

POLI 2060 Introduction to Political Theory

MWF: 2:30-3:20 PM
112 Audubon Hall

Instructor: Mr. Stephen Savage
Instructor Email: ssavag5@lsu.edu
Office Hours: MW 1:20-2:20 PM and by appointment

Course Objective:

This course will provide undergraduate students with a general introduction to the field of political theory. As it is only an introductory course, the course will primarily focus on giving students a general introduction to the major works in the field and secondarily, will work to provide students with an introduction to other works in the field. By the end of the course students should be able to identify several of the key figures in the field of political theory and understand the importance of political theory to the study of politics.

This course is a general education course and has been designed with the LSU learning competency statement in mind: "LSU graduates will demonstrate an understanding of the informing factors of global interdependence, including economic forces, political dynamics, and cultural and linguistic difference."

Evaluation:

The main source of evaluation for the course will be a series of tests over the various units/topics covered throughout the semester. Students will be given three exams throughout the semester, with the exams coming roughly at equal intervals throughout the semester. A small portion of student grades will come from participation/attendance. While attendance will not be taken every class period, students are expected to attend class and participate in discussions. Attendance will be taken at random throughout the semester and attendance checks will consist of quizzes given on material covered in the day's lecture.

The grade breakdown for the course is as follows:

Exam 1 (all multiple choice): 20%
Exam 2 (multiple choice and essay): 25%
Final Exam (multiple choice and essay): 35%
Final Paper (details to be posted on Moodle at later date): 10%
Attendance: 10%

FINAL EXAM DATE: May 4, 2017 12:30 PM-2:30PM

Grading scale: A+ = 100-97 A = 96-93 A- = 92-90 B+ = 89-87 B = 86-83 B- = 82-80 C+ = 79-77 C = 76-73 C- = 72-70 D+ = 69-67 D = 66-63 D- = 62-60 F = 59 and Below

Structure of the Course:

The principal aim of this course is to acquaint students with several of the major thinkers in the field of political theory. The course will be divided into 4 units, with each having a theme that unites the assigned readings. The first unit will focus on Ancient Greece and the beginning of Western political thought. The second unit will focus on the shift from the ancient focus on right order to the shift toward order. The third unit will look at authors who provide alternative or critical views of thinkers featured in the first two units. The final unit will serve as an answer to the question of why we should still study political theory.

Unit One: Ancient Greece: The Search for Right Order

- Aeschylus: The Oresteia
- Plato: Apology, Crito, The Republic
- Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics

Unit Two: From Right Order to Order

- Hobbes: The Leviathan
- John Locke: Second Treatise of Government

Unit Three: Critical Voices

- Marx: “Estranged Labor”, The Communist Manifesto (Excerpts)
- Nietzsche: Beyond Good and Evil
- Simone de Beauvoir: The Second Sex (Excerpts)

Unit Four: “Political Thinking”

- Hannah Arendt: “Thinking and Moral Considerations: A Lecture”
- United Nations General Assembly: “Universal Declaration of Human Rights”
- Martin Luther King Jr.: “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”
- Wendy Brown: “Undoing the Demos”
- Judith Butler: Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?
- Alasdair MacIntyre: “The Virtues, the Unity of a Human Life and the Concept of a Tradition”
- Albert Camus: “The Growing Stone” from Exile and The Kingdom

Required Texts:

Since this course is a general education course I have tried to keep the cost of books down. Many texts we will discuss are in the public domain so they can likely be found for free online. For other texts we will only be looking at excerpts, which will be posted on Moodle. Two texts I do require you to have are Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics (ISBN: 9780023895302) and Nietzsche’s Beyond Good and Evil (ISBN: 9780521779135).

Classroom Etiquette:

From time to time we will stop to discuss the readings and issues that surround them. Classroom etiquette requires that students be attentive and respectful to one another (this means listening when others are making comments or asking questions). Please make sure that your phones and other devices are turned off or are silenced during class time so they do not serve as a distraction to you and those around you.

Since you are not required to purchase physical copies of every text we will use I understand that you may need to have electronic devices in the classroom in order to have your copy of the texts with you in class. I ask that you please honor my decision to help you save money by not taking advantage of this and using your devices for purposes other than looking at the text. I thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Student Obligations:

It is your responsibility to come to class having read the material and to be ready to discuss the material assigned. If you have questions, please do not hesitate to ask. The only way I can know the items you are struggling with is for you to let me know.

As a student it is also your responsibility to do your own work. Under no circumstances will cheating or plagiarism be tolerated. If you are unsure as to whether or not an action constitutes academic misconduct, please contact me and we can discuss it.

Students with Disabilities Policy

If you have a disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please see a Coordinator in the Office of Disability Services so that such accommodations may be arranged. The Office of Disability Services is located in 115 Johnston Hall and may be reached at (225) 578-5919.