

Poli 2060: Introduction to Political Theory

Tu-Th: 900-1020am. Williams 201.

Instructor: Alexander Orwin

Office hours: Stubbs 202, by appointment. Outdoor meetings preferred.

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Teaching Assistants: TBD

Content and Objectives

This course provides an introduction to the history of political thought, from ancient into modern times. It focuses on five of the most representative political philosophers: Machiavelli, Locke, Tocqueville, Plato, and Aristotle. Integrated learning allows students to make simple connections among ideas and experiences and across disciplines and perspectives. The LSU Integrative Learning Core (ILC) curriculum is designed to develop student abilities to transfer their learning to new situations, and demonstrate a sense of self as a learner. A fundamental goal of the ILC is to foster students' practical and intellectual capacities associated with integrative learning in preparation for high competence and functionality in their post-baccalaureate careers. This course fulfills the BOR Area of *Social/Behavioral Sciences* and provides students experience with the ILC proficiency of *Inquiry and Analysis*. Our chosen proficiencies are Analysis, Written Communication, and Oral Communication: these will be cultivated throughout the course.

We will attempt to approach these questions from the point of view of political philosophy. By beginning with Socrates, we will study how political philosophy first asked the most important questions about wisdom, justice, and law. Plato approves of the Socratic quest, while Aristophanes ridicules it. In turning to Aristotle, we will see how it applied these same questions to Greek cities and their institutions. Through Machiavelli and Locke, we will examine the origins of modern thought, including such notions as realpolitik, capitalism, divided government, and the conquest of nature. Through Tocqueville, Marx, and Nietzsche, we will consider three responses to the success of liberal thought: the first is critical but accepting, the last two hostile, one in the name of greater economic equality, the other in the name of intellectual elitism.

This course is inspired by the belief that university education should aspire to both professional training and something more than that. Some people are professionally successful, yet utterly miserable. Why? We aim here at a more holistic understanding of human well-being and happiness, as something that requires not just worldly success, but wisdom and insight about the complexity of both personal and political motives. **For further tips on how to succeed in this class, please consult the two "Ten Tips" documents on Moodle.**

Integrated Learning Statement for 2060: Inquiry and Analysis

Integrated learning allows students to make simple connections among ideas and experiences and across disciplines and perspectives. The LSU Integrative Learning Core (ILC) curriculum is designed to develop student abilities to transfer their learning to new situations and demonstrate a sense of self as a learner. A fundamental goal of the ILC is to foster students' practical and intellectual capacities associated with integrative learning in preparation for high competence and functionality in their post-baccalaureate careers. This course fulfills the BOR Area

of *Social/Behavioral Sciences* and provides students experience with the ILC proficiency of *Inquiry and Analysis*.

Bibliography

Please use the assigned editions, available for purchase at the LSU bookstore. Aside from providing accurate translations, they will allow you to follow the references I make in class, and allow me to check the references you make in your papers.

Aristotle. *Politics*. Trans. Carnes Lord. Second Edition. University of Chicago Press: 2013.

Machiavelli, Niccolo. *Prince*. Trans. Harvey C. Mansfield. Second Edition. University of Chicago Press, 1998.

Locke. John. *Second Treatise on Government*. Ed. Richard Cox. Harlan Davidson Inc., 1982.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Beyond Good and Evil*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. Vintage Books, 1989.

Plato and Aristophanes. *Texts on Socrates*. Trans. Thomas West and Grace Starry West. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998.

Tocqueville. *Democracy in America*. Trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop. University of Chicago Press, 2000.

Marx handouts will be posted online

Syllabus

Aug. 24: Introduction

Aug. 26: Plato, *Euthyphro*, pp. 41-61

Sep. 7: Plato, *Apology*, 63-89

Sep. 9: Plato, *Apology and Crito*, 89-114

Sep. 14: Aristophanes, *Clouds*, 115-145

Sep. 16: Aristophanes, 145-76

Sep. 21: Aristotle, *Politics*, pp. 1-24

Sep. 23: Aristotle, 38-45, 62-77

Sep. 28: Aristotle, 77-96, 114-17, 108, 175-78

Sep. 30: Aristotle, 187-216

Oct. 5: Machiavelli, *Prince*, pp. 107-11, 3-25

Oct. 7: Machiavelli, pp. 26-47

Oct. 9: Machiavelli, pp. 48-75

Oct. 12: Machiavelli, pp. 75-105

Oct. 14: Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*, pp. 1-31

Oct. 19: Locke, 33-57. **Midterm paper is due.**

Oct. 21: Locke, 58-88 (**virtual**)

Oct. 26: Locke, 88-120

Oct. 28: Locke, 120-48, Jefferson, *Declaration of Independence*

Nov. 2: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, pp. 3-15, 172-86

Nov. 4: Tocqueville, pp. 235-64

Nov. 9: Tocqueville, pp. 326-48, Lincoln, *Letter to Henry L. Pierce*, *Second Inaugural*

Nov. 11: Tocqueville, pp. 403-24, 606-17

Nov. 16: Marx, excerpts from *Capital* and *Estranged Labor*

Nov. 18: Marx, *Communist Manifesto*

Nov. 23: Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, pp. 473-79, *Beyond Good and Evil*, pp. 1-24

Nov. 25: Happy Thanksgiving

Nov. 30: Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 24-56

Dec. 2: Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 173-98

Dec. 6: **Final Exam**

Grading

15%: Attendance

Attendance is essential to overall success in the course, so all enrolled students are expected to sign in every class. **Attendance will become mandatory after the final drop date has passed.** Only one unexcused absence is permitted for each student: if you are able to honestly excuse your absences, please do so! Every additional absence will cost one attendance mark, and entail the added risk of missing a pop quiz. **A failing attendance grade (i.e. more than eight unexplained absences) will automatically result in a failing course grade.**

15%: Participation

Participation is mandatory, as a sign of alertness and preparedness in class. Half of the mark depends on your responses on the Forum, due every other session, half on your performance in class.

10%: Three in-class pop quizzes on the readings

These quizzes will be based on questions discussed in previous classes, and are designed to test your retention of them. Quizzes missed due to unexcused absences cannot be made up.

25%: Mid-term paper

This five-page paper on topics will be due on Oct. 14. You are encouraged to formulate your own topic, and may come to office hours in order to do so.

35%: Final exam

This will consist of two take-home essays, four pages each, comparing two authors from the course. The exam questions will be assigned five days before the exam, but study questions anticipating the exam will be distributed by early April. Further details about the grading of exams will be discussed, in writing and in speech, as the time approaches.

Grading scale:

90-100: A 97-100: A+ 93-96: A 90-92: A-

80-89: B 87-90: B+ 83-86: B 80-82: B-

70-79: C 77-80: C+ 73-76: C 70-72: C-

60-69: D 67-70: D+ 63-66: D 60-62: D-

Under 60: F

Class Rules

For attendance, see the official policy at <https://sites01.lsu.edu/wp/policiesprocedures/policies-procedures/22/>

Bring your books to class. They will be the primary focus of the lectures, which might be difficult to follow without them.

Both neuroscience and common sense teach that the growing array of electronic devices can be distracting. **Please turn off all such devices in class. Those who refuse to comply may be asked to leave.** Exceptions will be granted only for medically-confirmed disabilities.

Please do not eat during class: however, drinking non-alcoholic beverages is permitted. Do not leave in the middle of class except for an emergency.

Dozing or talking to classmates is forbidden.

Violation of class rules might cost you attendance and participation marks.