
F	= 0 – 59

Notice on Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. Attendance will be recorded using the quizzes. There will be no quiz make-ups, **even in the case of excused absences**. There will be no automatic lowering of the student's grade due to multiple absences. However, missing class entails losing all the points in the quiz for that day, and the absent student will not be afforded any additional opportunity to take the quiz. The student will also be less prepared for the mid-term and final examinations. It behooves the student to attend class.

Students must bring the assigned book to class.

Fundamental Points

Cheating and Collusion: Students suspected of cheating or colluding on quizzes or exams will immediately be brought to the dean for disciplinary action. Students, of course, are free to study with each other.

Classroom Conduct: Disruptive actions, including talking out of turn, texting, passing notes, not paying attention, etc. will not be tolerated. Be attentive and courteous to your instructor and your colleagues.

Electronics: Laptops, phones, I-Pads, e-readers, and other electronic devices may not be used, unless they are either for the purpose of taking notes or reading the assigned books.

Food: Eating food in the classroom is not permitted. Drinks are permitted.

Moodle: To access the course's Moodle page, please sign into your My LSU account. Contact the instructor immediately, if you cannot access it.

Reading Assignments:

Week 1:

Monday, August 24 Introduction to the course / philosophical argumentation & fallacies

CLASSICAL POLITICAL THOUGHT

Wednesday, August 26 Sophocles, *Antigone* [On Moodle]

Friday, August 28 Plato, *Gorgias*, p. 49-70 (466a-481b)

Week 2:

Monday, August 31 Plato, *Gorgias*, p. 25-49 (447a-465e)

Wednesday, September 2 Plato, *Gorgias*, p. 70-103 (481b-505d)

Friday, September 4 Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, p. 1-25 (Book I)

Week 3:

Monday, September 7 **NO CLASS** – Labor Day

Wednesday, September 9 Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, p. 26-41 (Book II)

Friday, September 11 Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, p. 42-66 (Book III)

Week 4:

Monday, September 14 Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, p. 67-89 (Book IV)

Wednesday, September 16 Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, p. 90-114 (Book V)

Friday, September 18 Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, p. 115-134 (Book VI)

Week 5:

Monday, September 21 Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, p. 135-162 (Book VII)

Wednesday, September 23 Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, p. 163-187 (Book VIII)

Friday, September 25 Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, p. 188-209 (Book IX)

Week 6:

Monday, September 28 Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, p. 210-235 (Book X)

MEDIEVAL AND EARLY PROTESTANT POLITICAL THOUGHT

Wednesday, September 30 Luther and Calvin: Van Drunen “Precursors of the Reformed Tradition,” *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms* p. 21-62 [On Moodle]

Friday, October 2 Luther, *On Secular Authority* [On Moodle]

Week 7:

Monday, October 5 Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 2.2.12-15; 4.20.1-32 [On Moodle]

Wednesday, October 7 **Mid-Term Examination**

MODERN POLITICAL THOUGHT

Friday, October 9 Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 3-33 (Ch. 1-7)

Week 8:

Monday, October 12	Machiavelli, <i>The Prince</i> , p. 34-71 (Ch. 8-18)
Wednesday, October 14	Machiavelli, <i>The Prince</i> , p.71-105 (Ch. 19-26)
Friday, October 16	Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , p. 6-37 (Ch. 1-7)
Week 9:	
Monday, October 19	Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , p. 38-74 (Ch. 8-12)
Wednesday, October 21	Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , p. 74-105 (Ch. 13-16)
Friday, October 23	Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , p. 106-127, 453-468 (Ch. 17-19, 46)
Week 10:	
Monday, October 26	Locke, <i>Second Treatise</i> , p. 267-302 (Ch. 1-5)
Wednesday, October 28	Locke, <i>Second Treatise</i> , p. 303-330 (Ch. 6 & 7)
Friday, October 30	NO CLASS – Fall Holiday
Week 11:	
Monday, November 2	Locke, <i>Second Treatise</i> , p. 330-363 (Ch. 8-11)
Wednesday, November 4	Locke, <i>Second Treatise</i> , p. 364-397 (Ch. 12-16)
Friday, November 6	Locke, <i>Second Treatise</i> , p. 397-428 (Ch. 17-19)
Week 12:	
Monday, November 9	Burke, <i>Reflections on the Revolution in France</i> , p. TBD.
Wednesday, November 11	Burke, <i>Reflections on the Revolution in France</i> , p. TBD.
Friday, November 13	Burke, <i>Reflections on the Revolution in France</i> , p. TBD.
Week 13:	
Monday, November 16	Burke, <i>Reflections on the Revolution in France</i> , p. TBD.
Wednesday, November 18	Paine, <i>Rights of Man</i> , pg. 8-43 [On Moodle]
Friday, November 20	Marx, “Estranged labor,” <i>Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts</i> , pg. 28-35 [On Moodle]

CONVERSATION WITH THE TRADITION

Week 14:

Monday, November 23 Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism*, p. 1-16, 111-126

Wednesday, November 25 NO CLASS – Thanksgiving Holiday

Friday, November 27 NO CLASS – Thanksgiving Holiday

Week 15:

Monday, November 30 Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism*, p. 17-37

Wednesday, December 2 Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism*, p. 38-63

Friday, December 4 Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism*, p. 64-86, 174-181

Final Exam:

Thursday, December 10 FINAL EXAM (12:30 – 2:30)