This course is an introduction to Western political thought and fulfills the general education requirement for the social sciences at LSU. Through analysis of the work of important thinkers, you will have the opportunity to discuss and formulate ideas about some of the most important themes and problems that arise in human living together. For instance, we will explore the character of freedom, family, power, property, slavery, authority, race, gender, and warfare and how politics relates to each.

We begin by jumping directly into controversial arguments about how politics ought to be. The first section of the course explores the work of thinkers who are particularly concerned with encouraging stability and order in human affairs. In Hobbes, Burke and Luther we find deference to established order and authority, convincing arguments for the value of custom and habit, and a preference for only slightly constrained government power. Plato’s Republic is also an attempt to describe how we might gain a stable political order through deference to rulers; but Plato is primarily concerned with creating a city that embodies metaphysical Justice and thus proposes a radical and novel kind of order.

In this way, Plato provides a nice bridge to the second section of the course. Here, we examine thinkers who are profoundly dissatisfied with the status quo. In Marx, de Beauvoir, Malcolm X and Goldman we find the order of the day diagnosed as corrupt, unjust or oppressive. Instead of fretting about the difficulties or dangers of change, each attempts to describe how we can revolutionize the way we live and interact with one another in order to improve our condition.

Halfway through the course, we will begin the course again by stepping back and asking a fundamental question: What have we been talking about? That is, what exactly is politics? We read Aristotle’s founding conceptualization of politics and Hannah Arendt’s attempt to build on it and then turn to John Locke and the Federalist papers to get a sense of what the meaning of politics has traditionally meant in the American context.

This will lead us to the final and most practically relevant stage in our thinking and talking about politics. In this section we will examine some texts that are examples of, or suggest methods for the conduct of politics. Max Weber, Socrates, Machiavelli and Gandhi each give us a distinctive understanding of what the conduct of effective and ethical politics looks like and their prescriptions are surprisingly at odds with one another.
Required Texts

*Princeton Readings in Political Thought*, edited by Mitchell Cohen and Nicole Ferron.

On Moodle:
- Mahatma Gandhi, *For Pacifists*
- Hannah Arendt, “Labor, Work, Action” in *The Portable Hannah Arendt*
- Aristotle, *The Ethics*, Book 6

Course Assignments and Policies

4 Reading Summaries (%20)

On four separate occasions, you will bring to class and turn in a typed, one-page, single-spaced summary of the reading for that day. Each summary will be worth %4 of your grade.

Each reading summary should contain the following three components:

1) a summary of the important ideas and themes in each of the major divisions/components of the reading (i.e. a summary of each section, chapter, etc.). That is, for each section of the reading you should ask yourself and then answer the question: “What is the main point the thinker is trying to make here?”

2) You must include page numbers at the end of every three sentences or so in your summary. These will indicate where I can find the textual evidence supporting your claims as to the meaning of this part of the text. You might also want to include brief quotations of particularly important or outstanding passages.

3) The summaries should read clearly and consist of complete sentences and carefully constructed short paragraphs. The point here is for you to give a concise and plausible interpretation of the main point of the reading.

4 Reading Questions (%20)

On four separate occasions (and not on the days you do reading summaries), you will come up with 10 questions about the reading for that day. All of the questions must be directly and specifically related to the readings. Most will consist of at least one explanatory sentence that sets up the question and includes citations (i.e. a reference to a page number in the text or a brief quote from the text). The questions should also relate to different parts of the reading to demonstrate that you have read the entire passage assigned for that day.

Here are two examples:

1. Aristotle says that “man, when perfected, is the best of animals, but, when separated from law and justice, he is the worst of all” [citation]. Why does Aristotle think that justice and law makes us better than other animals? Is it true that people who separate themselves from community are necessarily bad?

2. Hobbes seems to be arguing that an all-powerful king is the best way to ensure peace and stability [citation]. However, does not experience show that all-powerful kings often abuse their power and create unstable situations?
You might also encounter words, concepts or passages that are difficult to understand. If you have trouble deciphering the meaning of a part of the reading, think about it, cite it and then ask a question about it. The idea is for you to come up with questions that will help you clarify the main issues of the reading and facilitate class discussion.

The reading questions and summaries will be graded as follows:

- **√ + full credit (4%)**
  Follows all of the above instructions for summaries or questions and meets criteria of accuracy, comprehensiveness and balance, clear sentence structure and grammar. It is clear that you understand the text and can explain its main points well to a reader who has not read it (or in the case of the reading questions can raise important issues on the basis of the text).

- **√ credit (3%)**
  Follows all of the above instructions for summaries or questions and meets some of the criteria of accuracy, comprehensiveness and balance, clear sentence structure and grammar. It reveals a generally accurate understanding of the reading with a clear sense of the main points but is either noticeably weaker on one criterion or somewhat weaker on two criteria.

- **√ - sub-standard (2%)**
  Does not fully abide by the above instructions and does not contain two or more of the criteria of accuracy, comprehensiveness and balance, clear sentence structure and grammar. For instance, if a summary does not offer a clear analysis of the main arguments and/or has problems with sentence structure or if readings questions are unclear, non-specific or unrelated to the main themes of the text.

- **0 unsatisfactory (0%)**
  Substandard reading summaries or questions do not serve to explain the text to an unfamiliar reader, are inaccurate, or severely disorganized.

All reading questions and summaries are due at the beginning of class. Late questions and summaries will receive half credit. Each summary and set of questions is worth %4 of your grade.

**Two Exams**

The exams are designed to hone your thinking about and ensure that you have a solid grasp of the course texts and class discussions. The tests are open book, open note and multiple choice. No cell phones or laptops are permitted.

**Grading Summary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 Summaries</td>
<td>%20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Reading Questions</td>
<td>%20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>%25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td>%35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other Notes

Do not cheat. The summaries and reading questions should be based on your own interpretation and questions about the readings. That is, they must be in your own words, not in the words of others.

There is no participation grade, but you will not succeed if you do not attend class. On ten occasions you will need to come to class in order to turn in your reading summaries and questionnaires. Moreover, the exams will test not only your knowledge of the texts (which is challenging enough), but also what was discussed in class.

Course Schedule

1. Politics from the top down: Advocates of order and stability.

Week One
January 13th
January 15th
Introduction to the Course
Hobbes: Leviathan Part I, 205-219

Week Two
January 20th
January 22nd
Hobbes: Leviathan Part II, 219-242
Burke: Reflections on the Revolution in France, 349-355

Week Three
January 27th
January 29th
Martin Luther: The Christian in Society, 194-199
Plato: The Republic Part I, 50-65

Week Four
February 3rd
February 5th
Plato: The Republic Part II, 94-106
Karl Marx: A Contribution to the Critique ..., Estranged Labour, 435-447

2. Politics from the bottom up: Advocates of revolution and change.

Week Five
February 10th
February 12th
Karl Marx: The Communist Manifesto, 448-463
Simone de Beauvoir: The Second Sex 601-614

Week Six
February 17th
February 19th
Malcolm X: The Ballot or the Bullet, 636-642
Emma Goldman: Victims of Morality, 566-570

Week Seven
February 24th
February 26th
No Classes
Exam review
3. The study of politics: What have we been talking about?

**Week Eight**  
March 3rd  
March 5th  
**MIDTERM EXAM**  
Aristotle: The Politics Part I, 107-117

**Week Nine**  
March 10th  
March 12th  
Aristotle: The Politics Part II, 117-123 **and**  
Aristotle: The Ethics, Book 6 (on Moodle)  
Locke: Second Treatise of Government Part I, 243-268

**Week Ten**  
March 17th  
March 19th  
Locke: Second Treatise of Government Part II, 268-279  
Publius: The Federalist Papers, 335-346

4. The methods of politics: How can we change things or keep them the same?

**Week Eleven**  
March 24th  
March 26th  
Hannah Arendt: Labor, Work, Action, (on Moodle)  
*Eyes on the Prize* screening

**Week Twelve**  
March 31st  
April 2nd  
Weber: Politics as a Vocation, 499-511  

**Week Thirteen**  
April 7th  
April 9th  
Spring Break

**Week Fourteen**  
April 14th  
April 16th  
Niccolo Machiavelli: The Prince, Part II, 179-188  
Plato: The Apology, 19-39

**Week Fifteen**  
April 21st  
April 23rd  
Mahatma Gandhi: For Pacifists, (on e-reserve) 1-33  
Gandhi cont. (no additional reading)

**Week Sixteen**  
April 28th  
April 30th  
Thucydides: Pericles’ Funeral Oration, 13-18  
Exam Review

**Final Exam Time:** Thursday May 7th, 12:30pm – 2:30pm