

## **Political Science 210: Introduction to Political Theory SP 08**

**MW 3.30-5.18, Page Hall 0020**  
**Mr. Rich Arnold (Office phone: 614-292-9296)**  
**2185, Derby Hall,**  
**[arnold.301@osu.edu](mailto:arnold.301@osu.edu)**  
**Office hours MW 2.00-3.00 or by appointment**

**Overview:** Political Theory is the oldest form of Political Science and some theorists have become household names. This 10-week course is an introduction to Political Theory through analysis of some of these theorists' ideas. The course is organized chronologically around 5 central themes: Background to Political Theory; Ethics and Politics; Social Contract Theory; Liberty and Emancipation; and Science and Totalitarianism. Each class will be divided between a lecture-exposition element and a discussion based element. In the exposition element, I will relate the central ideas in the text and aim to clarify the structure and central ideas. In the discussion based element of the class, a small group of students will present an answer to a question emergent from the readings and then open it up for discussion. I will give an example of a presentation early on in the course and then students will take over. The course is designed to assess students' detailed thinking about complex ideas and exposition of cogent critiques: as such the concentration of readings and assessment is not on length and accumulation of facts but the comprehension and critique of ideas.

### **Course objectives:**

1. To develop critical thinking through logical exposition and criticism of arguments.
2. To encourage students to develop presentation skills and critically assess complex arguments.
3. To help students understand some of the major ideas that have shaped our past, present and will shape the future.

### **Texts:**

Both of the required texts for this class will be available at the bookstore(s), although I encourage you to check various sites on the internet as students can often get cheaper books there. The required texts are:

- Cohen, M. & Fermon, N. [Eds] Princeton Readings in Political Thought- essential texts since Plato (Princeton NJ, 1996, Princeton University Press)
- Arendt, H. On Violence (New York, 1970, Harcourt)

You should always bring your copy of the text to class for reference purposes.

### **Grades:**

Grades will be distributed according to the following criteria:

Attendance: 10%  
Participation: 10%  
Midterm: 20%  
Presentation: 20%  
Final paper: 40%

## Attendance

Students are expected to come to class. Attendance will constitute 10% of your grade. I will take attendance at the beginning of every class. I will allow two unexplained absences but every subsequent absence will see 2% taken from the grade. There are obvious situations for which I will make exceptions, including hospitalizations, funerals or conferences. However, I must have documentation in order to excuse these instances. I reserve the right to automatically fail students who turn up to less than 50% of classes.

## Participation

Students are expected to participate in discussions, especially during the presentation element of the class. While it is difficult to keep exact records of who is participating in a free-flowing discussion, it is usually very obvious to the judgment of an instructor. I will try to help people get involved by calling on those who remain silent. Participation counts for 10% of your grade.

## Midterm

I will distribute a mid-term in-class exam on Wednesday, November 05<sup>th</sup>. The exam is an open-book exam in which you are expected to answer two questions in essay format. The midterm is worth 20% of your final grade.

## Presentation

Beginning in week 3 (Monday, October 06<sup>th</sup>), groups of students will be expected to lead the discussion part of the class themselves by presenting an answer to the question on the syllabus. The format of the presentations should be as follows: Students should re-state the question and offer a thesis/answer; outline the format of the presentation; offer evidence from the readings to support their thesis; rebut or concede possible objections to their thesis; and conclude, touching on their major points. It is up to each of the groups to decide the minutiae of their division of labor, but I do expect equal participation. A grading rubric is attached to the syllabus and the presentations will constitute 20% of a student.

Students are required to meet with me the day before their group presentation to present their idea and get feedback. This office meeting is counted as part of the assessment in which I am looking for two things: Students' independent comprehension of the material and ability to think up their own answers. If you cannot come to my office hours, then we will arrange some other time. If students miss this meeting, they will lose 10% of the **final** (not presentation) grade.

I will give an example of what students are supposed to do on Thursday of week 2, giving a presentation on Plato and Thucydides. The topic for the presentation is: What are our obligations to the Political Community?

## Final Paper

The final assignment will be a 5 page paper on either Arendt's "On Violence" or another question from the course. I will distribute questions for this paper on the penultimate Monday of the course and it will be due in Monday, December 08<sup>th</sup> by 12.00 in my mailbox in 2140 Derby Hall. For each **day** (not class) that students are late in submitting a paper, 2% will be taken from the **overall** grade. If papers come in after 3.30 on that Tuesday, then they will be considered one day late. Those papers which come in the following day will be considered two days late. I will not accept submissions by email. The final paper counts for 40% of a student's grade.

## Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct is a violation of the code of Student Conduct. The University defines academic misconduct as any activity that compromises the academic integrity of the institution, or subverts the education process. Some examples are copying other people's work, having others write a paper for you, or plagiarizing work from the internet. If you plagiarize, please know that you will be caught. For more information please go to:

<http://www.osu.edu/offices/oa/procedures/index.htm>

## Disability Accommodation

"Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>."

## Respect

This is a class on politics and everyone has opinions. Please try and deal with others' opinions in a mature manner and **listen to them fully** before responding. Do not talk over other people. Please also do not hold your own in-class commentary with the person seated beside you as this is rude and if you have something to say then you should share it with the class. Egregious violators of respect will lose points from the participation portion of the grade. I reserve the right to ask those students who violate basic principles of respect to leave the room.

## Cellphone Policy

Please turn off all cellphones upon entering class. If there is an emergency situation, then this is of course something different and I will make exceptions but in general cellphones should not be on in the classroom. I reserve the right to ask those students who send text messages in class to leave the room.

### Classes and scheduled readings:

Readings are from the Cohen and Fermon book for most of the course (marked **R**). Some readings not included in the book will be available on Carmen (marked **C**). Readings should be done *before* class for a discussion of the text *in* class.

**Wednesday, September 24th:** Distribution of syllabus and glossary.

#### I. BACKGROUND TO POLITICAL THEORY

**Monday, September 29th:** Introductions: group assignments: What is political theory and why study it?

*Reading- Leo Strauss: What is Political Philosophy? (R: 642-655)*

**Wednesday, October 1st:** The origins of political theory: Thucydides & Plato.

*Readings- Thucydides: Pericles Funeral Oration; Plato: The Apology (R: 13-39)*

Question for presentation: What are our obligations to the political community?

**Monday, October 6th:** Plato's Republic, Pt. I \*STUDENT PRESENTATIONS BEGIN\*

*Readings- Plato: The Republic (R: 39-94)*

Question for presentation: Is Plato's omnipotent state a guarantee of the good life or are there limits we would wish to impose upon it?

**Wednesday, October 8th:** Plato's Republic, Pt. II

*Readings- Plato: The Republic (R: 94-106 + C)*

Question for presentation: Do you agree with Plato's argument that sometimes men have to be lied to for their own good?

**Monday, October 13th:** Aristotle

*Readings- Aristotle: The Politics (R: 107-126)*

Question for presentation: Do you agree that man is "a political animal"? Is human co-operation "natural"? Is politics a part of human nature?

#### II. ETHICS

**Wednesday, October 15th:** Christian Political Theory: Augustine and Aquinas

*Readings- Augustine: City of God; Aquinas: Politics and Law (R: 129-152)*

Question for presentation: Should we obey our rulers without question? Are there ever legitimate grounds for conscious disobedience?

**Monday, October 20th:** Renaissance political theory: Machiavelli

*Readings- Machiavelli: The Prince (R: 167-187)*

Question for presentation: Is there a special morality for politics? Should politicians be allowed to do things others are not?

**Wednesday, October 22nd:** Ethics and politics: Weber

*Readings- Weber: Politics as a Vocation (R: 491-498)]*

Question for presentation: How useful for analyzing the actions of politicians is Weber's proposed dichotomy between the "ethic of ultimate ends" and the "ethic of responsibility"? Can real life be divided in so simplistic a fashion? Does anyone operate solely according to the "ethic of ultimate ends"?

### III. SOCIAL CONTRACT THEORY

Re-read Aristotle

**Monday, October 27th:** Hobbes.

*Readings- Hobbes: Leviathan (R: 205-242)*

Question for presentation: Compare and contrast Hobbes' and Aristotle's views of the nature of man: is man a "political animal" in Hobbes' state of nature? Who do you think is closer to the truth, Hobbes or Aristotle?

**Wednesday, October 29th:** The English liberal tradition: Locke.

*Readings- Locke: Second Treatise of Government (R: 243-279)*

Question for presentation: Compare and contrast Hobbes' and Locke's view of the sovereign. Where do they agree? Where do they differ? Which do you think is more reasonable? Why?

**Monday, November 03rd:** Rousseau

*Readings- Rousseau: On the Social Contract; Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men (R: 280-313)*

Question for presentation: To what extent does Rousseau's state of nature agree with those of Hobbes and Locke? Which is closest to your own impression of the state of nature?

**Wednesday, November 05th:** MIDTERM

### IV. LIBERTY AND EMANCIPATION

**Monday, November 10th:** Society: Tocqueville

*Readings- Tocqueville: Democracy in America (R: 398-424)*

Question for presentation: Is majority rule a threat to Democracy? Where should the political community draw the line between the rights of majorities and minorities? Why?

**Wednesday, November 12th:** Marxism and Society

*Readings- Marx: The Communist Manifesto (R: 448-464)*

Question for presentation: How far should we be prepared to reform society in order to achieve equality? Is economics so important for human politics?

**Monday, November 17th:** Mill and free speech

*Readings- Mill: On Liberty and On the Subjection of Women (R: 375-397)*

Question for presentation: Where should we draw the line between preserving the practices of the past and reforming them according to our own ideology? Are all traditional practices founded on unequal relationships and so fair game?

**Wednesday, November 19th:** Scientism: Orwell

*Readings- Orwell: Politics and the English Language (R: 591-600)*

Question for presentation: Is the existence of society incompatible with the idea of Liberty? Can people be truly free if they live amongst others?

#### V. SCIENCE AND TOTALITARIANISM

**Monday, November 24th:** Weber and Orwell on Science. FINAL PAPER QUESTIONS DISTRIBUTED

*Readings- Weber: Science as a vocation (C); Orwell: What is Science? (C)*

Question for presentation: Can any authorities tell us how to live? Are all authorities ultimately biased?

**Wednesday, November 26th: Class cancelled: enjoy the holiday!**

**Monday, December 01st:** Science and the Fascist movements: Arendt I

*Readings- Arendt: The Origins of Totalitarianism, (R: 575-590)*

Question for presentation: Arendt blames totalitarianism on science acting as an authority in our lives. To what extent do you agree?

**Wednesday, December 03rd:** Arendt II

*Reading- Arendt: On Violence (all)*

Question for presentation: Arendt argues that societies are either based on power or violence. What does this suggest is important for the composition of societies?

PAPERS ARE DUE IN BY 12.00 MONDAY, DECEMBER 8<sup>TH</sup> IN MY MAILBOX (2140 DERBY HALL)

### Grading guide for presentations

The presentation itself is worth 20% of a student's grade. The meeting with me beforehand is worth 10% and is part of the assessment. In the presentation, students will be graded from 1-5 on 4 areas listed below and generally the grade of the group will be the grade of the individual student (although I do reserve the right to change a student's individual grade). Below is a definition of the points scale and each of the areas:

- 1- Not addressed.
- 2- Addressed area unevenly and in patches.
- 3- Addressed area below the standard expected for the course
- 4- Addressed area at the standard expected for the course
- 5- Addressed area above the standard expected for the course: showed insight and originality

Breakdown of grades:

\_\_\_\_\_ Introduction, statement and justification of question, thesis statement.

\_\_\_\_\_ Use of evidence to back up claims.

\_\_\_\_\_ Connection of evidence to argument.

\_\_\_\_\_ Style, flair and originality; oratory style.