

POLS 251-1: Introduction to Political Philosophy  
Northern Illinois University  
Department of Political Science  
Fall 2017

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**Course Description:**

This course will introduce students to some of the most important classical texts in political philosophy, beginning with Plato and ending with Locke. We will concentrate on the varying accounts given by these philosophers on the role of political community in living a good and just life. We will look at the differences between ancient and modern ways of understanding the nature of human beings and of human excellence and happiness. The question of the best regime and the best way of life as presented by these philosophers will be our most crucial theme. This course endeavors to bring enduring questions and problems to life; while we embark on an historical journey that takes us from ancient Athens to seventeenth century England, it ought to become clear that the ideas discussed by our authors are just as important to us now as ever.

**Readings:**

The following are REQUIRED texts. They can be purchased at either of the campus bookstores.

- ❖ Aristotle. *Politics*, translated by Carnes Lord (Univ. of Chicago Press)
- ❖ Hobbes. *Leviathan*, ed. E.M. Curley (Hackett)
- ❖ Locke. *Second Treatise on Government*, ed. R.H. Cox (AHM Croft's Classics)
- ❖ Locke. *Letter on Toleration*, ed. James H. Tully (Hackett)
- ❖ Machiavelli. *The Prince*, translated by H.C. Mansfield, Jr. (Univ. of Chicago Press)
- ❖ Plato & Aristophanes. *Texts on Socrates*, translated and with notes by Thomas G. West and Grace Starry West (Cornell University Press)

**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?

### **Course Requirements:**

#### 1. Attendance and Participation:

Your attendance and class participation are important components of the course. 20% of your course grade will depend on your attendance and participation. Attendance will not be recorded, but your regular and active attendance and participation will be noted. You will receive an A on the oral participation component of the course evaluation if you come very consistently and participate very actively. If you miss more than two or three classes, and you participate very rarely, this will result in a low attendance and participation grade.

You are expected to participate in a lively manner, by answering questions about the text, asking questions about the text, and, generally, by offering insightful comments that will enrich your experience as well as that of your fellow students.

See (iv) Study Questions component under Tests and Assignments below, where you will learn that half of your Attendance and Participation grade depends on completing the study questions responses.

#### 2. Reading:

All reading assignments must be completed BEFORE the beginning of the relevant class. Please keep in mind that your ability to participate effectively will depend on your diligence in completing the readings as assigned. All readings as well as all lecture material are fair game for tests and examinations. You must study your readings and take good notes in lectures in order to do well on the tests and examinations.

Since particular passages of the text will be referred to and read in class, please bring the appropriate texts to class.

#### 3. Tests and Assignments:

For due dates, please see the schedule below.

i) *Quizzes*. Two quizzes will be administered throughout the term. Each counts for 10%, for a total of 20% of your grade. The quizzes will contain short-answer identification questions as well as more analytical and longer ones, on occasion comparative in nature. They are always administered at the beginning of the classes on the days they are scheduled.

ii) *Midterm Test*. This test will be comparative and analytical in nature. It is worth 15% of your grade.

iii). *Term Paper*. You are required to write one paper, of no less than 1000 words and no more than 1500 words. Further specifications will be given when the essay topics are handed out within the first couple of weeks of class. The essay will be graded according to command of the material demonstrated, logic of the arguments, grammar, style, and organization. It will rely on the primary material assigned and will not require you to do secondary research. It is worth 25% of your grade.

The essay will be handed in at the beginning of class in which it is due, or it will be deemed late. Late assignments will be penalized 5% per day, including weekends, and including the date of due date after class. All papers must be submitted through the Safe Assign process on Blackboard and in hard copy in class.

iii) *Final Exam*. This exam, worth 20% of the final grade, will be given in the officially scheduled slot. It will cover all the material in the course. A study guide will be provided.

iv) *Study Question Responses*. For every thinker/work we study, you will be given a set of study questions to help you prepare for class. Answer a total of 20 of these or more. Answers should be about a paragraph long, and will only be accepted in person at the beginning of class. The purpose of these is to help you prepare to participate in class. If you complete all 20, you will receive 10% of your final grade towards the 20% assigned to attendance and participation (which is to say half of your attendance and participation grade depends on this). If you hand in between 10 and 20, you will receive half of that, and if you hand in fewer than 10 you will forfeit that 10% of your final grade. The content is not graded for substance, but if there is not a good face effort to answer the question, it will not be accepted as a submission.

### **Grading Scheme:**

Attendance and Participation: 20% (half of this grade is for completing study question responses; the other half is for overall attendance and participation)

Two Quizzes: 20% (Each counts for 10%)

Midterm Test: 15%

Term Paper: 25%

Final Exam: 20%

**Grading Scale:**

93%-100% =	A	90%-92.9% =	A-	87.5%-89.9% =	B+
83%-87.4% =	B	80%-82.9% =	B-	77.5%-79.9% =	C+
70%-77.4% =	C	60%-69.9% =	D	Less than 60%	F
				=	

**Lateness Policy:**

IF there are extraordinary circumstances that make it impossible for the student to complete work or come to class, the professor must be notified as soon as possible. Let it be clear that only EXTRAORDINARY and unexpected circumstances will be considered. For example, a heavy workload within or without the university does not count as extraordinary –and neither does a common cold. If there is a serious medical problem that has impeded the student’s ability to do his or her work, then please let the professor know and bring supporting documentation. NO consideration will be given to those students who do not alert the professor of a problem prior to the due date of an assignment or the date of a quiz or exam.

The term paper will be handed in at the beginning of class in which it is due, or it will be deemed late. Late assignments will be penalized 5% per day, including weekends. All papers must be submitted through the Safe Assign process on Blackboard and in hard copy in class. Since the topics for the paper are given early in the term, you are responsible for budgeting your time, and for meeting this deadline.

**Class Decorum:**

You are expected to be courteous and collegial in this class. Here are some of the decorum guidelines:

- ❖ Be on time for class.
- ❖ Do not leave during class. Use the restroom, get a drink of water, etc. before class begins or after it ends. If you must leave early or come in late, please provide a reasonable explanation and be as undistruptive as possible when you are coming or going.
- ❖ Respect your classmates. Do not interrupt your colleagues, and make sure that your comments are civil. Discussion is wonderful and encouraged, but it is only possible when we listen to one another and make comments that are courteous.
- ❖ Do not disrupt lectures. No cell phones, no private conversations, no snoring. If you wish to interrupt to ask a question, please put your hand up. Questions are encouraged!

**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 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).

**Unannounced Quizzes:**

The professor reserves the right to give unannounced quizzes if it becomes clear that students are not doing the assigned reading, and the quality of class participation and discussion is unsatisfactory.

**Religious Observance:**

If classes or assignments coincide with your religious observance, please let the professor know as soon as possible so that you can be accommodated in the best way possible.

**Extra Credit:**

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

### **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 will range from an F on the assignment to an F in the 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.

### **Political Science Web Site:**

Students are strongly encouraged to consult the Department of Political Science web site on a regular basis. This up-to-date, central source of information will assist students in contacting faculty and staff, reviewing course requirements and syllabi, exploring graduate study, researching career options, tracking department events, and accessing important details related to undergraduate programs and activities. To reach this site, go to <http://polsci.niu.edu>

### **Undergraduate Writing Awards:**

The Department of Political Science recognizes, on an annual basis, outstanding undergraduate papers written in conjunction with 300-400 level political science courses or directed studies, such as independent studies or honors theses. Winners are expected to attend the Department's spring graduation ceremony where they will receive a certificate and a check for \$50.00. No more than two papers may be submitted by a student. There is no requirement as to the length of papers submitted for the award. Often the Department awards prizes for both an outstanding short paper and an outstanding long paper. The number and types of award is dependent upon the papers submitted for consideration in any given year. Authors do not have to be political science majors or have a particular class standing. Only papers written in the previous calendar year are considered for the award. However, papers completed in the current spring semester are eligible for the following year's competition even if

the student has graduated. Papers can be submitted by students or faculty and must be supplied in triplicate to the undergraduate secretary. All copies must have two cover pages – one with the student’s name and one without the student’s name. Papers are not to be stapled or bound. Instead, please use paper clips. Papers are generally due in March and notice of call for papers and submission deadlines will be published in the department e-announcements. You may also contact the department for information at 753-1015.

**Course Outline and Due Dates:**

August 29	Introduction
August 31; September 5, 7	Plato, <i>Euthyphro</i>
September 12, 14, 19	Plato, <i>Apology</i> ; <i>Crito</i>
September 21	No class
September 26	Aristotle, <i>Politics</i> , Book I, chapters 1-7
September 28	Aristotle, <i>Politics</i> , Book I, chapters 8-13
October 3	Aristotle, <i>Politics</i> , Book III, chapters 1-8 <b>Quiz 1</b>
October 5	Aristotle, <i>Politics</i> , Book III, chapters 9-13
October 10	Machiavelli, <i>Prince</i> , Epistle Dedicatory, chapters 1-6
October 12	Machiavelli, <i>Prince</i> , chapters 7-14
October 17	Machiavelli, <i>Prince</i> , chapters 15-18
October 19	Machiavelli, <i>Prince</i> , chapters 19, 21, 24-26
October 24	<b>Midterm Test</b>
October 26	Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , chapters 6, 10-11
October 31	Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , chapters 13-16
November 2 & 7	Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , chapters 17-19, 21, 29-30
November 9	Locke, <i>Second Treatise</i> , chapters 1-3
November 14	Locke, <i>Second Treatise</i> , chapters 5-6
November 16	<b>Quiz 2</b>
November 21	Locke, <i>Second Treatise</i> , chapters 8-12
November 23	Thanksgiving –no class
November 28	Locke, <i>Second Treatise</i> , chapters 13-14, 19
November 30	Locke, <i>Letter on Toleration</i>
December 5	Locke, <i>Letter on Toleration</i> , con’d
December 7	Review; <b>essays due</b>
December 12	Final Exam 10:00am-11:50am – regular classroom