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Spring 2016  
POLS 130  
MWF. 9:10-10:10am  
AH 201

## Introduction to Political Theory

Political theory is the study of how we ought to organize the forces that shape our lives. Among the most immediate and controversial of these forces is government. What is a government? Why should (or shouldn't) we have one? How should it be organized? When does it become illegitimate?

Of course, government is a classic topic (for many fields) and these are classic questions. But! We theorists are an ambitious bunch and we've made sure our field has broader horizons. This course will therefore consider the whats, whys, and hows of the economy, culture, ecology, race, gender, spirituality, education, and most everything else that forms our social and political experience.

Our project this semester will be to get to know the field of political theory in all its sprawling, weird, fun, challenging vastness. This will involve both historical and contemporary components. The first third of the course will engage the *tradition* of political theory and philosophy, the second will engage some *tensions* between basic concepts as they have evolved from this tradition, and the final third will consider a number of pressing *topics* in contemporary politics. In this way we will lay a historical groundwork that can help us critically engage the core political questions we face in our own lives.

I hope that we can read and discuss each of our course materials in three unique (but connected) ways. First, these texts arise from, and shape, history. In reading them, we will consider the way theorists' works arise from their context while also generating new contexts for subsequent scholars and political practitioners. Second, these texts contain challenging and provocative arguments in which writers are often telling us how we ought to live. We need to be able to understand and address their (perhaps presumptuous) claims if we want to understand and defend our own politics. Finally, these texts are often beautiful in their own funny ways. I love political theory, not just for the history and arguments, but also because the texts are often well-written, charming, and weird. We'll talk more about this threefold attention to history, argument, and beauty soon.

### Required Texts

All of this course's readings will be made available to you electronically, either in the form of .pdf documents posted on the course's webpage or as journal articles accessible through the library website. From time to time you will be responsible for locating these articles on your own. I realize this is a bit of a pain but I promise that it's a good skill to practice!

We are going to try two risky things this semester. First, you will be allowed to bring readings to class on your laptop, iPad, Kindle, or whatever other electronic device you prefer. We all have to learn how to participate in a discussion with a glowing screen in front of us. That's just the world we live in. That said, I reserve the right to shift us back to the printed word if this proves too distracting (if you are having problems with other students surfing the internet during class, slip an anonymous note under my office door and I'll issue a warning). Second, we will have less reading than comparable courses (generally around 20 pages/day, opposed to the typical theory seminar load of

40 pages/day). You should know that this is a trap: the reduction in pages corresponds to higher standards for reading comprehension. Take your time with the pages assigned!

### **Classroom Expectations**

A good classroom environment takes work from everyone. This is particularly important in a discussion-based class in which everyone will be expected to participate on a weekly basis. Those of us who tend to speak up more than others may need to consciously step back and allow other people a chance to contribute. Those of us who tend to be more reserved or hesitant may need to make efforts to share our thoughts in order to do our part in the classroom. Every respectful voice helps us all learn more, and I will expect you to behave accordingly.

In order to establish a good classroom environment, I hope to observe a few guidelines:

- Come to every class. I'm not going to be a fastidious attendance taker but it's going to help everyone's comprehension (and your final grade!) to have you there and engaged.
- Bring all assigned materials to every class.
- We will start with the assumption that we will raise hands before we speak in class. If this does not feel necessary, we can reassess.
- If you're likely to get sleepy in class, bring whatever provisions you need to stay engaged.

### **Assignments and Assessments**

Your final grade for the course will be calculated based on five assessments:

1. Micro-essays – 15%
2. Midterm exam – 25%
3. Three-quarter-term quiz – 15%
4. 6-8 page final essay – 25%
5. Discussion participation and attendance – 20%

### **Micro-essays**

Ten times over the course of the semester, I'll ask you to write an in-class micro-essay. These essays should fit on the front and back of one index card (I'll bring the index cards). My goal is not to "catch" you for failing to comprehend the readings perfectly. Instead, I hope to provoke you to critically engage a key topic from the readings and pose questions to me about our discussions.

The essays will be graded on a generous pass/fail basis. Basically, if you show up having done the readings, can fill up an index card, and repeat this fifteen times, you'll ace this section of the course. Think of it as a free A for 15% of your grade just for showing up and having something to say.

### **Class Schedule**

#### February 1– Introduction to the Course

- Syllabus

#### February 3 – Framing the Course

- Ruth W. Grant, "Political Theory, Political Science, and Politics."
- Niccolo Machiavelli, "Letter to Vittori."

February 5 – Plato

- “Crito.”

February 8 – Plato

- *Republic*, Book 1.

February 10 – Plato

- *Republic*, Book 2.

February 12 – CLASS CANCELLED!

February 15 – Plato

- *Republic*, Book 4, 8.

February 17 – Aristotle

- *Politics*, Book 1-2

February 19 –The Old Testament

- *Genesis*, Book 1-4, 6-9, 11, 18, 19.
- *Exodus*, Book 18.
- *Deuteronomy*, Books 16-17.
- *Exodus*, Books 20-23.

February 22 – Luther and the Reformation

- Ullman, “Theocratic and Feudal Kinship,” *A History of Political Thought*, 130-141.
- Gillespie, “Luther and the Reformation,” *The Theological Origins of Modernity*, 108-12.

February 24 – Thomas Hobbes

- *Leviathan*, Author’s Introduction
- Ibid. Chapters 10-13.

February 26 – Thomas Hobbes

- *Leviathan*, Chapters 14-18.

February 29 – Thomas Hobbes

- *Leviathan*, Chapters 19-21, 26, 29, 30

March 2 – John Locke

- *Second Treatise on Government*, Chapter 1
- Ibid. Chapter 2, paragraph 4-8, 13-end.

March 4 – John Locke

- *Second Treatise on Government*, Chapters 3-5.
- Ibid., Chapter 8, sections 95-104.

March 7 – John Locke

- *Second Treatise on Government*, Chapter 6, paragraph 57.

- Ibid. Chapter 7, paragraph 77, 85-90.
- Ibid. Chapter 8, 95-99, 119-122.
- Ibid. Chapter 9.
- Ibid. Chapter 10, paragraph 132.
- Ibid. Chapter 11, paragraph 134-140.
- Ibid. Chapter 12, paragraph 143-144.
- Ibid. Chapter 13, paragraph 149-150, 155.

#### March 9 – John Locke

- *Second Treatise on Government*, Chapter 15, paragraph 169-171.
- Ibid. Chapter 18, paragraph 199, 201-204, 207-210.
- Ibid. Chapter 19, paragraph 211-212, 220-226, 240-242.

#### March 11 – Jean-Jacques Rousseau

- *Discourse on Inequality*, Part one and two selections

#### March 14 – Jean-Jacques Rousseau

- *Social Contract*, Book 1, chapter 1-3, 4, 6-8.

#### March 16 – Jean-Jacques Rousseau

- *Social Contract*, Book 1, chapter 7.
- Ibid. Book 2, chapter 1, 3-4, 6-7.
- Ibid. Book 4, chapter 1-2.

#### March 18 – MIDTERM DURING CLASS TIME

#### March 21 – SPRING BREAK

#### March 23 – SPRING BREAK

#### March 25 – SPRING BREAK

#### March 28 – Socialism v. Liberalism

- John Stewart Mill, “Chapters on Socialism,” p. xxii-xxv, 221-234, 260-261.

#### March 30 – Socialism v. Liberalism

- Fredrick Engels, “Socialism, Utopian and Scientific.”

#### April 1 – Socialism v. Liberalism

- Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels, “Manifesto of the Communist Party” (selections)

#### April 4 – Leadership v. Democracy

- James Madison, et. al., *Federalist Papers* #9, 10, 51, 78.
- Brutus, *Anti-federalist Papers*, Brutus #1.

#### April 6 – Leadership v. Democracy

- Max Weber, “Politics as a Vocation,” 77-95, 115-128.

April 8 – Liberalism v. Democracy

- Jürgen Habermas, “Constitutional Democracy: A Paradoxical Union of Contradictory Principles?”

April 11 – Democrats v. Democracy

- Jacques Rancière, “Ten Theses on Politics,” *Theory & Event* 5:3 (2001), 1-10

April 13 – Democrats v. Democracy

- Chantal Mouffe, “Democratic Citizenship and the Political Community.”

April 15 – Feminism

- Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (selections)

April 18 – Feminism

- Iris Marion Young, “Throwing Like a Girl.”

April 20 – Race in America

- Booker T. Washington, “The Atlanta Compromise.”
- WEB Dubois, “Of Mr. Washington...”

April 22– Race in America

- Malcolm X, “The Ballot or the Bullet.”

April 25 – Intersectionality

- Andrea Smith, “Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy.”

April 27 – THREE-QUARTER-TERM QUIZ

April 29 – Environmentalism

- William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness.”

May 2 – Environmentalism

- Robyn Eckersley, “Exploring the Environmental Spectrum.”

May 4 – Rebellion

- Martin Luther King Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.”
- John Brown, “Address to the Court.”

May 6 – Rebellion

- Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (selections).

May 9 – Conservatism

- Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (selections forthcoming).

May 11 – Conservatism

- Russell Kirk, “Ten Principles of Conservatism.”

May 16 – FINAL PAPERS DUE AT 5:00 PM