

POLS 3000H: Introduction to Political Theory (Honors)

University of Georgia, Department of Political Science

Spring 2021

M W F 3:00-3:50pm

MLC 250

Instructor: Harrison Frye

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Office Hours: By appointment (via Zoom)

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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: Should there be limits on freedom of speech?

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 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. The hope is that you will subject your assumptions and beliefs 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. (2009) *Why Not Socialism?*, Princeton University Press, ISBN: 9780691143613
- Talisse, R. (2019) *Overdoing Democracy: Why We Must Put Politics in Its Place*, Oxford University Press, ISBN: 978-0190924195
- Shelby, T. (2016) *Dark Ghettos: Injustice, Dissent, and Reform*, ISBN: 978-0674984073
- Waldron, J. (2006) *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. Class Presentation: 15%
4. 3 Papers: 65% (21 ⅔% each)

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. Given the circumstances, I will be extremely lenient with excused absences – the important thing is to communicate with me.

Class Presentation:

Once this semester, each student will open the class session with a presentation. These presentations should be short and crisp – about five to seven minutes long. They should *not* attempt to summarize the main argument of the text under discussion. Your remarks should be divided into two sections: (i) identifying aspects of the argument that you did not understand/would like to review; and (ii) raising at least one critical

question regarding an important claim by the author being discussed to spur conversation.

You should submit an outline of your presentation by no later than **noon** on the day of the presentation on eLC.

Papers

There will be three papers (1300-1500 words) due throughout semester. More information on the papers will be provided later in the semester.

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 – Jan. 13
 Add/Drop – Jan. 13-20
 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – Jan. 18
 Paper 1 Due – February 5
 Paper 2 Due – March 5
 Withdrawal Date – March 23
 Paper 3 Due – April 30
 Classes End – May 3

5. Course Schedule

All readings marked with a * are available on eLC.

Date	Class Material Covered
Wed., Jan. 13	No Readings (Introductory class)
Fri., Jan. 15	*Colin Bird, <i>Introduction to Political Philosophy</i> [1 st selections]
Mon., Jan. 18	No Class – MLK, Jr. Day
Wed., Jan. 20	*Michael Huemer, “Why People Are Irrational about Politics”
Fri., Jan. 22	*J. S. Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> , Chapter 1
Mon., Jan. 25	*J. S. Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> , Chapter 2
Wed., Jan. 27	Jeremy Waldron, <i>The Harm in Hate Speech</i> , Chapter 1
Fri., Jan. 29	Jeremy Waldron, <i>The Harm in Hate Speech</i> , Chapter 3 (skip sections titled, “ <i>Beauharnais v. Illinois (1952)</i> ”, “ <i>Beauharnais</i> verses <i>New York Times v. Sullivan</i> ”)
Mon., Feb. 1	Jeremy Waldron, <i>The Harm in Hate Speech</i> , Chapter 4 (skip sections titled, “Rawls on Free Speech”, “Hatred and Law in a Well-Ordered Society”, “The Analogy with Pornography”, “Clear and Present Danger?”)
Wed., Feb. 3	Jeremy Waldron, <i>The Harm in Hate Speech</i> , Chapter 5 (skip sections titled, “Racial Epithets”, “Religious Hatred and Religious Offense”)
Fri., Feb. 5	Paper 1 Due at 5:00pm – No Class
Mon., Feb. 8	G. A. Cohen, <i>Why Not Socialism?</i> , pp. 1-52
Wed., Feb. 10	G. A. Cohen, <i>Why Not Socialism?</i> , pp. 53-82
Fri., Feb. 12	Cohen, cont.
Mon., Feb. 15	*F. A. Hayek, “Equality, Value, and Merit”
Wed., Feb. 17	No Class – Instructional Break
Fri., Feb. 19	Hayek continued.
Mon., Feb. 22	*Robert Nozick, <i>Anarchy, State, and Utopia</i> [selections]

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Wed., Feb. 24	Nozick, cont.
Fri., Feb. 26	*John Rawls, <i>A Theory of Justice</i> [1 st selections]
Mon., Mar. 1	*John Rawls, <i>A Theory of Justice</i> [2 nd selections]
Wed., Mar. 3	Rawls., Cont.
Fri., Mar. 5	Paper 2 Due at 5:00pm - No Class
Mon., Mar. 8	Tommie Shelby, <i>Dark Ghettos</i> , Introduction, Chapter 1
Wed., Mar. 10	Tommie Shelby, <i>Dark Ghettos</i> , Chapter 2
Fri., Mar. 12	No Class - Instructional Break
Mon., Mar. 15	*Leslie Green, "The Self-Image of the State"
Wed., Mar. 17	*Michael Huemer, "The TV Contract"
Fri., Mar. 19	Huemer, cont.
Mon., Mar. 22	*Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , Chapter 13-15 [1 st selections]
Wed., Mar. 24	*Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , 17-19 [2 nd selections]
Fri., Mar. 26	*Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , Chapter 20-21, 29 [3 rd selections]
Mon., Mar. 29	Hobbes, cont.
Wed., Mar. 31	Tommie Shelby, <i>Dark Ghettos</i> , Chapter 7
Fri., Apr. 2	Tommie Shelby, <i>Dark Ghettos</i> , Chapter 8
Mon., Apr. 5	*Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail"
Wed., Apr. 7	*Colin Bird, <i>Introduction to Political Philosophy</i> [2 nd selections]
Fri., Apr. 9	*Joseph Schumpeter, <i>Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy</i> [1 st selections]
Mon., Apr. 12	*Joseph Schumpeter, <i>Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy</i> [2 nd selections]
Wed., Apr. 14	*Bruce Ackerman and Joseph Fishkin, "Deliberation Day"
Fri., Apr. 16	*Lynn Sanders, "Against Deliberation"
Mon., Apr. 19	Robert Talisse, <i>Overdoing Democracy</i> , Introduction, Chapter 1
Wed., Apr. 21	Robert Talisse, <i>Overdoing Democracy</i> , Chapter 2
Fri., Apr. 23	Robert Talisse, <i>Overdoing Democracy</i> , Chapter 3
Mon., Apr. 26	Robert Talisse, <i>Overdoing Democracy</i> , Chapter 4
Wed., Apr. 28	Robert Talisse, <i>Overdoing Democracy</i> , Chapter 5
Fri., Apr. 30	Paper 3 Due at 5:00pm - No Class
Mon., May. 3	No Reading (A Review and Conclusion)