

## POLS 3000E

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### 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*

“The basic question of political theory could be put this way: what is going on? What is really happening in society? We need to ask this question because the ordinary commonsense understanding of what is going on is inadequate. And the answers offered frequently are surprising, strange, even shocking for ordinary understanding.”

—*Charles Taylor*

Political theory is both a specialized academic field of study within political science and a cognitive enterprise that we all engage in whenever we reflect on the possibilities and limits of social and political life. As a field of study, political theory is at the core of an education in political science, for the only way to think intelligently about politics is to learn to think one’s way through the works of the great writers on the subject. The principal aim of this course is to offer a detailed examination of some of the canonical texts of the Western tradition of political thought from Plato to Arendt. The course begins with Plato’s *Apology* and *Republic* and Aristotle’s *Politics*, and their accounts of political community, political knowledge, justice, ruling, citizenship, and slavery. The course then engages Niccolò Machiavelli’s conception of grand politics in *The Prince* and his theatrical masterpiece, *The Mandrake*. After Machiavelli we will turn our attention to an examination of modern political thought by engaging John Stuart Mill’s *On Liberty* and *The Subjection of Women* and Karl Marx’s *Communist Manifesto*. The course concludes with a study of Hannah Arendt’s *On Violence* and *Lying in Politics*.

We will approach these books, essays, pamphlets and play with the three-fold aim of entering into the thought-world of the text in order to understand the aims of its author on his or her own terms, to feel the force of the problems of politics that the author took himself or herself to be confronting, as well as the promise (and difficulties) of his or her strategies for confronting them. Once we have a sense of what an author is doing through an intense study of his or her work, we will be in a better position to appreciate the material as a cognitive resource by which we can arm ourselves with concepts and perspectives to help us think clearly, critically, and creatively about difficult questions of social and political life. Although readers have interpreted and criticized these great works for years, each generation of readers who comes to them has the opportunity to make them new by finding fresh meanings, new possibilities, new perspectives, and new ideas in them. These works have enriched the world we live in, and by becoming familiar with them we will be able to acquire a richer understanding of our world.

### COURSE OBJECTIVES

- 1) Develop skills of careful and thoughtful reading of political thought.
- 2) Develop the historical sense necessary for an adequate understanding of political issues.
- 3) Develop the ability to think analytically, creatively, and critically about political ideas and problems.
- 4) Consider how the problems, concepts, and arguments examined might be of significance today and challenge our own way of thinking about politics.

## BOOKS

The following books are **required** and available in the campus bookstore. All other texts will be available on eLC. **No work that uses any other edition or translation of these books will be accepted.**

- Plato, *Republic*, 2<sup>nd</sup> 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)
- J. S. Mill, *On Liberty and other writings*, ed. Stefan Collini (Cambridge)
- Hannah Arendt, *Crisis of the Republic* (Harvest)

**NOTE:** Buy or rent these physical books, new or used, at the campus bookstore or online. You may not use a different edition or translation of these books. You may not use electronic editions either. I want you to learn how to interact with books, not your devices. My role in this class is to help you learn, and I cannot do that if you do not have the same books that I have because you will literally be on the wrong page reading the wrong words and you will not be able to follow my lectures or discuss the books with your classmates.

## ONLINE LEARNING AND COURSE STRUCTURE

This course has been developed to promote **asynchronous** learning. The instructor and students do NOT meet on a designated day and time each week. The course is organized by week (Monday-Sunday). There are 15 weeks of instruction, and you may work at your own pace within each week. This gives you flexibility, but this flexibility is coupled with assignments to hold you **accountable**. Each week you will read the assigned reading, watch the assigned video lectures, and complete the assigned work - either three discussion posts or a short paper. You are expected to check your email frequently and to log into eLC several times a week to participate in the discussion forum. You are not merely a spectator in the course; you are expected to participate in it, not to be entertained by it.

**Due dates:** Each week's assigned work is due by midnight at the end of the week (Sunday). It is your responsibility to keep up with the reading and assignments. As a rule you will not be able to make up missed discussion posts, and late papers will not be accepted unless you have received written permission (i.e. an email) from the instructor in advance. Deadline extensions will be granted for a reasonable amount of time (usually a few days) for legitimate reasons.

**Readings:** This is a text-based course. **It is essential to keep up with the reading.** The texts for this class are not "quick reads"; nor can you simply read the first few pages or glance over their paragraphs quickly to catch their leading ideas. You must reserve enough time each week to read the assigned texts— closely, carefully, and completely, following the current of thought with uninterrupted interest and concentration. This course is designed to reward those who do the reading.

**Lectures:** All the video lectures have been transcribed and captioned. The text in the PowerPoint slides is also searchable. The purpose of the lectures is to help you understand the reading. Understanding the reading is our primary goal. The lectures are not stand-alone resources. They should not be relied upon to write your papers or to make your discussion posts. For all assignments, evidence of independent reading and thinking will be rewarded.

**Papers:** In addition to participation in the discussion forums and doing the required reading for it, you are required to write three short papers (3-4 pages) worth 30% of your final grade. Paper expectations and requirements will be explained in detail when the first paper assignment is posted on eLC.

**Discussions:** To do well in this course it is essential to do well in the discussions, which comprise 70% of your final grade. **You are required to make 3 posts per weekly discussion.** Perhaps I only state the obvious here, but in order to contribute to an intellectual discussion you cannot simply read a book and like it or express agreement with your classmates. You must instead judiciously apply the book to the topics under discussion.

Discussion post grades are based on the quality of your contribution to the discussion. Students can earn a maximum of 12 points per discussion. Points will be allocated according to the **grading rubric** below. Demonstrating active engagement with the reading is key to a good grade.

POINTS	CRITERIA
4	Contribution is accurate, original, relevant, well written, demonstrates active engagement with the reading (e.g. cites and quotes textual evidence) and promotes critical discussion of the issues
3	Contribution lacks at least one of the above qualities but demonstrates active engagement with the reading
2	Contribution is based on personal opinion or experience rather than the reading
1	Contribution adds no critical or informational dimension to the discussion but contributes social value (e.g. collegiality)
0	Contribution adds nothing to the discussion or is missing

**Posting Rules:** It is important for everyone to follow the rules so we can all benefit from the discussion.

1. Always **reply** to others unless you are the first person to start a **thread** on one of the questions. If one of your classmates has already started a thread on a particular question, and you want to contribute to that thread, you must reply to somebody in that thread. I will delete any new threads that should have been a reply. Remember: this is an *intellectual discussion* among many people. I expect you to read and to respond to what others have said before you. Students who make “hit and run” posts—writing a comment without displaying any evidence of reading anyone else’s and then disappearing from the discussion—will be penalized to deter such conversation-trolling behavior (i.e., 0 or 1 point). If you enter the discussion late in the week (e.g. late Sunday night), and do not add something to what has already been said, with new evidence from the text, you will earn little credit for your post (i.e., 1 or 2 points).

2. You are required to make **three quality posts** to earn full credit. The rubric above defines a quality post. The entire point is to discuss the reading, and you can’t do that unless you quote and refer to specific pages and passages in the text. If you are not talking about the reading, and quoting from the reading, you are not doing it right. If you have nothing to add to a particular conversation beyond affirming or repeating what others have already said, you should contribute to a different thread where you do have something to add. Posts that merely express agreement with one of your classmates without actually contributing to the discussion are not quality posts and will be graded accordingly (i.e., 1 or 2 points). Posts that primarily repeat what other students have already said are not quality posts and will be graded accordingly (i.e., 1 or 2 points).

3. Your posts should be your own work and reflect your own **thinking**. Trust your own thinking! Posting is not a matter of expressing an opinion; it’s a matter of thinking about what you are reading and sharing your thoughts. Reading, thinking, and writing are the only abilities you need to succeed in this course. But you need to read carefully and think about what you are reading and take time to compose a well-written post. I expect you to make an effort to understand what you are reading. What you do not understand is the perfect thing to write about and discuss. Bringing to our attention some aspect of the reading you find interesting, puzzling, or important is also doing a great service for the class.

**NOTE:** Please do not post or paraphrase whatever you find on SparkNotes, CliffsNotes, or other online sources. This is a waste of everyone's time. I like to read and participate in the discussions, not spend my time policing them and deleting material lifted from the internet. Since you have no idea what resources you may find on the internet are accurate and helpful, I advise you to rely only on the assigned reading, lectures, and your own thinking abilities.

**Extra credit:** No extra credit opportunities will be available this semester. The regular credit should be taken seriously from the first week until the last.

**Grading:** A final letter grade will be assigned based on the following scale (percentages):

A >93 A- 90-93 B+ 87-90 B 83-87 B- 80-83 C+ 77-80 C 73-77 C- 70-73.

For example, if you earn 180 out of 200 possible points this semester you will receive an A-.

**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 attributed." 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.

## CLASS CALENDAR

*This schedule is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary and are considered further elaborations of the original course.*

**1/10-1/16 | Week 1: Introductions**

- Read the syllabus (this document)
- Participate in the discussion

**1/17-1/23 | Week 2: Plato's *Apology***

- Read Plato's *Apology* (pp. 20-42). Text available on eLC.
- Video Lectures:
  - Who is Socrates?* (16:1)
  - Socrates's Wisdom* (20:41)
  - Socrates's Moral Courage* (16:09)
- Participate in the discussion

**1/24-1/30 | Week 3: Plato's *Republic***

- Read Plato's *Republic*, Books I-III (pp. 1-93)
- Video Lectures:
  - The Elenchus* (16:07)
  - Plato's Three Problems* (19:56)
  - Founding a City in Theory* (25:51)
  - The Luxurious City* (10:40)
  - The Noble Falsehood* (16:07)
- Participate in the discussion

1/31-2/6 | **Week 4: Plato's *Republic***

- Read: Plato's *Republic*, Books IV-V (pp. 94-156)
- Video Lectures:
  - Law and Human Nature* (8:52)
  - The Tripartite Soul* (13:58)
  - What Justice Is* (12:10)
  - Plato on Women* (9:20)
- Participate in the discussion

2/7-2/13 | **Week 5: Plato's *Republic***

- Read: Plato's *Republic*, Books VI and VII (pp. 157-212)
- Video Lectures:
  - Philosopher-Kings* (32:11)
  - The Allegory of the Cave* (22:05)
- Paper Assignment

2/14-2/20 | **Week 6: Aristotle's *Politics***

- Read Aristotle's *Politics*, Book I (pp. 2-21)
- Video Lectures:
  - Aristotle vs. Plato* (13:41)
  - Aristotle's Life and Works* (21:08)
  - Aristotle's Naturalism* (37:51)
  - Masters and Slaves and Laboring for a Living* (25:42)
  - Living Well and the Rule of Children, Women, and Men* (22:41)
- Participate in the discussion

2/21-2/27 | **Week 7: Aristotle's *Politics***

- Read Aristotle's *Politics*, Books II and III (pp. 22-82).
- Video Lectures:
  - Aristotle's Criticisms of Plato's Republic* (17:28)
  - Citizens and Constitutions* ()
- Participate in the discussion

2/28-3/6 | **Week 8: Machiavelli's *Prince***

- Read Machiavelli's *Prince* (3-123)
- Video Lectures:
  - The Myth of Machiavelli* (10:53)
  - Machiavelli's Political Experiences* (26:03)
  - Reading Machiavelli* (34:45)
  - Machiavelli, Prince of Business* lecture by Maurizio Viroli (1:02:49)
- Participate in the discussion

3/7-3/13 | **Week 9: SPRING BREAK**

3/14-3/20 | **Week 10: Machiavelli's *Mandrake***

- Read Machiavelli's *Mandrake* (pp. 433-481). Text available on eLC.
- Watch the video of UGA's 2016 Performance of the *Mandrake* (1:28:12)
- Participate in the discussion

3/21-3/27 | **Week 11: Mill's *On Liberty***

- Read Mill, *On Liberty*, chapter 1 (pp. 5-18)
- Video Lectures:
  - Mill and Bentham* (16:02)
  - Mill's mental crisis and rejection of Bentham's utilitarianism* (20:28)
  - Social Tyranny* (16:14)
  - Mill's Principle of Liberty* (17:08)
- Participate in the discussion

3/28-4/3 | **Week 12: Mill's *On Liberty***

- Read Mill, *On Liberty*, chapters 2 and 3 (pp. 19-74)
- Video Lectures:
  - Mill's Principle of Fallibility* (17:35)
  - Mill's Principle of Knowledge and Principle of Multi-Sidedness* (18:05)
  - The Value of Individuality* (11:37)
  - The Danger of Democratic Conformism* (28:45)
- Participate in the discussion

4/4-4/10 | **Week 13: Mill's *Subjection of Women***

- Read Mill, *The Subjection of Women*, chapters 1-3 (pp. 119-194)
- Video Lectures:
  - Why read The Subjection of Women today?* (12:01)
  - The Present Artificial Ideal of Feminine Character* (28:00)
  - The Question of Women's Position in Society* (17:36)
  - Russell Brand in conversation with Professor Anne Phillips, "Feminism – Can It Change the World?"* (1:03:12)
- Paper Assignment

4/11-4/17 | **Week 14: Marx's *Communist Manifesto***

- Read Marx, *Communist Manifesto* (pp. 73-102). Text available on eLC.
- Video Lectures:
  - BBC Karl Marx part 1* (29:09)
  - BBC Karl Marx part 2* (29:51)
  - The Enduring Relevance of Marx* (13:15)
  - In Praise of the Bourgeoisie* (27:53)
  - Innovate or Die* (18:29)
  - A Revolutionary Proletariat* ()
- Participate in the discussion

4/18-4/24 | **Week 15: Marx's *Communist Manifesto***

- Read Marx, *Communist Manifesto* (pp. 73-102). Text available on eLC.
- Video Lectures:
  - In Defense of Communism* (16:01)
  - Marx's Critique of Socialism* (10:44)
- Paper Assignment

4/25-5/8 | **Week 16: Arendt's *On Violence* and *Lying in Politics***

- Read Arendt's *On Violence* (pp. 105-184) and *Lying in Politics* (pp. 3-47)
- Video Lectures:
  - Arendt's Political Experiences*
  - The Student Rebels and the Question of Violence*
  - The Mainstream Confusion of Power and Violence*
  - Power is the Opposite of Violence*
  - Lying in Politics*
- Participate in the discussion