

Political Philosophy

Political Science 377, Section 01 (CID 7437)

Summer 1, 2008

M,T,W,H,F
10-11:50
Room 306
Office Hours:
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.

Course requirements

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.

Attendance grades will reflect whether you display responsibility and commitment by showing up for class, not what you do once you are there.

Your written performance will be evaluated on the basis of your **exams** (two midterms and a final) and your **author reports**. Midterms and the final exam are in-class, open-book, open-note assignments. Author reports are written at home and they are open-book, open-note.

On the **exams**, you will be presented with three questions and you will have to choose one to write about. Each exam will cover two theorists.

Author reports focus on one theorist of your choice and they prove both that you have read that theorist and that you have a thoughtful position on their work. There are no pre-selected topics: you have to create your own.

Author reports shall be between 600 and 1200 words (penalized for being under 500 or over 2000 words), with a word count clearly appearing next to your name.

You are free to choose when you turn in your author reports, with one condition: you can never turn in two on the same day.

Grade composition

The different elements of this class will be graded in the following manner:

<i>exam 1</i>	25%
<i>exam 2</i>	25%
<i>final</i>	30%
<i>attendance</i>	10%
<i>author report 1</i>	5%
<i>author report 2</i>	5%

Extra credit

If you want to earn extra points in the course, you may turn in one or two extra author reports – with the same condition of never turning in two at the same time. The third author report you turn in may earn you up to 3%, while the fourth one may earn you up to 4% of the total grade. All author reports will be graded on the quality of the critical engagement of the material that you demonstrate in them.

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.

Classroom policies – listed on Blackboard in a separate document that nonetheless has the same force as the syllabus – you are responsible for the content of both documents

Course schedule

T 06.03.	intro to course	no readings
W 06.04.	Plato 1	Republic 1 – 2
H 06.05.	Plato 3	Republic 3-4
F 06.06.	Plato 4	Republic 5-6
M 06.09.	Plato 5	Republic 7-8
T 06.10.	Plato 6	Republic 9-10
W 06.11.	Aristotle 1	Politics 1-2
H 06.12.	Aristotle 2	Politics 3-4
F 06.13.	Aristotle 3	Politics 5-6
M 06.16.	Aristotle 4	Politics 7-8
T 06.17.	EXAM 1	
W 06.18.	Machiavelli	Prince
H 06.19.	Hobbes 1	Leviathan Part 1
F 06.20.	Hobbes 2	Leviathan Part 2
M 06.23.	EXAM 2	
T 06.24.	Kant 1	What is Enlightenment?, What is orientation in thinking?, Idea for a universal history with a cosmopolitan purpose
W 06.25.	Kant 2	Conjectures on the beginning of human history, Perpetual peace, Theory and practice
H 06.26.	Marx 1	Economic and philosophical manuscripts of 1844
F 06.27.	Marx 2	These on Feuerbach, The German ideology, Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, On imperialism in India
M 06.30.	FINAL	