



Course Description

This course is a primarily chronological introduction to a selection of major and some minor works in Western political theory. The texts we read are (mostly) old, but the questions should be familiar: **How should we live, and what rules should govern our collective life?** Those are, roughly, the questions of the *good life* and *justice*. **How should we go about pursuing our goals?** That is the question of political action. Finally, **why do we disagree when we answer those questions?** That's the question of *ideology*.

Political theory focuses on analyzing and interpreting concepts and arguments. That's one of the reasons it makes perfect sense to read ancient texts to think about current problems: even when the ideas aren't applicable, your engagement with the ideas gives you skills to think about our own burning questions.

Your most important assignment in this course is to apply the tools of political theory to this course: figure out ways of categorizing and conceptualizing the ideas we encounter, think about how they apply and fail to apply to the problems of our time, and develop skills to explain your discoveries to others.

Learning Objectives

At the end of the semester, you should:

1. Be **familiar** with the texts we have read and the kinds of arguments you have encountered during the course.
2. Have an **understanding** of what political theory is and have at least a general comprehension of major themes and concepts in political theory (e.g., you should know in more than one way what liberalism and conservatism are).
3. Be able to read other similar texts and **analyze** other political arguments. In other words, you should be able to engage in inquiry into political arguments. For example, you should be able to understand what is wrong with a logically fallacious argument and at the same time understand why it might work to get people riled up.
4. Be able to **express** your views on these matters both verbally, in writing, and using other "new" media, both individually and by working in groups.
5. Be able to **solve problems**, both intellectual and social, using the skills and knowledge you've acquired in this course in conjunction with other skills and knowledge you might have from elsewhere.

Course Requirements

People learn in different ways, and they bring different skills and background

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Important Dates

9/28: Drop/add deadline

9/28: Notification deadline for religious conflicts

10/19–20: Fall study break

10/21: Midterm self-assessment essay due

12/21: End-of-term self-assessment essay due

Introduction to Political Theory

knowledge to the courses they take. This course is designed with those ideas in mind. That means two things: One, we will frequently ask you think about what you have learned, and how. Two, there are many different ways of satisfying the requirements of the course, many involving the particular skills and interests you might have.

To do well in this course, do the following:

1. **Take initiative.** Your choice of assignments, finding group partners, getting credit for participation require proactive decisions on your part. That's the way the political world works, too. In doing that...
2. **leverage your own talents.** None of us are good at everything; all of us are good at something. You know and can do more things than you might realize. Choose assignments with that in mind. But also...
3. **take on challenges.** You will face new and difficult things: texts, assignments, people. So also in life. We will reward risk taking. But, finally, you must
4. **work hard.** We know that "A for effort" went out by the second grade, but while hard work is not a *sufficient* condition for a good grade — that means it alone won't get you a good grade — it's a *necessary* condition. That is, you can't get a good grade if you haven't made a serious effort to read, attend, participate, and create.

Because of the flexibility of the assignments, the grading structure for this course may at first seem complicated. Please read the material carefully so you understand it. In the following, we present the course in two different ways. First, we explain the different components. Then we explain how you will be evaluated.

I. Learning Components

Readings

The readings for this course are frequently very difficult. We know they are, and our goal is to help you understand and engage them. You need to complete the reading for the day before the lecture; for each lecture, you will need to answer a few questions online. Those questions help you think about the readings, and they allow us to gauge your difficulties with them.

Everything listed below is required:

Plato, *The Trial and Death of Socrates*, third edition, translated by G.M.A. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishers, 2000).

Weston, Anthony, *A Rulebook for Argument*, fourth edition (Indianapolis, Hackett Publishers, 2009).

Wootton, David, ed. *Modern Political Thought from Machiavelli to Nietzsche* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishers, 1996).

Additional required readings are available through the CTools site for the course.

Introduction to Political Theory

Lectures

The lectures are going to be largely interactive, thanks to the LectureTools software. Attendance in lectures is optional; participation during lectures is rewarded.

Before lecture You need to complete the reading for the day one day before and answer a few basic questions accessible through the course website **by 8 a.m. of morning of the lecture**. Your feedback counts for your grade; it is also important as it will help shape the content of the lecture.

There will also be an ongoing “Political Theory in the News” assignment, which we will encourage you to think about when you do the reading. If you find a relevant suggestion, post it on the class blog by 8 a.m. of the morning of the lecture.

If you don’t use a laptop and LectureTools to take notes during lecture, you can print the outlines of the lecture notes on the morning of the lecture.

During lecture During lecture, we present the main ideas from the readings. *We don’t expect you to have understood everything in the readings. before the lecture.*

After lecture The lectures will be available on LectureTools. You can use them to review lectures before sections, for the exams, and in general to clarify confusions. It is also a method of catching up if you have had to miss a lecture.

Discussion Sections

Discussion sections are, in many ways, the most important part of the course. That’s where you get to sharpen your understanding of the texts and ideas, try out and practice your own ideas, and engage others in discussions. It is very important to attend and *participate* in discussion sections regularly — that means, every time.

The purpose of the discussion sections is *not* to explain the lecture, but to focus on the ideas of the texts and the lecture, analyze them, and take them further. Your GSI will arrange this in many ways: there can be discussions, group discussions, in-class writing and group projects, as well as old-fashioned quizzes.

Remember to bring the reading for the day into the discussion section.

Student-produced Work

There are no exams in this course! But that does not mean we aren’t interested in seeing how you work with the material you have learned in this course and demonstrate that learning. We will give you specific instructions on all of the assignments below, but the general outline is as follows:

Writing. Analytic and argumentative texts are the bread and butter of academic work. ***Everyone will have to write one short conventional essay in this course.*** In addition, we will count appropriate analytic texts longer than 500 words posted on the course blog as writing assignments. You can write two of those during the semester. All of these will be evaluated for the quality of writing and

LectureTools

LectureTools is a software interface developed at the University of Michigan to facilitate interactive learning in large classes. A separate handout and an in-class training session will provide more information on its use.

Possible Flu Outbreaks

If you get the flu and especially if you know or suspect it is of the H1N1 variety, please stay home and contact your GSI immediately via email. We will make alternative arrangements for you to participate in the discussion sections.

Introduction to Political Theory

argumentation. On the blog posts, your ability to prompt (thoughtful) comments from other students will count as a positive.

Political theory in the news. You might think that a given day's reading resonates with some event or phenomenon that you have seen reported in contemporary media. You can write about it on the course blog, in a quick post of about 100–200 (with a link).

Blog commentary. Commenting on other students' longer posts and "political theory in the news" posts is a form of writing in this course. You may do it as frequently as you want, or not at all. Standards of civility, quality of argumentation and writing apply to those posts.

Group work. Many students hate group work. But for better or for worse, most work in the "real" world — your working life after your higher education — involves group work, and it's a good idea to learn to deal with it. Your group projects can be **slideware presentations, academic posters, podcasts, videos, and websites**. Groups can consist of 3–5 students. Creating the group is its members' responsibility. In other words, if you want to create a group project, find your partners yourself. Individual students' grade for the group project will be a function of the quality of the final product and your group members' assessment of your level of contribution. Each student may participate in two group projects throughout the term.

Learning self-assessment essays. Each student must submit two "learning self-assessment essays." The first will be due on Wednesday, October 21 (the day after the fall study break) and the second on Monday, December 21. In these essays, you evaluate what you have done and what you have learned in the course up to that point and, using the general rubric below, make an argument for the grade you deserve.

II. Evaluation

All evaluation in this course is based on *rewarding achievements*, as opposed to focusing on shortcomings. Your own evaluation of what and how you have learned will play an important role in determining your course grade. Because of this, there aren't exact percentages for any given work components. Instead, each component will be weighed so as to take into account *improvements, risk taking and challenges, and initiative*.

In your self-evaluation, you will use the following general rubric:

Introduction to Political Theory

Grade range

Common Components

Optional Components

A

Do all the readings and complete 95% of the online reading questions.

Attend and participate actively in 95% of discussion sections, perform well in all section-specific assignments.

Receive at least B in the conventional essay assignment.

Contribute actively (at least 15 times *throughout the term*) on the course blog with "political theory in the news" posts or with comments on other posts.

Participate actively in the lectures by asking and responding to questions.

Join in the production of at least one group project *and* receive an A range grade in at least one.

OR

Write at least two longer (500 words or more) blog posts and receive at least one A range grade and nothing lower than a B range grade.

B

Do all the readings and complete 95% of the online reading questions.

Attend and participate actively in 95% of discussion sections, perform well in all section-specific assignments.

Receive at least B in the conventional essay assignment.

Contribute actively (at least 15 times *throughout the term*) on the course blog with "political theory in the news" posts or with comments on other posts.

OR

Participate actively in the lectures by asking and responding to questions.

OR

Join in the production of at least one group project *and* receive a B range grade in at least one.

OR

Write at least two longer (500 words or more) blog posts and receive at least one B range grade.

C

Do all the readings and complete 70% of the online reading questions.

Attend and participate actively in 70% of discussion sections, perform satisfactorily in more than half section-specific assignments.

Receive at least C in the conventional essay assignment.

Contribute on the course blog with "political theory in the news" posts or with comments on other posts.

OR

Participate actively in the lectures by asking and responding to questions.

OR

Join in the production of at least one group project *and* receive a C range grade in at least one.

OR

Write at least one longer (500 words or more) blog posts and receive at least a C range grade.

Introduction to Political Theory

D range grades result from (1) falling significantly below 70% in *any* of the first two common components, (2) below in 70% in both of the first two common components, or (3) not making any satisfactory effort in the optional components. *Anything below that will mean a failing grade.*

How do *we* figure out your grade? We look at our own records of your achievements in the categories listed in the rubric above and we read carefully your self-assessment essays. Your thoughtful and honest engagement of what, how, and how much you have learned will play a role in the grade you receive. We realize this may seem more precise than what you usually see on syllabi, but in reality it is no less precise. And, to alleviate your worries, we encourage you to talk with your GSI *and* the professor after your midterm self-assessment and your midterm grade have been returned to you.

Summary: This course rewards initiative, effort, risk taking, and skill. Please note that it is very easy to get at least a B in the course. Also note that risk taking is rewarded in the sense that if you do poorly on one kind of assignment, you can try something else. But do also note that if you do not keep up with the work, it is easy to fail the course.

If you actually want to make a *grievance* of any grade you have received, you must follow this procedure:

Grade grievances

1. Wait 24 hours after receiving the grade before approaching the GSI.
2. Provide an explanation **in writing** for why the grade you received was unfair.
3. If you are unsatisfied with your GSI's response, you may write an appeal to the professor. This appeal must include your original explanation to the GSI and a written explanation for why it is unfair.

Departmental grade grievance procedures are outlined on the political science website, at <http://www.polisci.lsa.umich.edu/undergrad/grievance.html>.

Late work

Because you have so many options in your assignments, you must follow the timelines for them. *Any assignment that has a deadline must be turned in on time.* No work will be accepted after the deadline. No excuse — computer crash, grandma dying — is acceptable.

Incompletes

The university policy on the grade of “incomplete” will apply in this course. It is generally not in a student's interest to have an incomplete, so try to avoid getting one.

Students with Disabilities

If you would like to request academic accommodations due to a disability, please make an appointment to see Prof. LaVaque-Manty. If you haven't done so already, you are also encouraged to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD), Rm. G-625 Haven Hall 1045, tel. 763-3000 (Voice/TTY/TDD).

Introduction to Political Theory

Rules of the Game for the Course

I. Here is what we expect from students:

- You will treat everyone in the class with respect.
- You will understand that you may encounter opinions and material you disagree with and even find objectionable.
- You will acknowledge that there is no “A for effort,” but that effort is necessary for a good grade.
- You will not cheat, plagiarize or otherwise steal the work of others.
- You will not make excuses for your failure to do what you ought.
- You will accept the consequences — good and bad — of your actions.

II. Here is what students can expect from us:

- We will treat you with the respect.
- We will manage the class in a professional manner. That may include educating you in appropriate behavior.
- We will begin and end class on time.
- We will return your assignments quickly with detailed feedback.
- We will pursue the maximum punishment for academic misconduct.
- We will keep records of your attendance and performance.
- We will investigate every excuse for nonattendance of classes and noncompletion of assignments.
- We will be available to you for advising.
- We will maintain confidentiality concerning your performance.
- Your grade will reflect the quality of your learning and nothing else.

Academic integrity

Engaging in academic work is a tricky business. On the one hand, it is important that individuals do the work that is assigned to them, even if it means reinventing the wheel. On the other hand, all scholars stand on the shoulders of others — in other words, all meaningful academic work is collaborative in one way or another — so it is sometimes hard to draw the line.

There is another reason why citations are so prevalent in academic writing. For all their bloviating, academics are a modest bunch, and when they “Joe Schmoe says this,” they think it’s possible they’ve gotten Joe’s idea all wrong. So they want to give their readers a chance to get it out for themselves.

Putting this simply, the idea of citations in academic work is to

- (1) **give credit where credit is due**, and
- (2) **allow the reader to check things out and pursue things further.**

Religious Observances

In keeping with the University of Michigan policy of respecting students’ religious commitments, all attempts will be made to accommodate conflicts arising out of religious observances. Please note that, according to the Provost’s policy on religious holidays, **you must give notice of a religious conflict by the drop/add deadline.** After that, requests cannot be honored.

Policy regarding e-mail

We encourage you to use e-mail to communicate with us. Keep in mind the following:

- We will reply to e-mails within 24 hours during the week and 48 hours during the weekend.
- We will be happy to answer substantive questions about the course materials, but we will *not* read drafts of papers or partial papers submitted electronically.
- E-mail is a part of your performance in this course. It is also a means of *professional* communication. Dude, if u like cant tell the diff b/w dat n rting 2 ur friends, u r an idiot. ill fail u n ROTFLMAO. ;P

Introduction to Political Theory

That's why us academics take the practices of proper citation extremely seriously. If you engage in any form of academic misconduct, you will **automatically fail this course**. And that is only the first part. As the LSA Academic Judiciary Manual of Procedures specifies, a student may be expelled from the university for academic misconduct. So that we're clear on this, for the purposes of this class, plagiarism will mean

submitting a piece of work which in part or in whole is not entirely the student's own work without attributing those same portions to their correct source.

Additional information on what does and does not count as plagiarism is available on the course website. **You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with those cases.**

Meeting the learning objectives in this course requires that *you* apply your current knowledge and skills to the questions and exercises and, through them, improve that knowledge and those skills. Shortcuts won't get you there, however appealing they might seem. Because of this, **the use of commercial study guides such as Cliff Notes, Sparknotes.com, and other similar resources outside this course counts as academic misconduct**. You will automatically fail this course if we catch you using such resources. They also won't do you any good in this course.

Calendar

Sept. 9 Introduction: **What is political theory?**

Sept. 14 Plato, "Apology," in *The Trial & Death of Socrates*.
Anthony Weston, *A Rulebook for Arguments*, ch. 1.

Sept. 16 Plato, "Crito," in *The Trial & Death of Socrates*.

Sept. 21 Martin Luther King, Jr., "A Letter from a Birmingham Jail."*
Weston, *Rulebook*, ch. 2.

Sept. 23 Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chs. 1–7 (W, 9–21).

Sept. 28 Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chs. 8–26 (W, 21–52).

Sept. 30 Michael Walzer, "Political Action."*
Weston, *Rulebook*, ch. 3, Appendix I.

Oct. 5 Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* chs. 11–14 (W, 148–165).
Weston, *Rulebook*, Appendix II.

Oct. 7 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chs. 15–18 (W, 165–179).

Texts marked with an asterisk (*) are accessible in the "Readings" folder on the course website's Resources.

Texts marked with a **W** are in Wootton, ed., *Modern Political Thought*.

Introduction to Political Theory

- Oct. 12 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chs. 21, 28–29 (188–193, 224–233).
- Oct. 14 Thomas Halper & Douglas Muzzio, “Hobbes in the City: Urban Dystopias in American Movies.”*
Rebecca Solnit, “The Uses of Disaster.”*
- Oct. 19 Fall study break**
- Oct. 21 John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, chs. 1–9 (W, 286–321).
Weston, *Rulebook*, ch. 4.
Midterm self-assessment essay due
- Oct. 26 Locke, *Second Treatise*, chs. 10–17 (W, 321–340).
Weston, *Rulebook*, ch. 5.
- Oct. 28 Locke, *Second Treatise*, chs. 18–19 (W, 340–353).
Malcolm X, “The Ballot or the Bullet.”*
- Nov. 2 J-J Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (W, 376–410).
- Nov. 4 Rousseau, *Social Contract*, bks. I and II (W, 427–449).
- Nov. 9 Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (W, 502–521).
- Nov. 11 Immanuel Kant, “What Is Enlightenment?” (W, 522–525).
Hannah More, “Village Politics.”*
Weston, *Rulebook*, ch. 6.
- Nov. 16 Selections from *The Federalist* (W, 543–557).
Weston, *Rulebook*, ch. 7.
- Nov. 18 J.S. Mill, *On Liberty*, ch. 2 (W, 599–620).
- Nov. 23 Mill, *On Liberty*, chs. 3–4 (W, 620–639).
- Nov. 25 No class because of Thanksgiving break**
- Nov. 30 Mill, *Subjection of Women*, chs. 1–2 (W, 652–677).
- Dec. 2 Mill, *Subjection of Women*, chs. 3–4 (W, 677–705).
LaVaque-Manty, “Being a Woman and Other Disabilities.”*
- Dec. 7 Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology* (W, 775–797).
- Dec. 9 Marx & Engels, *Communist Manifesto*, parts I and II (W, 798–809).
- Dec. 14 Shlomo Avineri, “The Communist Manifesto at 150.”*