

Political Philosophy

Political Science 377W: 02

Spring 2008

T, H
3:30-4:50 p.m.
AB 1, room 310
Office Hours: T 2-3:30
H 2-3:30
or by appointment

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Course description and objectives

This course introduces participants to political philosophy through some of the most significant works in that domain. Course content is limited in two very significant ways: the works we will be reading are unapologetic staples of the Western canon and they constitute an incomplete list of what is significant in that canon. Bluntly put, we will be reading great dead white males and not even reading anywhere near all of the great dead white males who matter.

This limited exercise is nonetheless incontrovertible in the sense that it will serve as the foundation for further inquiries into a fuller rendition of the Western canon and as a reference point for explorations of alternative canons. Once you have familiarized yourself with these basic texts, you will be ready to read other works of political philosophy and to critically engage with this tradition. You will also be equipped to approach other areas of political science and politics with the insights you will gain from grappling with political theoretical issues. The skills you will develop in this class will therefore transfer to all political explorations: the practice of asking 'the big questions' about the nature of politics, about the nature and condition of humans, about the way people in politics do and should act, will not remain within the confines of this one course.

Prerequisite: POL 261

Course requirements

Your performance in this course will be graded on the quality and intensity of your engagement with class materials, which means both your demonstrated understanding of the subject matter of the course and your demonstrated capacity to apply ideas from class materials to political realities outside of those materials.

Throughout the course, it will be assumed that you complete all **readings** by the time they first appear on the schedule. Having done the readings is not considered an achievement but a baseline assumption. The readings are the sine qua non of participation.

The **writing** requirements for the course are in keeping with the W designation and consist of 5 author essays and a final. All of them are take-home, open-book, open-note. All author essays will seek to test whether you have read the texts and whether you have been able to formulate your own positions vis-à-vis the readings, as well as to apply them to political realities outside of class readings. The final exam in the class will be a paper due at the time assigned by the university for a final exam.

General rules for all written assignments in this course:

- word counts will appear on the first page of each assignment next to your name – assignments without word counts will be penalized
- there will be absolutely no late assignments in this course – not turning in an essay at the beginning of the class period when it is due means a 0 on that essay
- given that all writing is open-book, open-note, it is essential to reference the sources of your information even more meticulously than otherwise – please take especial care to familiarize yourself with the plagiarism policy for the course
- you are only allowed to use the Internet for your work in this course as a portal to reach academic / scholarly material, in venues such as JSTOR – using Wikipedia or any online encyclopedia will be penalized

Author essays

- 700 to 1400 words
- penalties under 700 (!!) and over 1800 words
- choose one out of 2 or 3 questions
- open-book, open-note
- scheduled as follows:
 - Plato essay – questions out Feb 14, essay due Feb 19, 10% of grade
 - Aristotle essay – questions out Feb 28, essay due March 6, 10% of grade
 - Machiavelli and Hobbes essay – questions out March 20, essay due March 27, 15% of grade
 - Kant essay – questions out Apr 17, essay due Apr 22, 15% of grade
 - Marx essay – questions out May 1, essay due May 6, 15% of grade

Final

- multiple authors – more than one from the course, or one from the course and anyone else you want to include
- 1400 to 200 words
- penalties under 1200 and over 2200 words
- open-book, open-note
- no list of topics or questions – you have to create your own topic for this one
- you will have to write about theory/ philosophy and practical application as well in this paper
- class meeting on March 27 entirely devoted to workshop about research topics for final
- week of April 1 devoted to research on your topic of choice – no class meeting that week
- due at time of final exam for the course

Class **attendance** is properly understood as a requirement for the course. As such, it is graded. Each class meeting will begin with an attendance check. Each absence will mean one point off of the total 20 points for attendance.

Grade composition

The 200 total points in the course will be distributed and the different elements will be graded in the following manner:

Plato essay	20 points	10%
Aristotle essay	20 points	10%
Machiavelli and Hobbes essay	30 points	15%
Kant essay	30 points	15%
Marx essay	30 points	15%
final	50 points	25%
attendance	20 points	10%

Grading scale

A = 100-90, B = 89-80, C = 79-70, D = 69-60, F = 59 and below.

Course texts

The following required texts are available for purchase at the bookstore:

Aristotle: The Politics – trans. Carnes Lord
 Hobbes: Leviathan – Penguin Classics
 Kant: Political Writings – Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought
 Machiavelli: The Prince and the Discourses – Modern Library College Editions
 The Marx – Engels Reader – ed. Robert C. Tucker
 Plato: The Republic – trans. Allan Bloom

You may already own some of the texts or may choose to purchase them from retailers other than the bookstore. However, you are required to have the editions that are specified above.

Course policies

The policies that govern this course are included on the BlackBoard site of the course. Please note that you are responsible for knowing and abiding by, the contents of the 'Course Policies' document and that everything in it has the same force as other items on the syllabus. Please familiarize yourself with the document early on.

Tentative course schedule

Date	Day	Theme and readings
17-Jan	H	Introduction to the course
22-Jan	T	Plato: The Republic – book 1
24-Jan	H	Plato: The Republic – book 2
29-Jan	T	Plato: The Republic – books 3 and 4
31-Jan	H	Plato: The Republic – books 5 and 6
5-Feb	T	Plato: The Republic – book 7
7-Feb	H	Plato: The Republic – book 8
12-Feb	T	Plato: The Republic – book 9
14-Feb	H	Plato: The Republic – book 10
19-Feb	T	Aristotle: The Politics – books 1 and 2
21-Feb	H	Aristotle: The Politics – books 3 and 4
26-Feb	T	Aristotle: The Politics – books 5 and 6
28-Feb	H	Aristotle: The Politics – books 7 and 8
4-Mar	T	Machiavelli: The Prince
6-Mar	H	Hobbes: Leviathan – Part 1: Of man
18-Mar	T	Hobbes: Leviathan – Part 1: Of man
20-Mar	H	Hobbes: Leviathan – Part 2: Of commonwealth
25-Mar	T	Hobbes: Leviathan – Part 2: Of commonwealth
27-Mar	H	research topic workshop
1-Apr	T	research – no class meeting
3-Apr	H	research – no class meeting
8-Apr	T	Kant: What is Enlightenment; What is orientation in thinking?
10-Apr	H	Kant: Idea for a universal history with a cosmopolitan purpose; Conjectures on the beginning of human history
15-Apr	T	Kant: Perpetual peace
17-Apr	H	Kant: ‘Theory and practice’
22-Apr	T	Marx: Economic and philosophic manuscripts of 1844
24-Apr	H	Marx: Economic and philosophic manuscripts of 1844
29-Apr	T	Marx: Theses on Feuerbach; The German ideology
1-May	H	Marx: Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte; On Imperialism in India
6-May	T	recap and research discussion
8-May	H	recap

final to be scheduled by SHSU