

POLS 3000

Fall 2018
T-Th 8:00-9:15 a.m.
301 Baldwin Hall

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Office Hours: immediately after class 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 unbearability 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*

Bulletin Description: Political theory for students with little or no previous course work in the area. Focuses on one or more important political concepts or phenomena (e.g., power, freedom, or political ambition) and as entry-point into various approaches and literatures within the field.

Course Description: This course will introduce you to some of the foundational texts in the Western tradition of political thought. We begin with ancient Greek philosophers (Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle) and their accounts of political community, justice, ruling, and citizenship. Next we study Christian political thought (in the context of the Roman Empire) through an examination of the philosophy, politics, and theology of St. Augustine’s massive work, *City of God*. Then we will turn our attention to princely politics in Machiavelli’s infamous little treatise, *The Prince*. The course concludes with a study of modern political thought by engaging John Stuart Mill (on liberty in modern democratic social conditions) and Karl Marx (on capitalism, communism, and revolution). Some common themes and recurring issues in this course include the struggle of civilization with barbarism, the desire for domination, the cause of freedom against slavery and tyranny, the political role and capabilities of women and workers, the meaning of life, opinions, truth, justice, power, wealth, war, work, happiness, morality, culture, society, and individuality.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This is a classic college course. We read classic works in the spirit of the classic objectives of the university: namely, the pursue knowledge for its own sake and the education of citizens.

Over the course of the semester students will:

1. Gain knowledge of the key terms, concepts, theories, methods, and principles in the works of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Machiavelli, Mill and Marx.
2. Learn how to interpret and comprehend the problems, concepts, and arguments which have shaped the Western tradition of political thought.
3. Consider how the problems, concepts, and arguments treated might be of significance today and challenge our own way of thinking about politics.
4. Develop the capacity to think conceptually, the ability to read carefully and critically, your analytical skills as a writer and your voice as a political theorist.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

Course Format: This is a text-based reading, lecture, and discussion course. Class time will be a mixture of lecture, questions, and small-group activities. I expect you to come to class on time, regularly, and to have read the assigned material for each session.

Reading: It is essential to keep up with the reading. The reading should be completed before class by the date listed on the syllabus. I've tried to keep the reading to a minimum. It should take you about 2 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 four in-class quizzes, two brief writing assignments, a final, longer essay, and my impression of your effort over the course of the semester. 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 before each quiz.

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

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)

12: Plato quiz (Sept. 6)

10: 2-page brief writing assignment on Aristotle (due Sept. 20)

12: Augustine quiz (Oct. 9)

12: 3-page brief writing assignment on Machiavelli (due Oct. 23)

12: Mill quiz (Nov. 6)

12: Marx quiz (Nov. 15)

20: Final paper (due Dec. 6, 5 p.m.)

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

Meme Competition! I make memes about the thinkers we read in this class and use them in my PowerPoint slides. I invite you to make funny memes too and send them to me by email *any time* during the semester. I will collect and present them to the class on the last day. The winners of the competition will earn 2 extra credit points.

Extra Credit: You have two further opportunities to earn extra credit. You will earn 1 extra credit point simply by attending class on **October 18**. And in our last class session on **November 29**, you will be given an exam 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 exam together in class. A good score on this exam may well boost your final grade in the course; but a not so good score will not hurt you.

Attendance: My attendance policy is that I expect you to come to class regularly. If you know ahead of time when you will be absent I’d appreciate an email or notice in advance explaining your reason. If you choose to skip classes, you will struggle to do well on the in-class quizzes which cover material discussed in class. If you miss several classes without a valid excuse several points will be docked from your EFFORT grade.

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 note-taking pen-and-paper students perform better on quizzes and other assessments of learning than students who take notes on a laptop.

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 that you cheated on a quiz you will immediately fail that assignment and your case will be handed on to a university committee.

REQUIRED BOOKS

Buy (or otherwise acquire*) a copy of 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)
ISBN-13: 978-0872205543 | New \$6.24 | Used \$1.84
- Plato, *Republic*, 2nd edition, trans., G. M. A. Grube, rev. C. D. C. Reeve (Hackett)
ISBN-13: 978-0872201361 | New \$12.35 | Used \$2.36
- Aristotle, *Politics*, a new translation by C. D. C. Reeve (Hackett)
ISBN-13: 978-1624665578 | New \$22.00 | Used \$22.00
- St. Augustine, *City of God*, trans. Henry Bettenson (Penguin Classics)
ISBN-13: 978-0140448948 | New \$10.82 | Used \$6.97
- Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Peter Constantine (Modern Library)
ISBN-13: 978-0812978056 | New \$9.35 | Used \$0.89
- Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*, ed. Jeffrey C. Isaac, Rethinking the Western Tradition (Yale)
ISBN-13: 978-0300123029 | New \$13.50 | Used \$7.00
- J. S. Mill, *On Liberty and other writings*, ed. Stefan Collini (Cambridge)
ISBN-13: 978-0521379175 | New \$15.23 | Used \$1.75

**I strongly discourage you from renting books. You save little money by doing so (while the publishers profit), you forgo the opportunity to sell your books yourself, and you must return the books at the end of the semester. Rent houses, not books.*

“The printed, bound and paid-for book was—still is, for the moment—more exacting, more demanding, of its producer and consumer both. It is the site of an encounter, in silence, of two minds, one following in the other’s steps but invited to imagine, to argue, to concur on a level of reflection beyond that of personal encounter, with all its merely social conventions, its merciful padding of blather and mutual forgiveness.”

—John Updike

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Class begins, Tue., Aug. 14 – Syllabus

Thur., Aug. 16 – Learn names

The Gift of Socrates: Care For Your Soul!

“I say to you: Wealth does not bring about excellence, but excellence makes wealth and everything else good for men, both individually and collectively” (Apology, 30B, p. 33).

Tue., Aug. 21 – Introduction to Socrates’s life, character, reputation, beliefs, and death

Read: *Apology* (21-42)

Plato’s Republic: Philosophy, Philosophers, and Politics

“Until philosophers rule as kings in cities or those who are now called kings and leading men genuinely and adequately philosophize, that is, until political power and philosophy entirely coincide, while the many natures who at present pursue either one exclusively are forcibly prevented from doing so, cities will have no rest from evils, Glaucon, nor, I think, will the human race” (Republic, 473C-D, p. 148).

Thur., Aug. 23 – From Socrates’s Method to Plato’s

Read: *Republic* I and II (1-59)

Tue., Aug. 28 – Plato’s Investigation of a City

Read: *Republic* III (60-93)

Thur., Aug. 30 – Plato’s (Political) Psychology and What Justice Is

Read: *Republic* IV (94-121)

Tue., Sept. 4 – Plato’s Political Proposals and What the Philosopher Knows

Read: *Republic* V and VI (122-185)

Thur., Sept. 6 – The Allegory of the Cave

Read: *Republic* VII (186-212)

****Plato quiz****

Aristotle’s Politics: Taking Humans from Nature and Using Them to Live Well

“...it is evident that a city is among the things that exist by nature, that a human is by nature a political animal, and that anyone who is without a city, not by luck but by nature, is either a wretch or else better than human, and, like the one Homer condemns, he is ‘clanless, lawless, and homeless’” (Politics, 1253a1-5, p. 4).

Tue., Sept. 11 – Introduction to Aristotle’s Life and Works

Read: *Politics* I (2-21)

Thur., Sept. 13 – Ruler and Ruled

Read: *Politics* II (22-51)

Tue., Sept. 18 – Citizens and Constitutions

Read: *Politics* III (52-82)

Thur., Sept. 20 – Finish Aristotle

In-class activity

****2-page brief writing assignment on Aristotle due****

St. Augustine: Political Indifferentism

“Remove justice, and what are kingdoms but gangs of criminals on a large scale? What are criminal gangs but petty kingdoms?” (City of God, IV.4, p. 139).

Tue., Sept. 25 – Introduction to St. Augustine

Read: *City of God*, Bk. I (all)

Thur., Sept. 27 – Augustine II

Read: *City of God*, TBA

Tue., Oct. 2 – Augustine III

Read: *City of God*, TBA

Thur., Oct. 4 – Augustine IV

Read: *City of God*, TBA

Tue., Oct. 9 – Finish Augustine’s *City of God*

Read: *City of God*, TBA

****Augustine quiz****

Niccolò Machiavelli: Princely Politics

“As my intention is to write something useful for discerning minds, I find it more fitting to seek the truth of the matter rather than imaginary conceptions. Many have imagined republics and principalities that have never been seen or heard of, because how one lives and how one ought to live are so far apart that he who spurns what is actually done for what ought to be done will achieve ruin rather than his own preservation” (The Prince, ch. 15, p. 72).

Thur., Oct. 11- Meeting Machiavelli: Power, Political Knowledge, and the State

Read: *The Prince* (all)

Tue., Oct. 16 – Reading Machiavelli

In-class small group activity on Machiavelli’s maxims

Thur., Oct. 18 – In honor of Machiavelli I will bring coffee, *cantucci*, and we’ll watch two videos on Machiavelli

****Extra Credit Day****

John Stuart Mill: Taking Liberty to Heart

“That so few now dare to be eccentric, marks the chief danger of the time” (On Liberty, p. 67).

Tue., Oct. 23 – Introduction to Mill (and Bentham)

No reading assignment.

****3-page brief writing assignment on Machiavelli due****

Thur., Oct. 25 – No class.

Tue., Oct. 30 – Tyranny in Democratic Society

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

Thur., Nov. 1 – Truth and the Battlefield of Opinions

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

Tue., Nov. 6 – The Importance of Individuality

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

****Mill quiz****

Karl Marx: The Longing for Social Revolution

“Political power, properly so called, is merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another” (The Communist Manifesto, p. 92).

Thur., Nov. 8 – Introduction to Karl Marx

No reading.

Tue., Nov. 13 – Marx on the Bourgeoisie

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

Thur., Nov. 15 – Marx on the Proletariat, Communism, and Revolution

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

****Marx quiz****

Tue., Nov. 27 –TBD

Last class, Thur., Nov. 29 - Meme competition results and in-class extra-credit factoid quiz