

POLS 2300 - 090
Introduction to Political Theory
Ethics and Politics

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Spring 2012

Time & location: online
(access via CIS)

Please read this syllabus carefully. You are responsible for all the information, assignments, and deadlines detailed in this document. All times mentioned in the syllabus refer to Utah time.

Course Description:

This course provides an introduction to political theory as one of the subfields within political science. Political theory is a unique subfield among the others because it is concerned, explicitly or implicitly, with normative questions in addition to (or, sometimes instead of) empirical ones – that is, with questions of what *ought to be* in addition to what *is*. Addressing fundamental questions of how people live together in a society and how they organize or should organize such living, political theory’s pedigree stretches back at least twenty five hundred years and theory attracts attention of a great number of thinkers. Given the staggering volume and complexity of their contributions, in this course we will only touch on some of the central issues of the discipline and can hope to achieve only a very preliminary understanding of some of the controversies still much alive in political theory today. Accordingly, this syllabus does not come close to representing a comprehensive bibliography of the materials that are available in political theory, not even on the introductory level. Yet, it may prove a decent starting point for your initiation into this fascinating area of political science.

The course aims to be an introduction to political theory—or, more ambitiously, to thinking about the political—rather than an introduction to the history of such thinking. In other words, the course wants to go beyond mere “learning about” thinkers and their theories, and will focus on connecting theory to practice. Throughout the semester, we will engage the (potentially) practical aspect of political theory and critically evaluate its normative claims from the standpoint of a citizen and, ultimately, a human being living here and now, in a rich democracy in the twenty-first century. Understanding key concept of political theory can be seen as a tool with which to reflectively assess everyday politics, both domestic and international, and to think more clearly about the foundational premises of American political institutions and practices. You will be required to think critically and independently, and learn how to support your arguments with evidence.

To these ends, we will focus primarily on the following questions: What is “politics” and, perhaps more fundamentally, “the political”? What is the role of the political in human life? What is power? Can there be order without power? To what extent can politics take direction from the moral principles and to what extent should it bracket ethics in order to secure stability? What is the relationship between the individual and others, between the individual and society, between the individual and the state?

Let's make it clear from the start that for the most part, there are no definite, clear-cut answers to the above questions. To some, this may be the cause of dismay and, in the end, refusal to even bother thinking about political theory and/or politics. To others, however, the open-endedness of inquiry is what makes political theory captivating. Political thought is, like politics and social life itself, dynamic and amenable to reinterpretation. Therefore, to repeat, this course will not be about memorization of definitions or learning biographical data of people long dead. Its purpose is to introduce you to some of the essential questions of the discipline and enable you to think about them in an intelligent, informed manner. Its ultimate goal is to help you develop a broader appreciation for living among others, for politics, political theory, and for thinking as such. Hopefully, the course will be useful for embarking on such a journey.

Course objectives:

Throughout this course you will:

- Develop and/or improve your ability to think independently and critically, to articulate and defend your own views in relation to the major political controversies discussed throughout this course.
- Gain a sense of what is political theory.
- Demonstrate a basic understanding of the fundamental philosophical and political concepts that have defined modern western political discourse.
- Practice the ability to connect theory to contemporary political practice, and to critically analyze and interpret contending political arguments in a way that considers the moral and political implications of these intellectual sources for present day thinking, judging, and acting.

Required Books:

There are no required books for this course. All readings will be available in electronic form on Canvas. However, you may consider obtaining the following (very inexpensive) texts to save yourself extensive printing. The editions listed below are those used in the course.

- Plato, *Four Texts on Socrates* (Cornell; trans. West & West) or *The Trial and Death of Socrates* (Hackett, trans. Grube) - both books contain both the *Crito* and *Apology of Socrates*
- Machiavelli, *The Prince* (Penguin Classics)
- J.S. Mill, *On Liberty* (Hackett; ed. by E. Rapaport)
- K. Marx & B. Engels, *Communist Manifesto* (International Publishers)

Readings:

All required and optional texts are available on Canvas. Since the texts are complex and may be challenging, each required reading comes with a set of questions designed to help you navigate the text and better understand the main argument, thus making it easier for you to participate in the class discussions and score better in assignments. The questions are by no means exhaustive – neither the lectures nor the class discussions will be limited to those; any other questions and/or comments you may have about the readings are welcome and encouraged.

Course Requirements:

Participation	10%	50 points
Text Comprehension pieces	30%	150 points
Short Paper or Midterm Exam	30%	150 points
Term Paper <i>or</i> Final Exam	30%	150 points

- i) *You can do both the short paper and the midterm (only the better score will count)*
- ii) *You choose **either** the term paper **or** the final exam*

Grading Policy: (100% = 500 points)

A	94 – 100%	(470 – 500 pts)
A-	90 – 93.9%	(450 – 469 pts)
B+	87 – 89.9%	(435 – 449 pts)
B	83 – 86.9%	(415 – 434 pts)
B-	80 – 82.9%	(400 – 414 pts)
C+	77 – 79.9%	(385 – 399 pts)
C	73 – 76.9%	(365 – 384 pts)
C-	70 – 72.9%	(350 – 364 pts)
D+	67 – 69.9%	(335 – 349 pts)
D	63 – 66.9%	(315 – 334 pts)
D-	60 – 62.9%	(300 – 314 pts)
E	below 60%	(0 – 299 pts)

Participation: In this course, participation means active presence on the Canvas discussion board. For each week, a question will be posted on the board and you are expected to offer your answer and/or comment on answer(s) by other students. Your entry should be substantive and reasoned: it should indicate your opinion and give reasons for it (in other words, comments such as, “Great question,” “I agree with Jim,” “I do not know/care,” etc. will not count). One such entry per week is considered enough but you are not limited to just one. I will indicate when your response meets the expected quality and is therefore “counted” for that week.

Text Comprehension pieces: 1-2 pages (250 words minimum, 500 words maximum): answer to a question posted on Canvas. In most cases, you will be asked to summarize the main argument(s) of the text. A question will be posted for each week’s readings, starting with Week 2. You have to submit at least five summaries before the spring break. You are expected to turn in *ten* comprehension pieces (15 points each); you may submit up to twelve – in that case, only the ten highest scores will count towards your grade. You may use the preparatory questions as a guideline but the piece should be a coherent answer to the posted question, not an assemblage of disparate answers to the prep questions. *All Text Comprehension papers are due on Sunday (midnight) of the week for which the reading is assigned; no exceptions - papers submitted after deadline will not be accepted.*

Short Paper: *Optional.* 4 – 6 pages (1200 words minimum, 1800 words maximum); analytical/comparative essay. Topic will be distributed in advance at least ten days before the due date. You will be expected to demonstrate a solid understanding of the concepts discussed in class and ability to provide meaningful textual support for your claims. Drawing on sources outside the assigned readings is permitted but not required nor encouraged; proper referencing/citation is mandatory (instructions will be included with the topic). *You can choose to submit this paper or take the midterm exam; however, you can do both and only the higher score will count towards your final grade.* Also, if you prefer the term paper to the final exam, you may want to consider submitting the paper as a way of getting familiar with the expected format, style, and quality of the term paper, as these will be the same.

Midterm exam: *Optional.* The exam will take place during the week before the spring break, most likely on Thursday 3/8 (the day will be confirmed by the end of January). It will be administered by the University Testing Center or the TACC team in the Marriott Library. Off-campus exams are possible, subject to proctor verification by the TACC (details will be announced in January). The exam will be 80 minutes long, comprehensive, consisting of short answers and/or short essay. *You can choose to take the midterm or submit the short paper; however, you can do both and only the higher score will count towards your final grade.* Also, if you prefer the final exam to the term paper, you may want to consider

taking the midterm as a way of getting familiar with the format of the final exam, as these will be the same.

Term paper: *Optional.* 8 – 12 pages (2400 words minimum, 3600 words maximum); analytical/comparative essay. Topics will be distributed in advance (at least two to choose from). In addition, after consultation with me, you may develop your own topic. As with the short papers, you will be expected to demonstrate a solid understanding of the ideas discussed in class and ability to provide appropriate textual support for your claims. More detailed guidelines for writing this essay will be provided with the topics. *You opt for either the term paper or the final exam* (i.e., you cannot do both). No late papers – no exception.

Final exam: *Optional.* The exam will take place during the final week of the semester, most likely on Wednesday 5/2 (the day will be confirmed by the end of January) and will be administered by the University Testing Center or the TACC team in the Marriott Library. Off-campus exams are possible, subject to proctor verification by the TACC (details will be announced in January). The exam will be 120 minutes long, comprehensive; short answers and/or short essays covering the topics discussed in class during the whole semester. The final will be more extensive than the midterm but the format of the exams will be the same. *You opt for either the final exam or the term paper* (i.e., you cannot do both).

Late paper policy: Unless in documented emergency and arranged in advance, ten points will be deducted from the paper score for each day past the deadline. Term papers will not be accepted after May 2 – no exception (failure to submit the paper before 5/2 midnight will result in zero points for the assignment).

Extra Credit: Given the number of built-in opportunities for achieving good scores, there will be no extra credit assignments in this class.

Paper logistics: Papers need to be submitted through Canvas; you will get the graded papers back the same way. Papers shorter or longer than required will be accepted but the final grade will be reduced by one grade.

Accommodations/Equal Access:

The University of Utah, Department of Political Science seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the instructor and to the Center for Disability Services, <http://disability.utah.edu/> 162 Olpin Union Bldg, 581-5020 (V/TDD) to make arrangements for accommodations. This information is available in alternative format with prior notification.

Student Academic Conduct:

The University of Utah's policies pertaining to Academic Misconduct and Dishonesty will be carefully observed and strictly enforced in this class. This policy appears on pages 11-13 of the 2000-2002 General Catalog and in the electronic Policy and Procedures Manual at <http://www.admin.utah.edu/ppmanual/8/8-10.html>. Any instance of plagiarism, or other forms of academic misconduct, will result in a failing grade for that assignment and will likely result in a failing grade for the course. "Plagiarism" means the intentional unacknowledged use or incorporation of any other person's work in, or as a basis for, one's own work offered for academic consideration or credit or for public presentation. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, representing as one's own, without attribution, any other individual's words, phrasing, ideas, sequence of ideas, information or any other mode or content of expression. For a detailed definition, see the departmental web page. **Your papers may be subject to Turnitin scrutiny.**

Class schedule and readings

WHAT IS POLITICAL THEORY

Week 1 (1/9 – 1/15): Political Science, Political Theory

- J.P. Thiele, “Theory and Vision”
- L. Strauss, “What is Liberal Education”
- J. Elster, “Three Varieties of Political Theory” (*optional*)
- R. Grant, “Political Theory, Political Science, and Politics” (*optional*)

THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE STATE

Week 2 (1/16 – 1/22): Humans as political animals I

- Aristotle, selections from *Politics*
- H. Arendt, selections from *The Human Condition*
- J.S. Mill, selections from *On Liberty*
- Cicero, selections from *On Duties* and *The Laws* (*optional*)

Week 3 (1/23 – 1/29): Humans as political animals II

- N. Machiavelli, selections from *The Prince*
- M. Weber, selections from “Politics as a Vocation”
- A. Margalit, selections from *On Compromise*
- Gandhi, selections (*optional*)
- M. Walzer, “Dirty Hands” (*optional*)

Week 4 (1/30 – 2/5): Power and resistance I

- Plato, *Crito*
- T. Hobbes, selections from *Leviathan*
- Plato, selections from *Apology of Socrates* (*optional*)

Week 5 (2/6 – 2/12): Power and resistance II

- J. Locke, selections from *The Social Contract*
- H. Thoreau, selections from *Civil Disobedience*
- H. Arendt, “Civil Disobedience” (*optional*)

Week 6 (2/13 – 2/19): Power and resistance III

- M. Foucault, “Two Lectures”
- M. Foucault, “The Subject and Power”
- Gaventa, selections from *Power and Powerlessness*
- **Topic for the short paper will be announced by 2/15 noon**
- **Register for the midterm exam by 2/19 midnight**

THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY

Week 7 (2/20 - 2/26): “I”, “We”, and “Others” I

- C. Schmitt, selections from *The Concept of the Political*
- J. Locke, “A Letter Concerning Tolerance”
- J.P. Sartre, selections from “Portrait of the Anti-Semite”
- **Short paper due by 2/26 midnight**

Week 8 (2/27 – 3/4): “I”, “We”, and “Others” II

- R. Rorty, selections from “Justice as Larger Loyalty”
- Ch. Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition”
- K.A. Appiah, “Identity, Authenticity, Survival”
- M.L. King, Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (*optional*)
- ***Study guide for the midterm exam available by 2/27 noon***

Week 9 (3/5 – 3/11): Equality

- M. Wollstonecraft, “A Vindication of the Rights of Woman”
- C. Pateman, “The Fraternal Social Contract”
- J. Shklar, “Liberalism of Fear”
- E.C. DuBois, selections from *Feminism and Suffrage* (*optional*)
- ***At least five Text Comprehension pieces due by 3/11 midnight***
- ***Midterm exam (optional; time available: 80 minutes): Thursday 3/8, anytime between 12:00 and 4:00pm. University Testing Center, Student Services Building or the TACC Offices in the Marriott Library. Off-campus locations can be arranged.***

SPRING BREAK 3/12 – 3/18

THE INDIVIDUAL, SOCIETY, AND HISTORY/DEVELOPMENT

Week 10 (3/19 – 3/25): Progress or regress? I

- J.J. Rousseau, selections from the *Discourses*
- I. Kant, “What is Enlightenment?”
- R. Bork, “Modern Liberalism and Cultural Decline” (*optional*)

Week 11 (3/26 – 4/1): Progress or regress? II

- K. Marx & B. Engels, selections from *Communist Manifesto*
- R. Nozick, selections from *The Road to Serfdom*
- K. Marx, “On the Materialist Conception of History” (*optional*)
- K. Marx, “Eleven Theses on Feuerbach” (*optional*)
- ***Register for the final exam by 4/1 midnight***

JUSTICE

Week 12 (4/2 – 4/8): Thinking about justice then and now

- Plato, selections from *The Republic*
- J. Rawls, selections from *A Theory of Justice*
- J. Rawls, “Justice as Fairness: Political Not Metaphysical” (*optional*)

Week 13 (4/9 – 4/15): Against Rawls

- S.M. Okin, “Whose Justice?”
- I.M. Young, “The Idea of Impartiality”
- M. Sandel, “Justice and the Common Good”

Week 14 (4/16 – 4/22): Beyond Rawls

- T. Pogge, selections from *Global Justice*
- M. Nussbaum, “Capabilities and Social Justice”
- A. Sen, “Equality of What?” and selections from *Freedom as Development* (*optional*)
- ***Last opportunity to submit a Text Comprehension paper (by 4/22 midnight)***

Week 15 (4/23 – 4/29): Review & conclusion

- No new readings for this week

● ***Topics for the Term Paper and the study guide for the final exam will be available by 4/23 noon***

Week 16 (4/30 – 5/3)

● ***Final Exam (if you choose this option): Wednesday 5/2, anytime between 9:00 and 1:00pm (time available: 120 minutes); University Testing Center, Student Services Building or the TACC Offices in the Marriott Library. Off-campus locations can be arranged.***

● ***Term paper (if you choose this option): due by 5/2 midnight***