

Poli 2060: Introduction to Political Theory

Tu-Th: 900-1030am, Audobon 104

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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: Tocqueville, Machiavelli, and Locke. Plato, and Aristotle. As a social science general education elective this course is designed to acquaint students with various views of human nature, as well as how human beings organize themselves into political societies, real and imagined. Students will be expected to achieve an understanding of the informing factors of global interdependence, including economic forces, political dynamics, and cultural and linguistic difference. All general education courses are designed to enhance the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that facilitate the improvement of the civic life of communities.

We will attempt to approach these questions from the point of view of political philosophy. By beginning with Machiavelli and Locke, we will examine the origins of modern thought, including such notions as capitalism, divided government, religious toleration, and the conquest of nature. In proceeding to Tocqueville, we will consider how this thought has played out in the United States. We will then turn back to the entirely different outlook of ancient Greek thought. Through Plato, we will consider the highest claims raised on behalf of justice and wisdom; with Aristotle, we will investigate the participatory politics of the small, ancient city in contrast to Machiavelli and Locke's justification of larger, more dynamic societies.

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 follow 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.

-*Letter Concerning Toleration*. Ed. Kerry Walters. Broadview Editions: 2013.

Plato. *Republic*. Trans. Allan Bloom. Second Edition. Basic Books: 1991.

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

Syllabus

Readings are mandatory. Short questions about the text will be distributed before each assignment to help guide you through them.

Jan. 11: Introduction

Jan. 16: Machiavelli, *Prince*, pp. 3-25

Jan. 18: Machiavelli, pp. 26-47

Jan. 23: Machiavelli, pp. 48-82

Jan. 25: Machiavelli, pp. 83-105

Jan. 30: Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*, 1-32

Feb. 1: Locke, 33-74

Feb. 6: Locke, 75-108

Feb. 8, Locke, 109-48, Jefferson, *Declaration of Independence*

Feb. 13: Study hard during Mardi Gras

Feb. 15: Locke, *Letter on Toleration*, 45-90

Feb. 20: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, pp. 3-15, 46-55

Feb. 22: Tocqueville, pp. 235-64

Feb. 27: Tocqueville, pp. 326-48, Lincoln, *Second Inaugural*

Mar. 1: Tocqueville, pp. 403-24, 599-604, 606-17

Mar. 6: Plato, *Republic*, pp. 3-34

Mar. 8: Plato, pp. 35-54

Mar. 13: Plato, pp. 54-96

Mar. 15: Plato, pp. 97-125

Mar. 20: Plato, pp. 127-52

Mar. 22: Plato, pp. 152-92

Mar. 26-30: Stay away from Pensacola

Apr. 3: Plato, pp. 193-220

Apr. 5: Plato, pp. 221-240

Apr. 10: Plato, pp. 240-75

Apr. 12: Plato, pp. 275-303

Apr. 17: Aristotle, *Politics*, pp. 1-24

Apr. 19: Aristotle, pp. 24-34, 38-45, 62-71

Apr. 24: Aristotle, pp. 71-96

Apr. 26: Aristotle, pp. 186-222

May 3, 1230pm: 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. Every additional absence will cost one attendance mark, and entail the added risk of missing a pop quiz.

15%: Three in-class pop quizzes on the readings

The purpose of the quizzes is to ensure that everyone has done the readings. They will consist of five short answer questions testing basic, factual knowledge of the text. Pop quizzes missed due to unexcused absences cannot be made up.

30%: Mid-term exam:

A five-page paper on topics TBD will be due in early March.

40%: 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 mid-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/>

Class participation is strongly encouraged: it will both help you engage the material, and help me understand your concerns and reactions. While the class is too large to justify any formal participation mark, active participation may be informally considered in assessing the final grade.

Both neuroscience and common sense teach that the growing array of electronic devices can be distracting. Please turn off all such devices in class. Exceptions may be granted in certain circumstances: always feel free to ask.

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.