

POLSCI 402: Liberalism & Its Critics

Winter 2011

Course Description

This course explores the development of liberalism as a theory of toleration, rights, free market and individualism, and arguments against those values, both by explicit anti-liberals and by liberals themselves. It begins with the historical emergence of liberalism in the seventeenth century as a way to reconcile religious pluralism, but the seminar's focus will be more modern and contemporary debates about the relationship between (1) rights and citizenship, (2) about the relationship between liberty, on the one hand, and social and political equality, on the other, (3) about the relationship between individuals and the state, and (4) about cultural and religious pluralism. These themes are connected with one another, and we will not attend to them chronologically. Instead, we will explore them as they come up in the texts we read and in the questions and responses you have.



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Learning Objectives

The two primary purposes of this course is to (1) introduce you to the key ideas of liberalism and to criticisms against it and (2) help you reflect on what and how the academic discipline of political theory can contribute to understanding such issues.

Political theory is a type of social inquiry which studies arguments made in texts. The purpose of this course is to explore the arguments made for and against liberalism, and to teach you to **interpret** and **analyze** the texts and **evaluate** the arguments. Most of the steps require your own expressive skills, particularly your own writing. This means that while the **knowledge** objectives of the course are limited to the theories we study, mastering the **skill** objectives will make you prepared more broadly.

This course satisfies LSA's Upper Level Writing Requirement (provided your final course grade is C- or above). This means that the course involves lots of different kinds of writing and rewriting.

General Course Requirements

Writing

You will write much and often in this course, but you will also get much help. There are three key ideas guiding the writing pedagogy in the course: (1) The idea of writing as a **process** from an initial half-baked thought to a polished expression of sophisticated ideas, with many steps in between. (2) The **modularity** of the types of writing: work by political theorists includes *argument paraphrases, summaries and comparisons; counterarguments; reflections on genre; and new normative arguments*. Good work incorporates these into seamless wholes, but to be able to do that, one needs to learn to work with the modules by themselves. (3) To help you achieve that end, the third key idea is your own **reflection** of the writing process, how you understand any given assignment and how you feel you accomplished it (we call those “metacognitive writing activities” and explain them in greater detail below). Throughout this course, we will practice these various steps and modules, and you will be able to incorporate others’ feedback as you develop your ideas.

It is important to keep in mind that although we both study and produce texts, they are different kinds of texts. You won’t always be writing like the authors we study; you will be writing like political theorists who study those texts. Some of our authors are useful exemplars for that; others aren’t. You’ll also have other samples to model from. In this sense, political theory is no different from any other subfield of political science: you do not replicate the object of your study, but illuminate it for others.

There are two types of writing assignments in the course: short papers, which help you practice the modular aspects writing, and a term paper, in which you bring the different modules together. Think of the former as exercises — such as playing scales, doing pushups — and the term paper as the product with which you *communicate* your contribution — your performance of a difficult composition, being in an athletic competition. In both cases, you will also practice revising your work.

Short Papers. You will write three very short papers (500 words). The first of these papers is due on Wednesday, January 19. Topics for the other two will be assigned weekly, beginning early February, with specific due dates. You may choose which topic you want to write on; the only requirement is that you complete two additional papers.

The short papers ask you to practice the different modules of theory writing: paraphrasing, reviewing and comparing arguments as well as making counterarguments and developing normative arguments of your own.

Each of these papers has a revision requirement. The first paper, which everyone will write, will be graded and commented on and returned to you for revision on January 26. You will have a week to revise the paper. After you turn it in, it will be graded again.

You will revise the two other short papers on the basis of a *peer review*. You will submit

Drafts and final versions of the papers will be graded. The grade you receive for a paper is the weighted average of the draft (25%) and the second draft (75%).

your draft to two other, pre-selected students who will have several days to comment on the draft. After making revisions, you will turn in your final version as well as your original version and your peers' comments.

How the peer review works. Students in the course will be randomly assigned to groups of three for the duration of the semester. Each member of a group must **comment on two short papers by two of his or her peers** in the group. The quality of your comments will be graded.

Peer review: 15%

Term paper. The purpose of the term paper is to allow you to combine the different types of writing you have practiced in the short papers in a more sustained piece of work. The term paper will be 2,500–3,000 words long. A graded draft and a revised final version are required.

Each topic will be comparative in some way and require you to focus on at least two different theorists.

Term paper alternative! You may, if you wish, co-author your term paper with another student in the course.

Metacognitive writing activities: Research in the fields of education and writing indicates that explicit self-reflection and self-monitoring of learning processes during writing can improve student performance. For that reason, we will ask you to reflect on various aspects of your writing process at different times. These will be required — you can't get credit for the assignment if you don't complete them — but the cool thing is that they will help you produce better work.

Expectations about writing. We don't assume you already have mastered the styles of writing we focus on in this course, although your prior writing experience will help. Still, our purpose is to teach those styles to you now. We will provide many resources to give you a sense of what we hope you will have mastered by the end of the semester. For example, the course website has

- general and specific tips on writing political theory papers,
- links to resources on, for example, grammar, and
- examples of the different kinds of papers we are asking you to write. Some of these are from professional political theorists; others are from undergraduates like you.

We also urge you to take advantage of the professor's and particularly the GSI's office hours. The GSI's job is to help you work on your writing, and ignoring this great resource puts you at a disadvantage and wastes your tuition dollars.

We realize grades are important to you, and we therefore want to make it clear in advance what you will need to do well in this course. The following offers the *rough* principles on the basis of which your papers will be graded:

- A+** A rare piece of superb work. The paper exceeds all expectations for writers at this level. It offers an original thesis and a complex valid and sound argument in its defense. It displays the writer's familiarity with and understanding of relevant debates and literatures. Prose is mature and sophisticated and shows that the writer has not only mastered Standard Written English, but has also developed his or her own voice. A paper of this quality could be a candidate for publication.
- A-A-** Excellent work. Paper offers a clearly stated, interesting and very strong thesis which is supported with valid and sound arguments. The paper shows that the writer has thought about the assignment and developed his or her own ideas about it. Interpretations of theories are sophisticated and supported with textual evidence. Writing is excellent: the organization of the paper is clear, prose is good and grammar flawless.
- B+** Good work. Paper offers a clearly stated thesis which is supported with arguments which are by and large valid and sound. The paper stays on topic and considers all the relevant aspects of the assignment. Interpretations of theories are plausible — or at least intelligent — and supported with textual evidence; more than one source is considered. Writing, including outline, grammar and style, is solid. There are at most two or three typographical or grammatical errors.
- B** Satisfactory work. Paper offers a thesis and supports it with arguments. The thesis is solid but lacks complexity; there are some problems in the arguments or in how they are connected to the thesis. Interpretations are possible, but they can have some weaknesses. Paper uses textual evidence, but there are problems between the evidence and arguments. Paper only uses one textual source. Writing and organization have some minor problems that may affect readability; typographical, grammatical and stylistic errors are noticeable.
- B-** Acceptable work. Paper offers a thesis, but it is either simplistic, trivial, or otherwise weak. Arguments in support of the thesis have some significant problems (they may be invalid, unsound, or disconnected from the thesis), but they also have good aspects to them. The organization of the paper is confusing. Writing has some significant stylistic, grammatical and typographical problems. Textual evidence is generally insufficient or used poorly.
- C-C+** Weak work. Paper offers a minimal thesis and minimal arguments in its support. Interpretations are misguided and/or unsupported with satisfactory evidence. Writing — both at the level of paper organization and grammar — is problematic.
- C-** Poor work. Minimal, incoherent, or badly misguided thesis. There are either no arguments and no textual evidence, or arguments and evidence are so poorly used that they do not support the thesis. Organization is borderline incoherent, writing is so awkward that it begins to be unintelligible.
- D+-D-** Extremely poor work. No thesis, no arguments, no evidence. Writer has little or no conception of most rudimentary aspects of writing (paragraphs, outline).
- E** Unacceptable. The paper displays a fundamental lack of understanding of the principles that guide scholarly endeavors.

A word on grammar. Students often ask whether they will be “graded for grammar.” The answer is no and yes. “No,” in the sense that grammar alone isn’t a grading criterion. But “yes” in the sense that bad grammar — and awkward style — detract from the argument: they make it difficult to follow the writer’s logic, and they make it tiresome for the reader to go through the text. Your goal is not to entertain, but you also shouldn’t make the reading harder work than it needs to be. You are responsible for understanding the rules governing Standard Written English, and usage and grammar rules are important. As you can see in the descriptions on the left, **your paper cannot be in the A-range if it has significant grammatical problems.**

Readings

All writing is *about* something, and in this course it is primarily about the texts we read. You will therefore need to keep up with the readings and, in particular, show up in class having read the material.

The following are the required books for the course.

- John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*. Hackett Publishers, 1983.
- George Orwell, *A Collection of Essays*. Harcourt, 1953.
- Susan Moller Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* Princeton University Press, 1999.
- Carl Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*. MIT Press, 1988.

Additional required readings are available through the course website.

Quizzes

In order to motivate you to keep up with the readings, there will be **fifteen** random quizzes in the course throughout the term. This means that there will be a quiz every week, sometimes twice. The quizzes will ask you to say something about or do something with the reading for the day.

The quizzes are graded on a pass/fail basis. Passing credit indicates “good-faith effort” on your part: (a) your response **clearly** demonstrates you have done the reading and have engaged the question, and (b) you are able to answer questions about the readings when called on in class. If you cannot answer a question regarding the assignment, you cannot receive credit for your quiz that day. Also, leaving class immediately after the quiz counts as a failure.

The quizzes count for 20% of your final course grade. They translate into a letter grade as follows:

Pass 14 quizzes:	A+
Pass 13 quizzes:	A
Pass 11 or 12 quizzes:	B
Pass 9 or 10 quizzes:	C
Pass 7 or 8 quizzes:	D
Pass fewer than 7 quizzes:	E

Quizzes: 20% of your grade.

You may make up **one** quiz if you had a prior approval for your absence or if it is a documented emergency. The makeup may be written or oral. In keeping with the university policy of religious observances, this one-makeup rule **includes** classes missed because of religious observances.

Participation

Participation and attendance count for two reasons: (1) Learning is collective. You might not care about discussions, but by avoiding them, you deprive your peers of an educational opportunity they have a right to. (2) The ability to engage in an intelligent conversation is a skill which is different from being able to understand lectures and readings and from being able to write. Participation: 10% of your grade.

Attend class regularly and participate in class and group discussions. **Being more than ten minutes late to class counts as non-attendance; leaving early without prior approval counts as non-attendance.**

Grade grievances

If you believe that you have been unfairly graded, you must follow this procedure:

1. Wait 24 hours after receiving the grade before approaching the GSI or the professor.
2. Provide an explanation in writing for why the grade you received was unfair.

Departmental grade grievance procedures are outlined on the political science website.

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.

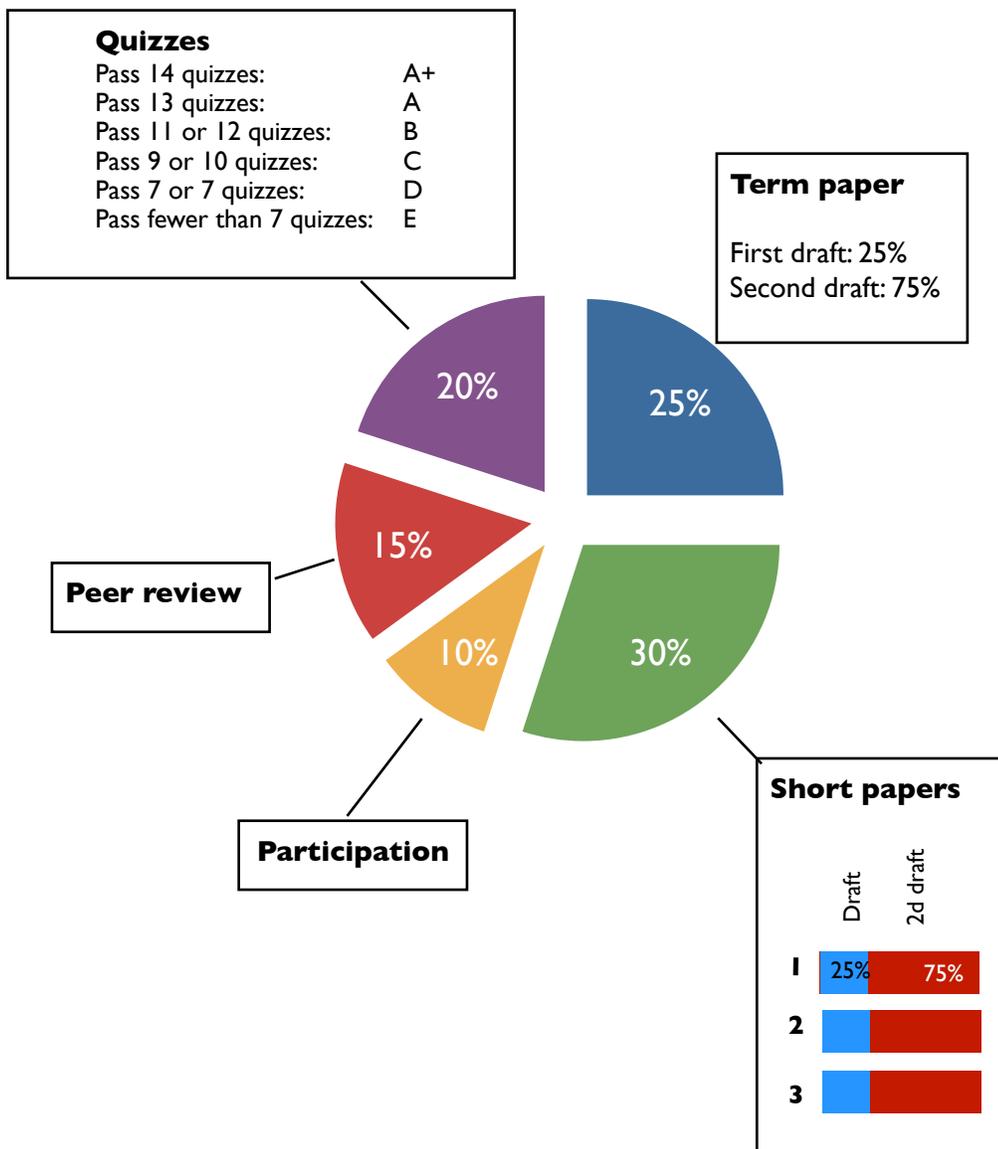
“Penalty” points

One of the purposes of college is to teach students the norms of the professional, post-collegiate “real” world. To emulate this, this course uses a system of “penalty” points to encourage responsible and attentive professional behavior. The policy is as follows:

- For each **four** penalty points, your **final course grade will go down one notch**. For example, if you were going to get a B+ but had four penalty points, you would get a B.
- You get **one** penalty point for minor infractions, including but not limited to failing to pay attention to course materials and policies, for showing up late or failing to show up to appointments, for leaving class early.
- You get **two** penalty points for more serious failures of professional consideration, including but not limited to not returning your peer commentaries on time or for turning in work late.

Summary of grading

Three short papers:	30%
Peer review:	15%
Participation:	10%
Quizzes:	20%
Term paper:	25%



General Policies

Religious Observances and Other Scheduling Conflicts

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.

Furthermore, we are sympathetic to the many other pressures students have in their lives and are willing to accommodate reasonable requests for extensions and other issues that involve scheduling conflicts. It is, however, *your* responsibility to bring conflicts to the professor's attention, and to do so *in advance*. Student athletes will, in most cases, need a letter from the Athletic Department about the scheduling conflicts. As a rule, **no** late assignments will be accepted without prior permission except in cases of a documented emergency.

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).

Academic integrity

Plagiarism and cheating are violations of academic integrity and so violations of the LSA Academic Conduct Code, and they will result automatically in a failure in the course. Furthermore, as the LSA Academic Judiciary Manual of Procedures specifies, a student may be expelled from the university for academic misconduct. 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 is available on the course website. **You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with those cases. Note that you may fail a paper by citing your sources incorrectly. You are also responsible for avoiding even the appearance of plagiarism.**

Meeting the learning objectives in this course requires that *you* apply your current knowledge and skills to the questions and exercises. Shortcuts won't get you there. Because of this, **the use of commercial study guides such as Cliff Notes, Sparknotes.com, and other similar resources outside this course is a violation of academic integrity.** You will automatically fail this course if we catch you using such resources.

Calendar

- 1/5 Introduction — no reading
- 1/10 Mao Zedong, “Combat Liberalism” *
Margaret Talbot, “A Mighty Fortress” *
Peter Berman, “The Philosopher of Islamic Terror” *
- 1/12 Robert Paul Wolff, *The Poverty of Liberalism* (excerpt) *
- 1/17 **MLK Day — No class**
- 1/19 Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*
Karl Marx, “On the Jewish Question” *
- 1/24 Carl Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, pp. 1-48
- 1/26 Schmitt, *Crisis*, pp. 48-76
- 1/31 Deirdre McCloskey, *The Bourgeois Virtues* (excerpt) *
- 2/2 Thomas Haskell, “Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility” *
- 2/7 George Orwell, “Such, Such Were the Joys” and “Charles Dickens,” in *A Collection of Essays*
- 2/9 Michael Walzer, “Liberalism and the Art of Separation” *
Judith Shklar, “The Liberalism of Fear” *
- 2/14 John Ruskin, *Unto this Last* (excerpt) *
Peter Berger, “On the Obsolescence of the Concept of Honour” *
- 2/16 Sharon Krause, *Liberalism with Honor* (excerpt) *
- 2/21 John Dewey, excerpts from political writings *
- 2/23 W. E. B. DuBois, *Dusk of Dawn* (excerpt) *
- 2/28 **“Spring” break**
- 3/2 **“Spring” break**
- 3/7 Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (excerpt)
- 3/9 John Rawls, “Justice as Fairness” and “The Law of Peoples” *
- 3/15 John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (excerpt) *
- 3/17 George Orwell, “Inside the Whale”
- 3/21 Mari Matsuda, “Public Response to Racist Speech” *
- 3/23 J. M. Coetzee, “Giving Offense” *
Andrew Altman, “Liberalism and Campus Hate Speech” *
- 3/28 Jeffrey Spinner-Halev, “Extending Diversity” *
- 3/30 Eamonn Callan, “Discrimination and Religious Schooling” *
- 4/4 *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* Pp. 3-94
- 4/6 *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* Pp. 85-131
- Term paper draft due**
- 4/11 Christian Rostbøll, “Autonomy, Respect and Arrogance in the Danish Cartoon Controversy” *
- 4/13 Adam Tebble, “Exclusion for Democracy” *
- 4/18 TBA

Texts marked with an asterisk (*) are available on CTools:

Resources > Readings