Political Science 2060:  
Introduction to Political Theory

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Office Hours: M/W 10:30-11:30 or by appointment

Course Overview:

It is often said that political philosophy is found in great books—that is, in books written by such thinkers as Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, and so on. The aim of this course is to introduce undergraduate students to some of these authors and the arguments contained in their books. This introduction confines itself to the Western tradition of thought; however, it ranges from classical antiquity to modernity. Students will begin to acquaint themselves with this great tradition and with some of the more important problems or questions found therein, including: the philosophical inquiry into human nature, the relationship between philosophy and the city, the relationship between things human and divine, what place history has in philosophical inquiry, and other related matters. Introduction to such problems through the great books engaged will allow students to recognize some of the continuity and discontinuity in philosophical arguments about politics as formulated over the ages.

General Education Requirement:

This course is a general education elective; and, as such, it is designed to contribute to your understanding and mastery of certain factual knowledge in the area of political theory. In this light, the course is intended to acquaint you with some of the classic narratives and philosophies of western civilization, so as to give you an understanding of other cultures and other times; to acquaint you with some of the moral and ethical issues of politics; and to encourage critical and analytical thinking, as well as a precise and graceful use of language. As a social science general education elective this course is further designed to acquaint you with various views of human nature, as well as how human beings organize themselves into political societies, real and imagined. You will be expected to achieve an understanding of the levels of association ranging from friends and family to civilizations of global significance; to develop an understanding of how people relate to each other and to the world around them, ranging from their relations to the physical environment to their relations to the divine; and to demonstrate an ability to identify, locate, evaluate, and use appropriate reference and technology sources in an ethical manner.

Grades:

Weekly Quizzes/Papers = 30%  
Take Home Midterm = 35%  
Final Exam = 35%  
*Extra Credits will be possible throughout the semester
Course Requirements:

Weekly Quizzes and Assignments
On five occasions throughout the semester students will be required to write an in-class quiz and on five different dates they will be asked to submit a short reaction paper of 1-2 pgs (double-spaced, 12 pt. font, standard margins, proper citations, grammar, etc.), each of which will be related to the week’s readings and discussion. Keeping up with assigned reading and class attendance are essential to success in this area, and for the class as a whole. Suggested paper topics will be provided at the beginning of the week they are due. Each quiz or paper will be given a grade from 0-3 and will either take place or be due on the Friday of the given week.

Take Home Midterm
The midterm exam will consist of a choice of two out of four essay questions to be distributed one week prior to the due date. Each question will require a 2-3 page (double-spaced, 12 pt. font, standard margins, etc.) essay of original work with proper reference and citation of the texts considered. Students are expected to properly and conscientiously edit all essays and assignments submitted.

Final Exam
The final exam will be written in class during the allotted exam period and will consist of a combination of multiple choice questions and a general essay question. Please note that the final exam will be cumulative.

Extra Credit
Periodically and unannounced students may be asked to undertake an optional and very short research assignment for later class presentation. Such assignments may include elaborating on a historical detail or issue that arises in discussion, providing a few sentences regarding the etymology of a relevant and noteworthy word, etc.

NB: It cannot be stressed enough that success in this class requires regular attendance (that means attending all classes) as well as continued, consistent, and careful reading of all assigned texts. Grasping the discussions and arguments of what are sometimes difficult texts requires individual reflection as well as dialogue with others considering similar texts, questions and problems. Together we will have an opportunity for interesting discussion and debate so long as students come to class well prepared.

Required Texts:


**Recommended Text:**


** A few additional readings will be provided to students on Moodle as indicated below.

*** Please bring the book(s) we are discussing to class so as to facilitate discussion with detailed and direct textual references when appropriate.

**Weekly Reading Schedule:**

Week 1 (Jan. 18-22)
Introduction
Sophocles, *Antigone*

Week 2 (Jan. 25-29)
Sophocles, *Antigone*
Plato, *Apology of Socrates*
Quiz 1

Week 3 (Feb. 1-5)
Plato, *Apology of Socrates*
Plato, *Crito*
Reaction Paper 1

Week 4 (Feb. 8-12)
Plato, *Euthyphro*
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*
Quiz 2

Week 5 (Feb. 15-19)
**Mardi Gras Break**
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*
Aristotle, *The Politics* (Select excerpts; to be provided on Moodle)

Week 6 (Feb. 22-26)
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*
Reaction Paper 2

Week 7 (Mar. 1-5)
Machiavelli, *The Prince*
Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy* (Select excerpts; to be provided on Moodle)
Quiz 3

Week 8 (Mar. 8-12)
Machiavelli, *The Prince*
Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*

**Midterm Due:** Mar. 12th (To be submitted in class and not by email)

**Week 9 (Mar. 15-19)**
Machiavelli, *Mandragola*
Rousseau, *Discourse*
Reaction Paper 3

**Week 10 (Mar. 22-26)**
Rousseau, *Discourse*
Quiz 4

**Week 11 (Mar. 29-31)**
Hegel, *Philosophy of History*

**Spring Break (Apr. 2-11)**

**Week 12 (Apr. 12-16)**
Hegel, *Philosophy of History*
Nietzsche, “Notes (1873)” (Excerpt; to be provided on Moodle)
Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*
Reaction Paper 4

**Week 13 (Apr. 19-23):**
Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*
Quiz 5

**Week 14 (Apr. 26-30)**
*Federalist Papers* (Select excerpts; to be provided on Moodle)
Pierre Manent, *A World Without Politics?* (Select excerpts; to be provided on Moodle)
Reaction Paper 5

**Week 15 (May 3-7)**
*Federalist Papers* and Manent

Conclusion and Review

**Final Exam** (Date to be determined; in-class during week of May 10-15)

NB: Laptops will not be allowed for use in class, except for official note-takers. Using the ole’ fashioned pen and paper method will ensure we are all on the same page, so to speak. Additionally, recent studies show that students understand better and learn more effectively without electronic devices and distractions.