

Political Science 8401: Graduate Level Introduction to Political Philosophy

W 3pm-5:30 pm

GH 448

Instructor: Prof. Heath Fogg Davis

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Office Hours: GH 455, W 11 am to 3 pm, and by appointment.

Course Description

The primary aim of this course is to provide students with an intensive introduction to the Political Science field of Political Theory at the graduate level—its motivating questions, themes, and mode of inquiry. A theory is a model or blueprint for making sense of our environment. Descriptive theories are models we use to describe what is, whereas prescriptive theories are models used to envision what can and/or should be. Political theories relate to our political environment, and come in both *descriptive* and *prescriptive* forms. But what distinguishes our political environment from other aspects of our social world? Whether a government is monarchical, theocratic, democratic, or socialist is obviously a political matter. But other matters are less clear-cut such as the structure of families, the provision of health care, the promotion and cultivation of the arts, the psychological trauma of war, and our moral obligations to non-human animals and the natural environment. What is “politics,” and what does it mean to theorize about it? The course is based upon close readings of some of the key political theory texts from ancient times to the 21st century.

Course Requirements

Four short writing assignments spread over the course of the semester (see schedule below for due dates), one class presentation, and active participation.

Each writing assignment will be posted to canvas. It is my job to assist you with your writing, and so we will spend some of our class time covering the basic elements of good academic writing and tackling some of its challenges. Your writing assignments will ask you to seek and work with secondary sources (refereed journal articles and books published by academic presses) that analyze the canonical works on our reading list. We will go over the professional standards and processes involved in writing and reviewing political theory scholarship with your career development in mind.

Your active participation is crucial to the success of this seminar. Simply put, we need you! To that end, please post 2 substantive discussion questions to our canvas site by 8:00 a.m. each Wednesday.

Presentation:

Agreement/Disagreement Resonance Presentation: Each student will take a turn in leading our seminar discussion with a short presentation. Here are the instructions:

Preparation

1. As you read the readings assigned for your designated day, be on the lookout for a sentence with which you either strongly agree or strongly disagree.

2. Find a cultural artifact that you see as being connected in some way to the sentence you chose. This might be a brief YouTube video of a movie or television scene, a news article, an artistic image, song lyrics, a poem, a photograph, an object, or anything else that you'd like to share with us. Be creative!

Presentation

Your powerpoint presentation should contain:

1. A slide with your chosen sentence written on it. Read it to us, and then explain why you either strongly agree or strongly disagree with it.
2. Your chosen cultural artifact. Show it to us (max. 10 mins), and then explain the resonance you feel between it and your chosen sentence.

The total time of the presentation should not exceed 20 minutes. Check out the rubric on Canvas to see how you will be evaluated.

Important tip: Do not assume that previous presenters have followed the instructions and model your presentation on theirs.

My hope is that you will find this format less daunting and more interesting than a traditional class presentation.

Office Hours

I am available during my regular office hours each week to discuss any aspect of the course. I am happy to schedule alternative times if my office hours conflict with your schedule.

Required Texts

All texts will be made available via canvas. As you read and contemplate our course materials, please keep three categories of critique in mind:

1. **Form:** What kind of writing is it? (e.g. dramatic dialogue, formal essay, book chapter, primary/secondary source, journalistic article, etc.) Why do you think the author chose the form? Is it effective, and to what end? What is your reaction to the author's writing style? For example, does he/she use writing tools such as metaphor, social scientific data, personal narrative, and/or anecdote effectively? What are the benefits and limits of specific writing formats? What is your evaluation of the writing style? Is it "well written," and what is the basis of your evaluation?
2. **Content:** What is the main argument (thesis)? Do you agree or disagree with it? Why or why not? Could the thesis be strengthened? If so, how? What other arguments does the author make to support his/her main argument? Are these supporting arguments effective in your view?
3. **Resonance:** Does the text "speak" to you? Is it relevant to your perception of our contemporary political world? Why or why not? If the text does resonate, then *how* does it resonate? If it does not resonate, then why not?

Final Grade Breakdown

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| Participation | 10% |
| Presentation | 15% |
| First Paper | 15% |
| Second Paper | 20% |
| Third Paper | 20% |
| Fourth Paper | 20% |

Letter Grade Equivalencies*

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|----|--------------|
| A | 93-100 |
| A- | 90-92 |
| B+ | 87-89 |
| B | 83-86 |
| B- | 80-82 |
| C+ | 77-79 |
| C | 73-76 |
| C- | 70-72 |
| D+ | 67-69 |
| D | 63-66 |
| D- | 60-62 |
| F | 59 and below |

*I use these to assign your final grade.

Course Policies**Attendance**

You should neither miss a class nor be late.

Class Engagement

Active course engagement and an attentive presence are essential. You must come to class prepared to present your response to the reading when asked, to engage course material thoughtfully, and to share your observations and insights with your classmates.

Class Etiquette

This class is designed to encourage discussion and exchanges of ideas in conjunction with the development of critical thinking, reading, and writing skills. I expect you to treat your fellow students with respect and courtesy, listening when they speak and refraining from personal attacks in your own statements and questions. You may disagree with your fellow students, but listen attentively when they are speaking and respond in a courteous manner.

Notes

You are strongly advised to take notes during discussions and presentations. I expect you to pay attention in the classroom and you are responsible for remembering discussions about the material we cover. Please keep in mind that the emphasis on note taking is meant to emphasize the importance of attentiveness and of assimilating information, ideas, and concepts in a thoughtful and intelligent manner. You should keep a weekly account of the course and be able to respond to points raised in previous classes.

Disability Disclosure Statement

This course is open to all students who meet the academic requirements for participation. Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss the specific situation as soon as possible. Please also contact Disability Resources and Services at 215-204-1280 in 100 Ritter Annex to coordinate reasonable accommodations for your coursework and participation.

Statement on Academic Freedom

Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. The university has adopted a policy on Student and Faculty Academic Rights and responsibilities (Policy # 03.70.02) which can be accessed through the following link:

http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy_non=03.70.02

Plagiarism

This instructor and the University take plagiarism extremely seriously. Personal pride should be sufficient deterrent, but there are also severe academic penalties for academic dishonesty. Please consult the University Bulletin concerning Temple's policy on plagiarism. Any kind of plagiarism for this class will result in a failing final grade for the course. The infraction will also be reported to university authorities.

Finally

Please remember that I hold everyone accountable to these course policies. They are here to provide a framework for the class – without which we would not get much accomplished. This seminar should be a fun time, as well as a challenging period of intellectual growth, and I look forward to working with you.

Course Schedule

Reading assignments are to be completed for the day listed. You are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the reading assignment. I reserve the right to alter reading assignments, but will always give you fair warning.

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| 1. | 1/16 | Introduction, no reading assignment |
| 2. | 1/23 | Plato's <i>Republic</i> Frank, excerpt from <i>Poetic Justice</i> Markovits, excerpt from <i>The Politics of Sincerity</i> |
| 3. | 1/30 | Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> Aristotle, <i>Politics</i> Dietz, "Between Polis and Empire: Aristotle's Politics" Sandel, "Who Deserves What? Aristotle" |
| 4. | 2/6 | Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> Frost, "Hobbes and the Matter of Self-Consciousness" Mills, "The <i>Racial Contract</i> Revisited: Still Unbroken After All these Years" |

2/11: First writing assignment due via canvas by midnight.

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| 5. | 2/13 | Locke, <i>The Second Treatise</i> Nozick, <i>Anarchy, State and Utopia</i> De Wispelaere and Weinstock, "State Regulation and Assisted Reproduction" |
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6. 2/20 Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*
Boyd, "Rousseau and the Vanishing Concept of the Political"
Young, excerpt from *Justice and the Politics of Difference*

7. 2/27 Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*

3/11: Second writing assignment due via canvas by midnight.

8. 3/6 **Spring Break—no class**

9. 3/13 Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*
Tronto, "Can Markets Be Moral?"
Young, excerpt from *Justice and the Politics of Difference*

3/18: Second writing assignment due via canvas by midnight.

10. 3/20 Mill, *On Liberty and Utilitarianism*
Appiah, "Stereotypes and the Shaping of Identity"
Brown, "Tolerance and or Equality"

11. 3/27 Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*
Mackinnon, excerpt from *Feminism Unmodified*
Marso, "Perverse Protests: Simone de Beauvoir on Pleasure and Danger, Resistance and Female Violence in Film"

4/1: Third writing assignment due via canvas by midnight.

12. 4/3 Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*
Okin, "'Forty Acres and a Mule' for Women: Rawls and Feminism"
Arneil, "Disability, Self Image and Modern Political Theory"

13. 4/10 Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, and *Discipline and Punish*
Butler, excerpt from *Bodies that Matter*
Pemberton, "Enforcing Gender: The Constitution of Sex and Gender in Prison Regimes"

14. 4/17 **No Class**

15. 4/24 Last Class, assignment TBD

4/29: Fourth writing assignment due via canvas by midnight.