

POLS 8080:
Problems in Political Philosophy
Survey in Political Theory

University of Georgia, Department of Political Science
Spring 2021
TR 3:55pm-6:40pm
Baldwin 101D

Instructor: Harrison Frye
Office: Baldwin 418
Office Hours: By appointment (via Zoom)
E-mail: hpfrye@uga.edu

This course attempts to provide a survey in the academic discipline of political theory. I say “attempt” as it is impossible to provide a satisfying survey of a subject matter that covers over two millennia of history. To that end, I designed the course to do four things:

1. Introduce students to what I take to be the three most impressively systematic works in the history of political thought: Plato’s *Republic*, Hobbes’s *Leviathan*, and Rawls’s *A Theory of Justice*.
2. Read classic texts with an eye towards the arguments in the text. This is not a history class, and so the texts and authors themselves are not the object of study.
3. Give a sense of some of the contemporary scholarship of the field – this is largely accomplished through secondary sources on the classics, but towards the end I will give students an opportunity to pick a book published in the last few years to work through.
4. Expose students to various ideas and traditions that remain influential today (e.g. the common good in both its classical and utilitarian guises, the concept of the social contract through Hobbes and Rawls, and the critical tradition of political thought through Marx).

In my view, political theory at its best is not the fetishism of long dead authors, but a living, reflective practice. The hope is that working through the influential arguments of the past will teach us something about our own beliefs and opinions.

The syllabus describes (1) course materials, (2) grades and assignments, (3) rules and requirements, and (4) 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 Materials

The following books are available at the UGA bookstore. All other readings are available on eLC under content.

Aristotle, *Politics*, Trans. Reeve, Hackett, 9780872203884
Ed. Troyer, J. *Classical Utilitarians: Bentham & Mill*, Hackett, ISBN: 9780872206496
Hobbes, T. *Leviathan*, ed. E. Curley, Hackett, ISBN: 0872201775
Nozick, R. *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, Basic Books, ISBN: 9780465051007
Plato, *Republic*, Trans. Grube, Hackett, 9780872201361
Rawls, J. *A Theory of Justice: Revised Edition*, Harvard, ISBN: 9780674000780
Ed. Tucker, R. *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd Edition, W. W. Norton ISBN:
039309040X

3. Assignments and Grading

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

1. Participation (10%)
2. Class Presentation (15%)
3. Short Response Papers (25%; 5% each)
4. Final Paper (and Final Paper Presentation) (50%)

Participation:

Attendance and participation is very important for this course to succeed. The more you put in, the better the class will be. Unexcused absences will be frowned upon. That being said, given the current circumstances, I will be lenient with excuses. Just make sure to communicate with me.

Reading:

I expect you to complete the reading before class. Make sure to allot enough time for the reading – it can be heavy and difficult. Taking notes on the material is encouraged.

Short Response Papers

On five (5) days of your choosing (NB: *not* a day you are presenting), I would like you to submit a ~400 word response paper to the reading by class time on the relevant day on eLC. These papers are a way for you to engage the work on your own terms. Some suggestions: (i) Formulate a question regarding the reading and why it is important, (ii) Point out a flaw in the argument, (iii) Discuss how the arguments in the text may be relevant for a contemporary political issue, etc.

Class Presentation:

At least once (depending on enrollment) each student will open the class session with a presentation. These presentations should be written out in complete prose and submitted to me by no later than **noon** on the day of the presentation on eLC. These presentations should be short and crisp – around 5 pages of double-spaced text. They should *not* attempt to summarize the main argument of the text under discussion. Your remarks should be divided into three sections: (i) identifying aspects of the argument that you did not understand/would like to review; (ii) offering at least one objection to an important claim by the author being discussed; and (iii) explaining some respect in which the discussion challenges an important or widely held political belief/assumption/commitment, along with an assessment of how serious you find that challenge to be.

Final Paper and Final Paper Presentation

Students will submit a longer research paper (6,000-8,000 words). This will be due May 10th at 5:00pm on eLC.

In preparation of this paper, students will provide a ~10 minute presentation of their final paper idea during class on April 29th. Like the class presentation, I would like a write-up of the presentation (~5 pages double-spaced text). This write-up should include a proposed works cited. The write-up is due by class-time on April 29th via eLC.

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 final paper 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 13

Add/Drop – January 13-20

Withdrawal Date – May 23

Final Paper Presentations – April 29

Classes End – May 3

Final Paper Due – May 10

5. Course Schedule

Readings marked with a * available on eLC.

Jan. 14 – Introduction (no reading)

Jan. 21 – Plato I

Plato, *Republic*, Books I-V

*Burnyeat, Myles, “The Truth in Tripartition,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelean Society*, vol. 6 (2006)

Jan. 28 – Plato II

Plato, *Republic*, Books VI-X

*Lear, Jonathan, “Inside and Outside the Republic,” *Phronesis*, Vol. 37 (1992)

Feb. 4 – Aristotle

Aristotle, *Politics*, Bks I, II (chs. i-iv), III, IV, VII, VIII (chs. i-ii)

*Cammack, Daniela, “Aristotle on the Virtue of the Multitude,” *Political Theory*, Vol. 41 (2013)

Feb. 11 – Hobbes I

Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapters I-XV

*Moehler, Michael, “Why Hobbes’s State of Nature is Best Modeled by an Assurance Game,” *Utilitas*, Vol. 21 (2009)

Feb. 18 – Hobbes II

Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapters XVI-XXX, Review & Conclusion

*Sreedhar, Susanne, “Defending the Hobbesian Right of Self-Defense,” *Political Theory*, Vol. 36 (2008)

Feb. 25 – Utilitarianism I

Ed. Troyer, *The Classical Utilitarians: Bentham, J.*, Selections from the *Principles of Morals and Legislation*: chs. I – IV (pp. 8-31), ch. XVII (pp. 48-61); Mill, J. S., *Utilitarianism* (p. 95-145)

*Taurek, John “Should the Numbers Count?” *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, Vol. 6 (1977)
Nozick, R, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, pp. ix-xiv, pp. 26-53

Mar. 4 – Utilitarianism II

Mill, J.S. *On Liberty* (in the Troyer reader)

*Messina, J.P., “Freedom of Expression and the Liberalism of Fear: A Defense of the Darker Mill” *Philosophers’ Imprint*, Vol. 20 (2020)

Mar. 11 – Marx I

Marx-Engels Reader, “For a Ruthless Critique of Everything Existing” (pp. 12-15), “On the Jewish Question” (pp. 26-52), “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844” (pp. 65-125)

*Kandiyali, Jan, “The Importance of Others: Marx on Unalienated Production,” *Ethics*, Vol. 113 (2020)

Mar. 18 – Marx II

Marx-Engels Reader, “On the History of His Opinions (Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*),” (pp. 3-6), “Capital, Vol. 1” (pp. 302-367), “Manifesto of the Communist Party” (pp. 473-500), “Critique of the Gotha Program” (pp. 525-541)

*Wood, Allen, “The Marxian Critique of Justice,” *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, Vol. 1 (1973)

Mar. 25 – Rawls I

Rawls, J. *A Theory of Justice, Revised Edition*, secs. 1-5, 9-16, 20-26, 29, 31, 82

Apr. 1 – Rawls II

*Sandel, Michael, “The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self,” *Political Theory*, Vol. 12 (1984)

Nozick, R. *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, Chapter 7

*Cohen, G. A., "Where the Action Is: On the Site of Distributive Justice," *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, Vol. 26 (1997)

Apr. 8 - Instructional Break (No Class)

Apr. 15 - TBD

Apr. 22 - TBD

Apr. 29 - Final Paper Presentations

May 3: Last Day of Classes

Final Paper Due May 10

Mental Health and Wellness Resources:

- *If you or someone you know needs assistance, you are encouraged to contact Student Care and Outreach in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-7774 or visit <https://sco.uga.edu>. They will help you navigate any difficult circumstances you may be facing by connecting you with the appropriate resources or services.*
- *UGA has several resources for a student seeking mental health services (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) or crisis support (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/info/emergencies>).*
- *If you need help managing stress anxiety, relationships, etc., please visit BeWellUGA (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) for a list of FREE workshops, classes, mentoring, and health coaching led by licensed clinicians and health educators in the University Health Center.*
- *Additional resources can be accessed through the UGA App.*