

INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL THEORY

POLS 3000 | CRN 33517 | Fall 2022
MWF 12:40-1:30 | Baldwin 301
Professor Ilya P. Winham (iwinham@uga.edu)
Office: Baldwin 304A
Office Hours: By appointment

*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*

*Many of the great theories of the past arose in response to a crisis in the world,
not in the community of theorists.
—Sheldon Wolin*

Political theory is both a specialized field of study within political science based on the study of the history of political thought, and a cognitive enterprise that we all engage in whenever we reflect on and attempt to navigate (or steer) the course of human events. As an academic field, 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. Political theory is also at the heart of the very idea of a university, which was created as an academic institution to foster reflection and conversations on the fundamental theoretical questions of life—questions that are not raised or discussed in business and STEM courses.

The principal aim of this course is to offer a detailed examination of some of the classic texts of the Western tradition of political thought. The course begins with Plato's *Apology* and *Republic* and Aristotle's *Politics*, and their inquiry into the greatest good for political communities. The course then engages Machiavelli's conception of grand politics in *The Prince*. After Machiavelli we turn to modern political thought by engaging Karl Marx's *Communist Manifesto* (on capitalism, socialism, communism, and social revolution) and John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* and *The Subjection of Women*. The course concludes with a study of Hannah Arendt's "On Violence," "Lying in Politics," and her controversial report on the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem for crimes against humanity.

We will approach these books, essays, and pamphlets 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 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 our world. 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 who we are and what we are doing.

PRIMARY TEXTS FOR STUDY:

The following books are **required** and available in the campus bookstore for purchase: (Texts marked * will be made available on eLC and you do not need to purchase them.)

- *Plato, *The Trial and Death of Socrates*, 3rd edition, trans. G. M. A. Grube, rev. J. M. Cooper (Hackett)
- Plato, *Republic*, 2nd 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)
- *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, ed. Jeffrey C. Isaac (Yale)
- Hannah Arendt, *Crisis of the Republic* (Harvest)

NOTE: Buy or rent these physical books, new or used, at the campus bookstore or order them 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 are not literally on the same page reading the same words as I am.

It is essential to keep up with the reading. The reading is to be completed by the date listed on the syllabus. ****Always bring the assigned reading to class.**** 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 to read the assigned texts carefully and completely.

COURSE FORMAT AND OBJECTIVES:

My objectives for this course are open-ended. While I hope you acquire knowledge from the readings and lectures, the ultimate payoff of this course is learning how to think, read, write, and speak critically. By taking this course you will:

- 1) Develop skills of careful and thoughtful reading of political thought.
- 2) Develop a sense of history which is necessary for an adequate understanding of political life.
- 3) Develop the ability to think systematically, analytically, creatively, and critically about political ideas, practices, 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.

This is a text-based lecture course. Given the number of students in the course and setup of the classroom, class time will be devoted to lectures. I expect you to come to class on time, regularly, and to listen and take notes. I expect you to have read the assigned material for each class session *before* coming to class and to be prepared to participate during breaks in the lectures for questions, discussion, the airing of different points of view, and so on. If for some reason you have to arrive late or must leave early, tell me *before* the moment in question and then arrive/depart as unobtrusively as possible. (If you think this will become habitual, don't take the class).

Classroom rules and conduct: 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. Therefore it must be kept free from distractions and disruptions by laptops, smartphones, and other electronic modes of communication and entertainment. Therefore, laptop use during class is banned and all phones should be silenced and put away.

Accommodations: Students with disabilities who require reasonable accommodations in order to participate in course activities or meet course requirements should contact the DRC and the instructor.

GRADED ASSIGNMENTS AND EXTRA CREDIT:

Detailed directions for each assignment will be posted on eLC. You can expect meaningful feedback on assignments within two weeks of their due date.

<u>Due Date – Assignment</u>	<u>Points</u>
Aug. 22 – <i>Apology</i> reading exercise	10
Aug. 29 – <i>Republic</i> II brief assignment	10
Sept. 12 – <i>Republic</i> VI brief assignment	10
Sept. 28 – <i>Politics</i> III brief assignment	10
Oct. 10 – <i>The Prince</i> paper	10
Oct. 17 – <i>On Liberty</i> paper	10
Oct. 24 – <i>Subjection of Women</i> brief assignment	10
Nov. 4 – <i>Communist Manifesto</i> reading exercise	10
Nov. 14 – <i>On Violence</i> quiz	10
Nov. 21 – <i>Lying in Politics</i> quiz	10
Total: 100	

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.

Late assignments: It is important to manage your time effectively. Assignments are due no later than 12:40 p.m. (i.e., the beginning of class) on the due date. I will give you further instructions about how to turn them in (via eLC, in person, or some other way). No late assignments will be accepted unless you have received express written permission (i.e., an email) from me giving you an extension of time on the assignment. I will grant extensions for a reasonable amount of time (usually a few days) for legitimate reasons.

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, original memes too. You should send them to me by email any time during the semester. You can submit as many memes as you want. I may use them in class. In any case, I will present all submissions at our last class meeting. The winner(s) of this friendly competition will be determined by popular vote and will (each) get two extra credit points.

Extra credit: In addition to the meme competition, you have the opportunity to earn extra credit in our last class session on **December 2**. 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 will boost your final grade in the course about 3 points; but a not so good score will not hurt you.

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.

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

- Wednesday, August 17 – Syllabus Day
- Friday, August 19 – Learn Names
- Monday, August 22 – Read Plato’s *Apology* (pp. 20-42)
****Apology reading exercise due****
- Wednesday, August 24 – Review or reread Plato’s *Apology* (pp. 20-42)
- Friday, August 26 – Read Plato’s *Republic*, Book I (pp. 1-31)
- Monday, August 29 – Read Plato’s *Republic*, Book II (pp. 32-59)
****Republic II brief paper due****
- Wednesday, August 31 – Read Plato’s *Republic*, Book III (pp. 60-93)
- Friday, September 2 – No reading. Catch up if you are behind!
- Monday, September 5 – NO CLASS (Labor Day Holiday)
- Wednesday, September 7 – Read Plato’s *Republic*, Book IV (pp. 94-121)
- Friday, September 9 – Read Plato’s *Republic*, Book V (pp. 122-156)
- Monday, September 12 – Read Plato’s *Republic*, Book VI (pp. 157-185)
****Republic VI brief paper due****
- Wednesday, September 14 – Read Plato’s *Republic*, Book VII (pp. 186-212)
- Friday, September 16 – Introduction to Aristotle. No reading assignment.
- Monday, September 19 – Read Aristotle’s *Politics*, Book I (pp. 2-21)
- Wednesday, September 21 – Read, reread, or review Aristotle’s *Politics*, Book I (pp. 2-21)
- Friday, September 23 – in-class video Josiah Ober, “Ethics in AI with Aristotle”
- Monday, September 26 – Read Aristotle’s *Politics*, Book II (pp. 22-51)
- Wednesday, September 28 – Read Aristotle’s *Politics*, Book III (pp. 52-82)
****Politics brief paper due****
- Friday, September 30 – NO CLASS. Reading Day: Start reading Machiavelli’s *Prince* (pp. 3-123)
- Monday, October 3 – Introduction to Niccolò Machiavelli
- Wednesday, October 5 – Finish reading Machiavelli’s *Prince* (pp. 3-123)
- Friday, October 7 – In honor of Machiavelli I will bring coffee, *cantucci*, and we’ll watch a video
- Monday, October 10 – Introduction to J. S. Mill
****The Prince paper due****
- Wednesday, October 12 – Read Mill’s *On Liberty*, ch. 1 (pp. 5-18)
- Friday, October 14 – Read Mill’s *On Liberty*, ch. 2 (pp. 19-55)
- Monday, October 17 – Read Mill’s *On Liberty*, ch. 3 (pp. 56-74)
****On Liberty paper due****
- Wednesday, October 19 – Read Mill’s *Subjection of Women*, ch. 1 (pp. 119-145)
- Friday, October 21 – Read Mill’s *Subjection of Women*, ch. 2 (pp. 146-165)

Monday, October 24 – Read Mill’s *Subjection of Women*, ch. 3 (pp. 166-194)
****Subjection of Women brief paper due****

Wednesday, October 26 – Introduction to Karl Marx (BBC video)

Friday, October 28 – NO CLASS. FALL BREAK.

Monday, October 31 – Read part I of *The Communist Manifesto* (pp. 73-84)

Wednesday, November 2 – Read part II of *The Communist Manifesto* (pp. 84-92)

Friday, November 4 – Read parts III and IV of *The Communist Manifesto* (pp. 92-102)
****Communist Manifesto reading assignment due****

Monday, November 7 – Introduction to Hannah Arendt. Read part I of *On Violence* (pp. 105-133)

Wednesday, November 9 – Read part II of Arendt’s *On Violence* (pp. 134-155)

Friday, November 11 – Read part III of Arendt’s *On Violence* (pp. 156-184)

Monday, November 14 – ****In-class quiz on Arendt’s *On Violence*****

Wednesday, November 16 – Read Arendt’s *Lying in Politics* (pp. 3-47)

Friday, November 18 – No new reading assignment.

Monday, November 21 – ****In-class quiz on Arendt’s *Lying in Politics*****

Wednesday, November 23 – NO CLASS

Friday, November 25 – NO CLASS

Monday, November 28 – Start watching *Hannah Arendt*, a film by Margarethe von Trotta

Wednesday, November 30 – Finish watching *Hannah Arendt*, a film by Margarethe von Trotta

Friday, December 2 – In-class extra credit factoid quiz and meme competition results