

POLS 3000

Short Session II (July 3-30, 2018)
 Baldwin 301 | MTWRF 9:15-11:30 a.m.
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 Office: 304A Baldwin Hall
 Office Hours: MTWRF 11:30-Noon and by appointment

INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL THEORY

“Political theory [is] a kind of meeting ground of . . . philosophers who turned to politics out of despair about the unbearable of certain historical experiences. Such was the case of Plato. . . . And we find the statesmen and great men of action who again out of despair turn to philosophy. . . . Such was the case of Machiavelli. . . . And we find finally the philosopher who out of despair of philosophy turns to politics. This is the case of Marx . . . The result in all cases is political theory.”

—Hannah Arendt

This course will examine some of the foundational texts in the Western tradition of political thought. The course begins with the ancient Greeks (Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle) and their accounts of political community, justice, ruling, and citizenship. The course then engages Niccolò Machiavelli’s conception of politics in *The Prince*. The course then moves on to an examination of modern political thought by engaging Karl Marx (on capitalism, communism, and social revolution) and John Stuart Mill (on liberty). Some common themes and recurring issues in this course include the cause of freedom versus slavery and tyranny, the question of truth and politics, justice, power, wealth, happiness, and the political role and capabilities of women and workers.

Students will comprehend and be able to explain, summarize, and discuss the political thought of Plato’s *Republic*, Aristotle’s *Politics*, Machiavelli’s *Prince*, Marx’s *Communist Manifesto*, and Mill’s *On Liberty*. The lectures are designed to communicate the meaning of these texts to the class. Lectures are necessary because reading these texts is not enough; there must be a personal exchange for deep learning to actually take place. Machiavelli distinguished three kinds of intelligence: “One kind can understand on its own, the second can understand through others, and the third can understand neither on its own nor through others” (*Prince*, 108). We hope to belong to the second category. Although we need guidance through the texts we will read, we also learn by having the courage to struggle and think for ourselves. As J. S. Mill said, we should not cling to “true opinions” out of fear of falling into error because we do not want to suffer the pains of thinking for ourselves (*On Liberty*, 36). Here Mill is echoing Plato, who suggested that “those who express a true opinion without understanding are [no] different from blind people who happen to travel the right road” (*Republic*, 180). “[T]he real lover of learning,” Plato wrote, “[must] struggle toward what is” (*Republic*, 163). A further objective of this class, to put it in Marx’s terms, is not to reinforce the class culture of bourgeoisie society which, for the vast majority of people, is “a mere training to act as a machine,” but to learn to think about politics in coherent and critical ways (*Manifesto*, 88). After all, according to Aristotle, “reason and understanding are our nature’s end” (*Politics*, 182). The payoff of learning how to analyze texts and political arguments is to develop the ability to bring critical thinking to our political theoretical engagements and to bring strategic planning to our practical political aims and actions.

TEXTS REQUIRED FOR PURCHASE

Rent or buy these books, new or used, at the bookstore or online, but keep in mind that you need to be quite literally on the same page of the text with me and your classmates. Therefore, you must purchase only these specific editions; no other editions, publishers, or translations will be approved for use in this course.

- Plato, *The Trial and Death of Socrates*, 3rd edition, trans. G. M. A. Grube (Hackett)
- Plato, *Republic*, 2nd edition, trans., G. M. A. Grube, rev. C. D. C. Reeve (Hackett)
- Aristotle, *Politics*, a new translation by C. D. C. Reeve (Hackett)
- Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Peter Constantine (Modern Library)
- Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*, ed. Jeffrey C. Isaac, Rethinking the Western Tradition (Yale)
- J. S. Mill, *On Liberty and other writings*, ed. Stefan Collini (Cambridge)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

Course Format: This is a text-based reading, lecture, and discussion course. I expect you to come to class on time, regularly, and have your book at hand. The assigned reading should be completed before each session, along with any “microassignments” due that day.

Reading: It is essential to keep up with the reading. The reading is to be completed by the date listed on the syllabus. I’ve tried to keep the reading to a minimum. It should take you 2-4 hours to do the assigned reading for each session. **Always bring your assigned reading to class.** Student who do not make a regular effort to bring the assigned reading to class will be docked a few points on their EFFORT grade (see below).

Assignments and Grading: Your final grade will be based on two in-class quizzes, five microassignments, a final paper, and my impression of your overall effort. The quizzes will be on what we cover in class and will consist of multiple choice, fill in the blank, and short answer questions. I will distribute a study guide at least two days before each quiz.

Grades will be assigned by points as follows, for a total of **100 points**:

10: Plato/Socrates microassignment (July 5)

10: Plato/Socrates quiz (July 11)

10: Aristotle microassignment (July 12)

10: Aristotle quiz (July 16)

10: Machiavelli microassignment (July 18)

10: Marx microassignment (July 23)

10: Mill microassignment (July 25)

20: Final paper (August 3)

10: Effort (based on my impression of whether you regularly did the reading, came to class prepared to learn, and made progress over the semester)

Grading scale: A >93 A- 90-93 B+ 87-90 B 83-87 B- 80-83 C+ 77-80 C 73-77 C- 70-73

Final Paper Topic: It has been said that the very meaning of politics, and the very reason it exists at all, is for the sake of freedom. Write a 5-page (12 pt font, double-spaced) essay that explains why, how, and to what extent Machiavelli, Marx, or Mill champion the cause of freedom against tyranny. Be sure to be as clear and as precise as you can be about what your chosen author means by freedom and tyranny. You only need to write on one of these authors, but you should feel free to compare/contrast their thought with anybody we have studied in this course if that helps you explain their understanding of the meaning of politics. **Due August 3.**

Extra Credit: You will have two opportunities to earn extra credit. You can earn extra credit simply by attending class on Friday, July 20. And in our last class session on Monday, July 30, I will give a ‘factoid’ quiz of about 40 questions that require short answers to some basic matters of ‘fact’ that pertain to the study of the various theorists and texts read in this course. We will grade this quiz together in class. A good score on this quiz will be worth about three extra credit (which may well boost your final grade in the course); but a not so good score will not hurt you.

Attendance: Since the July session is very short, I expect you to come to *every* class. If you know ahead of time that you will be absent from a class I’d appreciate an email in advance explaining your reason. If you miss more than *one* class without a valid excuse you will get *zero* effort points.

Electronic Etiquette Policy: The classroom is a learning environment first and foremost, and everyone is responsible for making certain that the classroom remains an environment conducive to learning. It must be kept free from distractions and disruptions by laptops, cell phones, and other electronic modes of communication and entertainment. Therefore, laptop use during class is banned and all phones should be put away. Studies show that students who take notes by hand perform better on quizzes and other assessments of learning than students who take notes on a computer.

Cultural Sensitivity: Our classroom environment should be mutually respectful and inclusive of all students. The classroom should be an environment with no discrimination, where everyone is comfortable and at liberty to contribute to, and benefit from, the entire learning experience. Any suggestions to improve class interactions or any concerns should be brought to my attention.

Academic Honesty: The University’s Academic Honesty Policy (“A Culture of Honesty,” available at <http://honesty.uga.edu/index.html>) defines scholastic honesty as “the performance of all academic work without cheating, lying, stealing, or receiving assistance from any other person or using any source of information not appropriately authorized or attribute.” Academic honesty is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else’s work as your own, will result in disciplinary action.

Cheating and Plagiarism: If I find out you cheated on a quiz, microassignment, or paper you will get no points for that assignment and your case will be handed on to a university committee.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Class begins, Tue., July 3 – Syllabus Day and Learn Names

Holiday, Wed., July 4 – No class

Thur., July 5 - Socrates's Mission and Method
 Read *Apology* (pp. 21-42) and *Republic* I (pp. 1-31)
Microassignment: What Does Socrates Know?

Fri., July 6 – From Socrates to the Theoretically-Minded Plato
 Read *Republic* II and III (32-93)

Mon., July 9 – Plato's (Political) Psychology and What Justice Is
 Read *Republic* IV (94-156)

Tue., July 10 – Plato's Political Proposals and What the Philosopher Knows
 Read *Republic* V-VI (157-212)

Wed., July 11 – The Allegory of the Cave
 Read *Republic* VII (186-212)
*****In-class Plato Quiz*****

Thur., July 12 – Aristotle's *Politics*: Taking Humans from Nature and Using Them to Live Well
 Read *Politics* I (2-21)
Microassignment: How do you understand Aristotle's argument that the city exists by nature?

Fri., July 13 – Rulers and Ruled in a Democracy
 Read *Politics* II and III (22-82)

Mon., July 16 – Aristotle's Best *Polis*
 Read *Politics* VII (158-188)
*****In-class Aristotle Quiz*****

Tue., July 17 – Reading Day. No class.
 Read *The Prince* (all)

Wed., July 18 – Meeting Machiavelli: Power, Political Knowledge, and the State
Microassignment: What do you find fascinating and horrifying about *The Prince*?

Thur., July 19 – Reading Machiavelli: Maxims of Machiavellism

Fri., July 20 – Machiavelli videos, coffee, and biscotti
*****Extra Credit Day*****

Mon., July 23 – Marx on Capitalism

Read part I of *The Communist Manifesto* (73-84)

Microassignment: How does Marx understand History?

Tue., July 24 – Marx on Communism and The Longing for Social Revolution

Read parts II and III of *The Communist Manifesto* (84-102)

Wed., July 25 – Bentham(ism), Mill, and Liberty in Democratic Society

Read *On Liberty*, ch. 1 (5-18)

Microassignment: Write a brief summary or outline of Mill's compressed historical account of the struggle between Liberty and Authority on pages 5-8 of *On Liberty*, and explain why this is important for Mill's argument.

Thur., July 26 – Truth and the Battlefield of Opinions

Read *On Liberty*, ch. 2 (19-55)

Fri., July 27 – The Importance of Individuality

Read *On Liberty*, ch. 3 (56-74)

Class ends, Mon., July 30 – In-class ****extra credit**** factoid quiz and course evaluations

Final Paper Due Friday, August 3

Grades due August 6