

POLI 2060: Introduction to Political Theory
M W F 10:30 – 11:20
Lockett Hall Room 284
Spring 2020

Instructor: Thomas Cloud
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Office Hours: Monday 11:30 – 12:30, Thursday 3 – 4, and by appointment

Intro: What *is* politics?

The purpose of this course is to explore what politics is in order to gain more clarity on what politics should aim at. Great minds have wrestled with these questions for thousands of years. It is no wonder why. Even if we struggle to answer these questions we have to act as if we have answers. How we answer these two questions in our words and our actions touches every aspect of our own lives and the lives of all who come after us.

Throughout the semester we will meet some fascinating, subtle, and sometimes troubling figures each with their own explanations of what politics is and the way of life it demands. Often these figures will disagree with each other (and you with them!). With every disagreement ask “Why?” because your answer matters.

Course requirements:

- Class participation in class discussion [5%]
- Reading Reflections and Questions [10%]
- Quizzes [25%]
- Two in-class midterms. (March 2 & April. 13) [40%]
- Final [20%]

Class Participation

Learning is best when done in community. My hope and goal is to open the world of political theory for your exploration. On the way you will find that part of the joy of exploring is sharing your discoveries and frustrations with your classmates. Perhaps you may discover a shared interest. Perhaps you will disagree and challenge each other’s interpretation. Both will help you learn. Politics deals with the greatest moral matters. Every single one of us finds it interesting on some level and has something to say on it.

Reading Reflections and Questions

Starting with the second day of class (January 17th) students are expected to submit questions and reflections on the day's reading prior to every class. NOTE: **Questions are due by 9am of the day of class.** I grade questions on a point scale of 0 to 3. Reading questions are a way for me to keep track of how students are reading a text. They also create a more interesting course and allow every student to have his or her say. I do not need more than a paragraph. Please give the page numbers for any citations or quotes.

As long as students are thoughtful in their responses they should have nothing to worry about with the reading questions and no fear of being wrong. However, if I think the student did not make enough effort or clearly did not read the assignment I will mark the student down. The reading reflections and questions are found on Moodle.

Quizzes with Cumulative Questions

Quizzes start on the second week of class and are noted in the calendar. Starting with the second quiz students may expect to see some questions from previous quizzes. For example quiz 4 will have new questions and could have questions from quizzes 1 through 3. Students should hold onto and study their previous quizzes.

Policy on laptops, iPad, smartphone, etc.

Unless the student has a medical need (for example the student has a vision problem that requires a laptop), I do not allow electronic devices to be used during class. I will make exceptions for students expecting emergency calls (though let's hope there aren't any).

Required paper notebook

In lieu of electronic devices, all students are expected to take notes on paper. NOTE: **A notebook for notetaking is required.** Notes are not required but strongly urged. We will use the notebooks for other in class activities aside from notetaking.

Midterms

I will give two in class midterms (March 2 and April 13). As we get closer I will decide on the exact format of both but students can expect an essay portion.

Final

The final will be a take home final. Students will write an essay between 1400 and 1500 words in length. **The essays will be due on Saturday May 9th at 9:30 am.** As this is the date set by the registrar it is also the latest possible date the essays can be turned in. The instructor will hand out prompts to the students on the Monday April 27th. Students will receive further guidance at that time about the essays.

Grading scale:

A+ (98%-100%), A (93%-97%), A- (90%-92%)

B+ (88%-90%), B (83%-87%), B- (80%-82%)

C+ (78%-80%), C (73%-77%), C- (70%-72%)

D+ (68%-70%), D (63%-67%), D- (60%-62%)

F (below 60%)

University Policies

[Attendance](#), [Integrity](#), and [Access](#)

University education is a great privilege, offered to all with the ability and the willingness to learn, without obstacles based on race, sex, or other aspects of personal identity. Students would be foolish to squander their opportunity by unexcused absence from class or by academic dishonesty. Please consult linked LSU policies.

University Statement on Integrated Learning

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*.

Required Books

Students should always bring the text we are discussing to class.

A Students Guide to Political Philosophy by Harvey C. Mansfield ISI ISBN:978-1882926435

The Prince by Niccolo Machiavelli translated by Harvey C. Mansfield, second edition
ISBN: 978-0226500447

Four Texts on Socrates translated by Thomas G. West and Grace Starry West ISBN:
978-0801485749

Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics Oxford World Classics translated by Sir David Ross
& Lesley Brown ISBN: 978-0199213610

Leviathan by Thomas Hobbes, Hackett edition ISBN: 978-0872201774

Gentlemen Prefer Blondes by Anita Loos, Liveright edition ISBN: 978-0871401700

Recommended: *The Federalist Papers*, Signet Classics edited by Charles Kessler
ISBN: 978-0451528810

Readings on Moodle

Throughout the course (and especially in the second half) I will post readings on Moodle. Students must print them and bring them to class on the day they are assigned. I encourage students to take notes on the printouts.

Course Calendar

Intro to Political Philosophy

Wednesday January 15 – Intro “What is politics?”

Friday January 17 – *A Student's Guide to Political Philosophy* by Harvey C. Mansfield (pp. 1-54)

Monday January 20 – **MLK Day No Class**

Machiavelli: Politics as we know it?

Wednesday January 22 – Dedicatory Letter and Chapters 1 to 3 of *The Prince* translated by Harvey C. Mansfield second edition.

Friday January 24 – Quiz 1 and Chapters 4 to 7 of *The Prince*

Monday January 27 – Chapters 8 to 11 of *The Prince*

Wednesday January 29 – Chapters 12 to 14 of *The Prince*

Friday January 31 – Quiz 2 and Chapters 15 to 19 of *The Prince*

Monday February 3 – Chapters 20 to 23 of *The Prince*

Wednesday February 5 – Chapters 24 to 26 of *The Prince* and Letter to Vettori

Friday February 7 – Quiz 3 selections from *Discourses on Livy* (Moodle)

Monday February 10 – Tocqueville Letter to Kergolay, Constant “Liberty of the Ancients compared with that of the Moderns.” Moodle

Return to the Ancients

Wednesday February 12 – Leo Strauss “Classical Political Philosophy” Moodle

Friday February 14 – Quiz 4 *The Clouds* by Aristophanes (*Four Texts* pp. 115-148)

Monday February 17 – *The Clouds* (*Four Texts* pp. 149-176)

Wednesday February 19 – *Apology of Socrates* (*Four Texts* pp. 63-78)

Friday February 21 – Quiz 5 *Apology of Socrates* (*Four Texts* pp. 79-97)

Monday February 24 – Mardi Gras Break

Wednesday February 26 – Mardi Gras Break (for our class)

Friday February 28 – Quiz 6 *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* by Anita Loos

Monday March 2 – Midterm 1

Wednesday March 4 – Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 1

Friday March 6 – Quiz 7 Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 2

Monday March 9 – *Ethics* Book 3

Wednesday March 11 – Ethics Book 4

Friday March 13 – Quiz 8 Ethics Book 5

Monday March 16 – Ethics Book 6

Wednesday March 18 – Ethics Book 7

Friday March 20 Quiz 9 Ethics Book 8

Monday March 30 – Ethics Book 9

Wednesday April 1 – Ethics Book 10

Modernity, America, and Progress

Friday April 3 – Quiz 10 Thomas Hobbes *Leviathan*

- Introduction (pp. 3-5)
- Ch. 1 (pp. 6-7)
- Ch. 2 ¶¶1-2, 7-10 (pp.7-8, 10-11)
- Ch. 6 ¶¶6-7 (pp.28-29)
- Ch. 8 ¶¶14-16 (pp. 40-41)
- Ch. 11 ¶¶1-5, 19-27 (pp. 57-58, 61-63)
- Ch. 13 (pp. 74-78)

Monday April 6 – Hobbes

- Ch. 14 ¶¶1-8, 18-19 (pp. 79-82, 84-85)
- Ch. 15 ¶¶1-8, 21-22 (pp. 89-93, 96-97)
- Ch. 17 (pp. 106-110)
- Ch. 18 ¶¶1-9, 20 (pp. 110-14, 117-118)
- Ch. 19 ¶¶1-12 (pp. 118-24)

Wednesday April 8 – Hobbes

- Ch. 20 ¶¶1-2, 10-11, 18-19 (pp. 127-28, 130-31, 135)
- Ch. 21 (pp. 136-145)
- Ch. 26 ¶¶1-9, 13, 23-24 (pp.172-175, 177, 181-182)
- Ch. 27 ¶¶1-8 (pp.190-192)
- Ch. 29 ¶¶6-16 (212-217)

Friday April 10 – Good Friday no class

Monday April 13 – Midterm 2

Wednesday April 15 – G.K. Chesterton “What is America?” Moodle

Friday April 17 – Quiz 11 Declaration of Independence, John Jay “Letter on Manumission of Slaves.” Moodle

Monday April 20 – Selections from the Federalists Moodle

Wednesday April 22 – Selections from Calhoun and Lincoln Moodle

Friday April 24 – Quiz 12 “The Study of Administration” by Woodrow Wilson. Moodle

Monday April 27 – Condorcet “Progress” Moodle

Wednesday April 29 – “Idea for a Universal History” by Immanuel Kant, Moodle

Friday May 1 – Quiz 13 “Beyond Nihilism” by Michael Polanyi, Moodle

Saturday May 9 – Take home essay due at 9:30 am.

(The instructor reserves the right to change any portion of this syllabus during the course)