

POLS 3000H: Introduction to Political Theory (Honors)

University of Georgia, Department of Political Science

Spring 2020

M W F 10:10-11:00am

Baldwin 104

Instructor: Harrison Frye

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Office Hours: M W 2-3pm, and by appointment

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This course introduces students to the discipline of political theory by discussing challenging arguments regarding how society is organized. To that end, we will focus on four topics:

Speech: How should speech be regulated (if it all)?

Justice: How should a just society distribute economic resources?

Authority: What is a "state" and why is it necessary?

Democracy: Is democracy a good way of making political decisions?

Obviously, this course will not cover all or even most of the academic discipline of political theory. Nonetheless, these are central topics of central concern today, and offer a valuable point of entry to political theory. Importantly, while you will become familiar with a variety of arguments, the course is not so much about texts but rather about prompting careful reflection about politics. In particular, the hope is that you will subject various assumptions and practices you take for granted to critical scrutiny. Students are therefore expected to explore and develop their own considered responses to the ideas in the readings.

The syllabus describes (1) course objectives, (2) course materials, (3) grades and assignments, (4) rules and requirements (including important dates), and (5) a course schedule.

The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

1. Course Objectives

- Sharpen analytical thinking and debating skills.
- Understand the moral foundations of the modern state.
- Practice engaging with viewpoints different than one's own.
- Confront difficult moral questions about the way we organize our social life.
- Come to understand one's personal values better.

2. Course Materials

The following books will be available for purchase from the UGA bookstore.

Cohen, G. A. *Why Not Socialism?*, Princeton University Press, ISBN:
9780691143613

Waldron, J. *The Harm in Hate Speech*, Harvard University Press, ISBN: 0674416864

All other readings will be available on eLC.

3. Assignments and Grading

The following components will make up your grade in this course:

1. Participation: 20%
2. Short Paper: 5%
3. Paper 1: 20%
4. Paper 2: 25%
5. Take-Home Final Examination: 30%

Participation:

Because this is a smaller class, participation is absolutely essential. It is important that you come to class having done the reading, with the readings, and be willing to participate. Repeated unexcused absences are grounds for failing this portion of your grade.

Short Paper:

There will be one short, 400-word paper, due February 5 at 5pm. This paper is intended to prepare you for the longer papers. More information on the short paper will be provided later in the semester.

Long Papers:

There will be two 1500-word papers due throughout semester. The first paper is due March 6 at 5pm, and the second paper due April 27 at 5pm. More information on the papers will be provided later in the semester.

Take-Home Final Examination:

There will be a take-home, open-book final examination in this course. The examination will involve short-answer questions that require you to (i) explain concepts and arguments presented in the texts using your own words, and (ii) compare and contrast claims advanced by the authors.

4. Rules and Requirements

Academic Freedom and Respect:

We will be talking about controversial issues in this course. I expect students to disagree with each other, as well as with me. To that end, it is important to have an open, civil environment to explore and express a variety of positions. The point is to learn something from one another, not to "win." This requires each of us to engage respectfully with one another, especially when we disagree.

Electronic Devices:

There is good evidence that electronic devices significantly distract from learning. I do not ban laptops because I understand that some people might have very good reasons to use them. That being said, unless you have a very good reason, I recommend not using laptops. From my own experience, not having laptops makes time in classroom more engaging and valuable.

Academic Integrity:

UGA Student Honor Code: "I will be academically honest in all of my academic work and will not tolerate academic dishonesty of others." A Culture of Honesty, the University's policy and procedures for handling cases of suspected dishonesty, can be found at www.uga.edu/ovpi.

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated on any assignment. You are responsible for knowing and following the honor code and all rules of academic integrity.

Late Work:

For the midterm and final, papers submitted past the deadline will incur a penalty of a third of a letter grade for each 24-hour period the paper is late.

Emergencies do happen. I will accommodate any that should come up. NB: Computer problems do not count as an emergency. Back up early and often. I recommend using a cloud service such as Dropbox or Google Drive.

Important Dates:

Spring Semester Begins - January 7

Add/Drop - January 7-13

Short Paper Due - February 5

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day - January 20

Paper 1 Due - March 2
Spring Break - March 9-13
Withdrawal Date - March 20
Paper 2 Due - April 27
Classes End - April 28
Take-Home Final - Due May 4 at 5pm

5. Course Schedule

All readings marked with a * are available on eLC.

January 8 - Introduction

No Reading

January 10 - Theory and Practice

*Colin Bird, *Introduction to Political Philosophy* [1st selections]

January 13 - Rethinking Disagreement

*Michael Huemer, "Why People Are Irrational about Politics"

Part I - Speech

January 15 - The Power of Words

*George Orwell, "Politics and the English Language"

January 17 - Grandstanding

*Justin Tosi and Brandon Warmke, "Moral Grandstanding"

January 20 - Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

No Class

January 22 - Freedom against Tyranny

*J. S. Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapter 1

January 24 - The Classic Defense of Free Speech

*J. S. Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapter 2

January 27 - The Basic Case for Restricting Hate Speech

Jeremy Waldron, *The Harm in Hate Speech*, Chapter 1

January 29 - Defamation and Dignity

Jeremy Waldron, *The Harm in Hate Speech*, Chapter 3

(NB: skip sections titled, "*Beauharnais v. Illinois (1952)*", "*Beauharnais* verses *New York Times v. Sullivan*")

January 31 - Dignity against Hate Speech

Jeremy Waldron, *The Harm in Hate Speech*, Chapter 4

(NB: skip sections titled, "Rawls on Free Speech", "Hatred and Law in a Well-Ordered Society", "The Analogy with Pornography", "Clear and Present Danger?")

February 3 - Dignity vs. Offense

Jeremy Waldron, *The Harm in Hate Speech*, Chapter 5

(NB: skip sections titled, "Racial Epithets", "Religious Hatred and Religious Offense")

February 5 - Short Paper Due 5:00pm

No Class

Part II - Justice

February 7 - The Camping Trip

G. A. Cohen, *Why Not Socialism?*, pp. 1-11

February 10 - Equality and Community

G. A. Cohen, *Why Not Socialism?*, pp. 12-52

February 12 - Feasibility and Experimentation

G. A. Cohen, *Why Not Socialism?*, pp. 53-82

February 14 - Equality before the Law

*F. A. Hayek, "Equality, Value, and Merit"

February 17 - Freedom and Ignorance

*F. A. Hayek, "The Moral Imperative of the Market"

February 19 - A Theory of Rights

*Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, [1st selections]

February 21 - The Entitlement Theory of Justice

*Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, [2nd selections]

February 24 - A Different Way?

*John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* [1st selections]

February 26 - Democratic Equality

*John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* [2nd selections]

February 28 - Assessing Rawls

*Rawls, cont.

March 2 - Paper 1 Due

No Class

March 4 - Relational Justice

*Iris Marion Young, "Five Faces of Oppression"

March 6 - Relational Justice, cont.

*Young, cont.

March 9-13: Spring Break

No Class

Part III - Authority

March 16 - The State

*Leslie Green, "The Self-Image of the State"

March 18 - The Puzzle of Authority

*Michael Huemer, "The TV Contract"

March 20 - The Puzzle of Authority, Cont.

*Huemer, continued

March 23 - The State of Nature and Its Problems

*Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapter 13-15 [1st selections]

March 25 - The State as Solution

*Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 17-19 [2nd selections]

March 27 - Freedom and Obedience

*Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapter 20-21, 29, review and conclusion [3rd selections]

March 30 - Anarchy Revisited

*Peter Leeson, "The Laws of Lawlessness"

April 1 - Civil Disobedience

*Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail"

April 3 - Uncivil Disobedience

*Jason Brennan, "When the State Is Unjust, Citizens May Use Justifiable Violence"

Part IV - Democracy

April 6 - Approaching Democracy

*Colin Bird, *Introduction to Political Philosophy* [2nd selections]

April 8 - Disenchanting Democracy

*Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* [1st selections]

April 10 - Democracy without Romance

*Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* [2nd selections]

April 13 - Deliberative Democracy

*Bruce Ackerman and Joseph Fishkin, "Deliberation Day"

April 15 - Deliberation Day

*Ackerman and Fishkin, cont.

April 17 - Difference against Deliberation

*Lynn Sanders, "Against Deliberation"

April 20 - The Illusion of Deliberation

*Robert Talisse, "New Challenges for Deliberative Democrats"

April 22 - The Problem of Elections

*Alex Guerrero, "Against Elections: The Lottocratic Alternative" (pp. 135-154)

April 24 - Lottocracy

*Alex Guerrero, "Against Elections: The Lottocratic Alternative" (pp. 154-178)

April 27 - Paper 2 Due

No Class

April 28 - A Review and Conclusion

No Reading

Take-Home Final Exam Due May 4 at 5pm