POLS 251: Introduction to Political Philosophy
Northern Illinois University
Department of Political Science
Fall 2017

Instructor: Lewis Hoss
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Classroom: Dusable Hall 246
Class Meeting Time: Tuesday/Thursday, 11:00 am — 12:15 pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course will introduce students to the study of political philosophy through a close reading of some of the most important texts in the Western tradition of political thought. Throughout this course we will grapple with a number of enduring political questions that continue to animate political discourse in the present day. What is the nature and purpose of human political communities? What is the best way of life for human beings and what is the best political arrangement for securing this way of life? Should our political regime aim to make us better human beings? Or should it merely prevent us from harming our neighbors? How should human nature be understood and what implications might this carry for our politics? We will analyze and discuss the answers to these and many other disputed questions as presented by some of the most influential thinkers in the Western political tradition. As we embark on a historical journey that will take us from ancient Greece to the modern age, enduring questions will be brought to life in a way that reveals their continued and crucial importance as we seek to navigate our current political environment.

REQUIRED TEXTS
- Niccolo Machiavelli, The Prince, translated by Harvey C. Mansfield (Univ. of Chicago Press)
- Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, ed. Edwin Curley (Hackett)
- John Locke, Two Treatises of Government, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge)
- John Locke, A Letter Concerning Toleration, ed. James H. Tully (Hackett)
- Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The Communist Manifesto: A Roadmap to History’s Most Important Political Document, ed. Phil Gasper (Haymarket)
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Attendance and Participation:
   You are expected to attend class and contribute to discussions. Your participation will be crucial to your success in this course, as our in-class discussions allow you to engage directly with the concepts, questions, and arguments that you will encounter in the readings. To deal with unforeseen events or illnesses, you will be allowed two unexcused absences. Students who miss more than two class meetings will be penalized. If you miss a class meeting it is your responsibility to acquire any notes/lecture materials from one of your classmates. Students who are consistently late to class will be penalized as if absent. Furthermore, attendance entails being mentally as well as physically present. Students who are visibly disengaged during class (sleeping, preoccupied with a cell phone, etc.) will be marked as absent – you should not come to class if you have no desire to participate.
   Participation entails asking questions or providing thoughtful comments related to the course material, answering questions raised by the instructor, and responding to the questions and comments of your peers. 25% of your final grade will depend on your attendance and participation.

Your attendance and participation grade will be evaluated as follows:

Student with a grade of A:
- Consistently raises questions and makes comments that illustrate a mastery of the course material
- Consistently uses course materials to answer questions raised by instructor and peers
- Draws connections between current and past course materials and concepts
- Shows consistent evidence of reading and comprehending course materials prior to class
- Holds an exceptional record of attendance (i.e. misses no more than two classes)

Student with a grade of B:
- Consistently raises questions and makes comments that illustrate partial mastery of the course material
- Occasionally uses course materials to answer questions raised by instructor and peers
- Shows consistent evidence of reading course materials prior to class
- Holds a good record of attendance (i.e. misses no more than three classes)

Student with a grade of C:
- Occasionally raises questions and makes comments that illustrate partial mastery of the course material
- Shows consistent evidence of reading course materials prior to class
- Holds a good record of attendance (i.e. misses no more than three classes)

Student with a grade of D or lower:
- Does not raise questions or make comments that illustrate mastery of the course material
- Makes comments but that do not clearly relate to the course materials
- Shows little or no evidence of reading course materials prior to class
- Holds a poor record of attendance (i.e. misses four or more classes)
2. Reading and Reflections

In addition to our discussions in the classroom, the primary method of learning in this course is through the close reading of primary sources in the history of political philosophy. All reading assignments must be completed prior to the beginning of class. The course schedule below provides a list of the readings that are to be completed before each class. Follow this schedule unless notified by the instructor.

Your ability to participate effectively in class will depend largely on your diligence in completing the readings as assigned. Furthermore, all assigned readings and lecture materials are fair game for exams. In order to succeed in this class, you will need to read the texts closely and take good notes during class.

You must bring to each class meeting the appropriate texts we have read for that particular day, because we will often look extensively at particular passages of the text.

Bi-Weekly Reflection Assignments

In preparation for each class meeting, you will be required to submit a short (one paragraph) reflection by 10pm on the evening before class that engages in some way with the readings assigned for the following day. These reflections are important for two reasons: first, they help to structure and animate our class discussions; second, they indicate student interests and general comprehension of the material. With this information, the instructor can further ensure that students are acquiring a grasp of the course material that will enable them to succeed in this course.

Your reflections should be in the form of a question or statement related to some specific concept, topic, proposition, or argument that you encountered in the reading. This gives you considerable flexibility to elaborate briefly on anything that you found interesting, confusing, enlightening, or infuriating. In each reflection you should provide a clear and concise statement explaining whether and why you agree/disagree with the thinker, are confused by the thinker, etc. with regard to the issue you identified in the reading. Above all, provide some evidence of intellectual engagement with the text. You will be allowed to miss six (6) reflections without penalty. There are 25 distinct reading assignments on the course schedule below – this means you must submit 19 quality reflections in order to earn full credit for this portion of your grade. Reflections that do not make reference to or do not adequately engage with specific ideas from the reading will be penalized. Reflections must be submitted online to Blackboard via the “Reading Reflections” tab. Late submissions will not be accepted. 20% of your final grade will depend on reflection submissions.
3. Exams
Two exams will be administered over the course of the semester:
   i. Midterm Exam: This exam will be comparative and analytical in nature. It is worth 15% of your final grade.
   ii. Final Exam: This exam will be *cumulative* and formatted much like the Midterm. It is worth 20% of your final grade. The final will be administered during the university’s officially scheduled time slot.

Both exams will be administered via the course Blackboard page. Further specifications will be provided by the instructor closer to the exam dates.

4. Term Paper
You are required to write one essay, of no less than 1000 words and no more than 1500 words. Further specifications will be given by the instructor when the essay topics are handed out in class. The essay will be graded according to the mastery of the course material demonstrated, the logic of your arguments, grammar, style, and organization. The essay will rely on the primary texts assigned for the course and will not require you to do secondary research.

The essay must be uploaded to the course Blackboard page (and submitted to SafeAssign) *by midnight* on December 7th. *Late submissions will not be accepted.* The term paper is worth 20% of your final grade.

COURSE GRADING SCHEME

Attendance and Participation: 25%
Reflections: 20%
Midterm Exam: 15%
Term Paper: 20%
Final Exam: 20%

Grading Scale:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>93% - 100%</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90% - 92.9%</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>87.5% - 89.9%</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>83% - 87.4%</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<tr>
<td>80% - 89.9%</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<tr>
<td>77.5% - 79.9%</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<tr>
<td>70% - 77.4%</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>60% - 69.9%</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>Less than 60%</td>
<td>F</td>
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MISCELLANEOUS COURSE POLICIES

**Lateness Policy:**
*Make-up exams or an extension of the term paper due date will not be provided* except in cases of extreme emergency and at the instructor’s discretion. If you are so unfortunate as to find yourself in such circumstances, the instructor must be notified *prior to the date of the exam or the term paper due date*. Only the most extraordinary of circumstances (i.e. serious injury or illness involving hospitalization, etc.) will be considered, and the instructor reserves the right to require supporting documentation.

**Classroom Decorum:**
In this class you are expected to be courteous and collegial toward your classmates and instructor. During classroom discussions you are expected to express yourself in a manner befitting the university setting. This means showing respect for those around you by sharing your thoughts in a civil and dignified manner and not interrupting/talking/whispering while another person is speaking. You should raise your hand if you wish to interrupt to ask a question or make a comment. I recognize that class discussion comes more easily for some people than for others. By temperament or habit, some individuals are “talkers” while others are “listeners.” Learning to be both is an important subsidiary goal of this course. Comments that are not relevant to the ongoing discussion and off the point will not be rewarded. Remarks that are disruptive to the discussion, insensitive to others, or attempt to dominate the discussion will not be tolerated. *Such behavior may result in a significant penalty to your participation grade.* I strongly prefer students to participate on a voluntary basis. If you are particularly apprehensive about talking in class, or feel closed out of the discussion for another reason, please speak with me. There are some things I can suggest that may be helpful. Remember - communication skills and self-confidence are extremely important assets in the professional world. It is better to develop these qualities in the collegial environment of this class rather than under more difficult circumstances later in life.

**Extra Credit:**
Extra credit assignments will not be given on an individual basis to raise final grades.

**PLUS Pathway: Origins and Influences:**
Introduction to Political Philosophy (POLS 251) is one of the courses available for fulfilling your general education Origins and Influences Pathway. It is identified as one of the courses under the Creativity and Critical Analysis knowledge domain. Of these two knowledge domains, this course focuses on critical analysis. We explore primary readings in political philosophy to trace the origins of important concepts regarding politics in Western thought, including notions of liberty, equality, and good governance. In making our way through intricate arguments made by
key figures in this tradition, we develop analytic and critical skills as well as an historical sensibility about the contexts in which key ideas developed.

In an effort to contribute to students’ general education, this course joins others in the Origins and Influences Pathway in posing some of the same questions, and exploring various possible answers across academic disciplines. We will focus on the following two Pathway questions:

1) How have societies balanced group and individual needs over time?
2) How have humans perceived nature, culture, and society over time?

University Attendance Policy:
If a student will be absent from classes for a week or more because of an accident, illness, or other emergency, instructors will be notified of the absence only if students or their parents request it through the Division of Student Affairs. Health Services will not release information about students unless they provide a written request.

Leaves of absence will be granted for volunteer services related to disaster relief in accordance with applicable Illinois statutes or executive orders issued by the State of Illinois in response to emergency situations. To initiate a leave of absence, students should contact their College Dean's office, or the vice provost (or the vice provost's delegate) for any student who has no college affiliation. Following the period of volunteer service, Registration and Records will facilitate reenrollment of the student.

Students are expected to comply with each individual instructor's established attendance policy. It is recommended that students avoid registering for classes in which they would amass significant absences. In the case of an absence due to required attendance at a university-sponsored event such as a department trip, performing arts activity, ROTC function, or athletic competition, reasonable attempts shall be made by faculty members to allow the student to make up missed work. Students are responsible for completing the work assigned and/or due on the days they are absent for university-sponsored events. Both the sponsoring unit and the student should inform the faculty member as soon as possible in the semester in order for arrangements to be made for completing missed assignments, examinations or other required course work. The student is required to provide 5 each instructor with an official notification in advance of the absence (e.g., a letter from the chair of the sponsoring department, the head of the sponsoring unit, or the coach).

Religious Observances:
The University asks instructors to make students aware of the following policy. “Northern Illinois University as a public institution of higher education in the State of Illinois does not observe religious holidays. It is the university’s policy, however, to reasonably accommodate the
religious observances of individual students in regards to admissions, class attendance, scheduling examinations and work requirements. Such policies shall be made known to faculty and students. Religious observance includes all aspects of religious observance and practice as well as belief. Absence from classes or examinations for religious observance does not relieve students from responsibility for any part of the course work required during the period of absence. To request accommodation, students who expect to miss classes, examinations or other assignments as a consequence of their religious observance shall provide instructors with reasonable notice of the date or dates they will be absent.”

The instructor is respectful and fully supportive of students who wish to participate in religious observances. Excused absences will be provided, but students must understand and follow the above policy with respect to reasonable notice and making up work.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:**
A student who believes that reasonable accommodations with respect to course work or other academic requirements may be appropriate in consideration of a disability must (1) provide the required verification of the disability to the Disabilities Resource Center, (2) meet with the Disabilities Resource Center to determine appropriate accommodations, and (3) inform the faculty in charge of the academic activity of the need for accommodation. Students are encouraged to inform the faculty of their requests for accommodations as early as possible in the semester, but must make the requests in a timely enough manner for accommodations to be appropriately considered and reviewed by the university. If contacted by the faculty member, the staff of the Disabilities Resource Center will provide advice about accommodations that may be indicated in the particular case. Students who make requests for reasonable accommodations are expected to follow the policies and procedures of the Disabilities Resource Center in this process, including but not limited to the Student Handbook. A wide range of services is available to students with disabilities, including housing, transportation, adaptation of printed materials, and advocacy with faculty and staff. Students with disabilities who need such services or want more information should contact the Disabilities Resource Center at 815-753-1303.

**Academic Integrity:**
**University Policy:** Good academic work must be based on honesty. The attempt of any student to present as his or her own work that which he or she has not produced is regarded by the faculty and administration as a serious offense. Students are considered to have cheated if they copy the work of another during an examination or turn in a paper or an assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else. Students are responsible for plagiarism, intentional or not, if they copy material from books, magazines, or other sources without identifying and acknowledging those sources or if they paraphrase ideas from such sources without acknowledging them. Students responsible for, or assisting others in, either cheating or plagiarism on an assignment, quiz, or examination may receive a grade of F for the course involved and may be suspended or dismissed from the university.
A faculty member has original jurisdiction over any instances of academic misconduct that occur in a course which the faculty member is teaching. The student shall be given the opportunity to resolve the matter in meetings with the faculty member and the department chair. If the facts of the incident are not disputed by the student, the faculty member may elect to resolve the matter at that level by levying a sanction no greater than an F for that course. The faculty member shall notify the student in writing whenever such action is taken, and the Office of Community Standards and Student Conduct shall receive a copy of the Academic Misconduct Incident Report indicating final disposition of the case, which will be placed in the student's judicial file. In all matters where the charge of academic misconduct is disputed by the student or if the faculty member feels a sanction greater than an F in the course is appropriate (such as repeated offenses or flagrant violations), the faculty member shall refer the matter to the Office of Community Standards and Student Conduct making use of the Academic Misconduct Incident Report. Additional sanctions greater than an F in a course can be levied only through the University Judicial System. With regards to finding the student either responsible or not responsible for his or her action, the ruling of the Judicial Hearing Board shall be binding. In cases where there is either a finding of responsibility or an admission of responsibility by the student, any recommendations by the hearing board regarding the course grade are non-binding on the instructor, who remains solely responsible for assigning a course grade, consistent with the policies set forth in the course syllabus.

**Course policy:** This course adheres to the University policy elaborated above. All incidences of academic misconduct will be reported, and course sanctions may range from an F on the assignment to an F in the entire course based on the severity of the misconduct. In addition, please note that *this instructor considers it academic misconduct to hand in an assignment for this course that has already been handed in for another course*. Students are expected to produce new work for this course, as well as to avoid copying or relying on the work of others, particularly without attribution.
COURSE SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Political Philosophy and the American Regime
Aug. 29: Introduction

Aug. 31: Declaration of Independence, available online at https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript

Ancient Greece and the Birth of Political Philosophy
Sep. 5: Plato, *Euthyphro*, available on Blackboard

Sep. 7: Plato, *Apology*, available on Blackboard

Sep. 12: Plato, *Crito*, available on Blackboard


Machiavellian Realism


Oct. 10: Midterm Review – NO REFLECTION TODAY

Oct. 12: MIDTERM EXAM

Hobbesian Empiricism and Absolute Government


**Lockean Liberalism**

Oct. 31: Locke, *Second Treatise*, chapters 1-3

Nov. 2: Locke, *Second Treatise*, chapter 5

Nov. 7: Locke, *Second Treatise*, chapters 6-9

Nov. 9: Locke, *Second Treatise*, chapters 10-13

Nov. 14: Locke, *Second Treatise*, chapters 14-19

Nov. 16: Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*

**Marxist Socialism**


Nov. 23: NO CLASS (THANKSGIVING BREAK)

Nov. 28: Marx & Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (p. 71-90)

Nov. 30: “Is the Manifesto Still Relevant?” (p.93-115)
Engels, “The Principles of Communism” (p.128-148)
Marx, “On Alienation” (p.149-153)
“Demands of the Communist Party in Germany” (p.153-155)

Dec. 5: Marx, “The Paris Commune” (p.164-175)
Marx, “The Transition to Communism” (p.176-181)
Marx, “The Realm of Necessity and the Realm of Freedom” (p.181-183)
Engels, “Marx’s Legacy” (p.190-191)

Dec. 7: Final Review – NO REFLECTION TODAY

**TERM PAPERS DUE**

Dec. 12 **FINAL EXAM**