

INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL THEORY
POLITICAL SCIENCE 2060

Law, Order, and the Just Society

Tuesday/Thursday 12:00-1:20 PM

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Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Overview

This course is meant to be a general undergraduate survey of Western political philosophy as it has evolved over time from the days of ancient Greece and Rome to our current age, the post-modern era. We will begin by discussing the nature of political philosophy and its goals, and we will frequently refer back to this discussion as we cover the changing nature of political thought throughout the course of the semester. Ultimately, political philosophy is rooted in pure philosophy and in certain "big" questions such as "What is justice?"

As this course is a general education elective, students will be expected to directly confront the larger questions raised by political philosophy and interpret them in light of current political concerns. In order to more fully familiarize students with both the broader philosophical approach to thinking about politics and the more focused social sciences approach, texts will include examples of pure philosophy as well as works on specific methodological approaches. It is hoped that by approaching the study of political philosophy as a holistic enterprise concerned with all aspects of the existence of the human person, by the end of the course, students will emerge better equipped to critically examine issues raised by the political leaders and thinkers of our day.

Course Requirements

Participation: While meditation on the deeper questions of being in the privacy and silence of one's own home may lead to the occasional valuable insight, experience has shown that the study of political philosophy in a group setting tends to produce wider and more frequent bursts of understanding. As such, students will be required to attend each scheduled class meeting. In addition, students will be expected to have read the assigned text prior to class, and be prepared for in-depth discussion of the material. While most classes will emphasize the lecture format, the instructor will often employ the Socratic Method to challenge students' understanding of the material covered to date. Reference to the assigned material will occur frequently throughout each class period, so it is to the student's advantage to bring the relevant text to class. In order to promote a comfortable and focused learning environment, please do not bring laptop computers to class, and please silence all electronic devices prior to the start of class. I have no objection to the use of recording devices in class, provided that it is understood that any such recordings may be used only for the purpose of facilitating note-taking and test-preparation. Any commercial

use or publication of lecture material without the permission of the instructor is prohibited. Participation will be worth 10% of the overall grade.

Tests: In order to maximize the opportunities for students to demonstrate their knowledge of course material, three exams will be given throughout the semester. Each exam will be worth 20% of the overall grade. Students are permitted to miss one exam during the semester, however this will result in doubling the value of the final exam to 40% of the student's final grade; please carefully consider the implications of so heavily weighting a single exam. It is to the student's advantage not to miss class, as exam questions will be drawn from both assigned readings and in-class discussions. The exam dates and topics are shown below; any changes to these dates or topics will be announced in class.

Papers: The study of political philosophy requires direct engagement with the ideas of the great political philosophers. During the course of the semester, a paper of 12-page length will be assigned. Topics will be chosen by the date indicated and should be drawn primarily from themes raised by the texts. A handout regarding citation style and overall paper format will be distributed prior to the due date for the first draft of the paper. The paper will be worth 30% of the overall grade. Students will benefit greatly from reading Christopher Lasch's *Plain Style: A Guide to Written English*.

Scoring Breakdown: Exam 1 - 20% Paper - 30%
 Exam 2 - 20%
 Exam 3 - 20% Participation - 10%

90 - 100% = A 80 - 89% = B 70 - 79% = C 60 - 69% = D 0 - 59% = F

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is essential to the university learning environment. Each student will be expected to abide by the Louisiana State University Code of Student Conduct at all times. An understanding of plagiarism and related concepts is central to maintaining academic integrity. Many bright and talented students often prematurely terminate their careers due to ignorance of the nature of plagiarism. In order to minimize the chance of students falling afoul of plagiarism rules, each student is advised to consult Louisiana State University's Student Life and Enrollment website concerning rules for academic integrity. The following web address will lead students to LSU's accepted definition of plagiarism: <http://saa.lsu.edu/Plagiarism.html> Should students have further concerns regarding this matter, they may consult with the instructor or with the Center for Academic Success at Coates Hall room B-31.

Required Texts

Thomas Aquinas, *The Political Ideas of Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Dino Bigongiari, (Free Press, 1997 edition), ISBN: 9780684836416

F.A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, (University of Chicago Press, 2007), ISBN: 9780226320557

Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. David Wootton, (Hackett Publishing, 1995 edition), ISBN: 0872203166

Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto and Other Writings*, (Barnes and Noble Classics, 2005), ISBN: 9781593081003

Sophocles, *Antigone*, any edition will suffice

Eric Voegelin, *Science, Politics and Gnosticism* (ISI Books, 2004), ISBN: 9781932236484

Course dates, required readings, and discussion topics

Classical and Medieval Thought

January 14 - Introduction, course overview

Required Reading: None

January 19 - *The Summum Bonum*

Required Reading: Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Introduction – 22 [via Moodle]

January 21 - The Virtues

Required Reading: Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, 23 – 64 [via Moodle]

January 26 - On the Nature and Immortality of the Soul

Required Reading: Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, 65 – 88 [via Moodle]

January 28 – Natural Law and Positive Law

Required Reading: Sophocles' *Antigone*

February 2 – Natural Law and Positive Law (continued)

Required Reading: Sophocles' *Antigone*

February 4 - Neo-Platonism, the Church Fathers, and the Christian Model of Government

Required Reading: St. Augustine, *City of God*, Books XIX-XX [via Moodle]

February 11 - The Christian conception of Man, the Polis, and Free Will

Required Reading: St. Augustine, *City of God*, Books XIX-XX [via Moodle]

February 16 – Ethics and Politics in the High Middle Ages

Required Reading: *The Political Ideas of Thomas Aquinas*, Introduction - 77

February 18 – Ethics and Politics in the High Middle Ages (continued)

Required Reading: *The Political Ideas of Thomas Aquinas*, Introduction - 77

February 23 - The Medieval Synthesis: Church and State

Required Reading: *The Political Ideas of Thomas Aquinas*, 147-158, 171-195

February 25 - The Medieval Synthesis (continued); **Paper topic due**

Required Reading: *The Political Ideas of Thomas Aquinas*, 147-158, 171-195

March 1 – **Exam 1**

Renaissance, Reformation, and Modern Thought

March 3 - The Practical Turn and the Secular State

Required Reading: Niccolo Machiavelli's *The Prince*

March 8 - Machiavelli's Ideal

Required Reading: Niccolo Machiavelli's *The Prince*

March 10 - The Nature of Enlightenment and the Spirit of the Age

Required Reading: Immanuel Kant's *What is Enlightenment?* and selections from *Groundwork for the Metaphysic of Morals*; selections from Rene Descartes' *Meditation on First Philosophy* and *Discourse on Method* [via Moodle]

March 15 – The Social Contract: Contract, Covenant, or Partnership?

Required Reading: Selections from John Locke's *Second Treatise on Government*; selections from Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan*; The Declaration of Independence [Moodle]

March 17 - Early Modern Constitutional Theory

Require Reading: Selections from John Locke's *Second Treatise on Government*; The Constitution of the United States of America [via Moodle]

March 20-27 Spring Break

March 29 - Socialism: The French Revolution completed

Required Reading: *The Communist Manifesto and Other Writings*, 3-42, 177-182

March 31 - Socialism: A New Theory of Justice?; **Rough draft of Paper due**

Required Reading: *The Communist Manifesto and Other Writings*, 3-42, 177-182

April 4 – **Final date to drop this course**

April 5 – **Exam 2**

Post-Modern Thought

April 7 – The Constitutions of Post-Modernity: Fascism

Required Reading: Selections from Benito Mussolini’s *The Doctrine of Fascism* [Moodle]

April 12 – The Constitutions of Post-Modernity: Neo-Liberalism

Required Reading: Selections from John Rawls’ *A Theory of Justice* and Peter Singer’s “Famine, Affluence, and Morality” [via Moodle]

April 14 – Anti-Totalitarianism

Required Reading: Friedrich Hayek’s *The Road to Serfdom*

April 19 - Anti-Totalitarianism (continued)

Required Reading: Friedrich Hayek’s *The Road to Serfdom*

April 21 – Anti-Totalitarianism (concluded)

Required Reading: Friedrich Hayek’s *The Road to Serfdom*

April 26 - The Return to the Aristotelian *Weltanschung*; **Paper due**

Required Reading: *Science, Politics and Gnosticism*, Introduction - 37

April 28 - Man, Society, and Justice reconsidered; Course Evaluation

Required Reading: *Science, Politics and Gnosticism*, 38 - conclusion

Exam 3 (Final Exam)