POLS 251-1: Introduction to Political Philosophy
Northern Illinois University
Department of Political Science
Fall 2018

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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.

  ISBN-10: 0226921840

  ISBN-10: 0872201775

❖ Locke. *Second Treatise on Government* (Hackett)
  ISBN-10: 0915144867

  ISBN-10: 0226500446

❖ Plato & Aristophanes. *Texts on Socrates*, translated and with notes by Thomas G.
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:

Your attendance is an important component of the course. 10% of your course grade will depend on your attendance. Attendance will be recorded via the Blackboard Course Tool meant for this function. It will calculate all attendance days equally, with deductions for absences, lateness, and early leaving. Please note that only illness documented with medical notes, school-sanctioned activities, or religious observance count as excused absences.

Your participation is also recommended and will be noted. To do well on the material, it is important to interact actively in class.

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 20% 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 25% 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.

Grading Scheme:

Attendance and Participation: 10%
Two Quizzes: 20% (Each counts for 10%)  
Midterm Test: 20%
Term Paper: 25%
Final Exam: 25%

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 undisruptive 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**
If you need an accommodation for this class, please contact the Disability Resource Center as soon as possible. The DRC coordinates accommodations for students with disabilities. It is located on the 4th floor of the Health Services Building, and can be reached at 815-753-1303 or drc@niu.edu.

Also, please contact me privately as soon as possible so we can discuss your accommodations. Please note that you will not be required to disclose your disability, only your accommodations. The sooner you let me know your needs, the sooner I can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.

**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](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:**

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>August 28</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 30; September 4, 6</td>
<td>Plato, <em>Apology</em></td>
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<td>September 11</td>
<td>Review of Plato; Writing Tests Tutorial</td>
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<td>September 13</td>
<td>Aristotle, Politics, Book I, chapters 1-7</td>
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<td>September 18</td>
<td>Aristotle, <em>Politics</em>, Book I, chapters 8-13</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Reading</td>
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<td>September 27; October 2</td>
<td>Aristotle, <em>Politics</em>, Book III, chapters 9-13</td>
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<td>October 4</td>
<td>Quiz 1&lt;br&gt;Machiavelli, <em>Prince</em>, Epistle Dedicatory, chs. 1</td>
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<td>October 9, 11</td>
<td>Machiavelli, <em>Prince</em>, chapters 2-6</td>
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<td>October 16, 18</td>
<td>Machiavelli, <em>Prince</em>, chapters 7-14</td>
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<td>October 23</td>
<td>Machiavelli, <em>Prince</em>, chapters 15-18</td>
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<td>October 25</td>
<td>Machiavelli, <em>Prince</em>, chapters 19, 21, 24-26</td>
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<td>October 30</td>
<td>Midterm test</td>
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<td>November 1</td>
<td>Hobbes, <em>Leviathan</em>, chapters 6, 10-11</td>
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<td>November 6, 8</td>
<td>Hobbes, <em>Leviathan</em>, chapters 13-16</td>
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<td>November 20</td>
<td>Quiz 2&lt;br&gt;Locke, <em>Second Treatise</em>, chapters 1-3</td>
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<td>November 22</td>
<td>Thanksgiving</td>
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<td>November 27</td>
<td>Locke, <em>Second Treatise</em>, chapters 5-6</td>
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<td>November 29</td>
<td>Locke, <em>Second Treatise</em>, chapters 8-12</td>
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<td>December 4, 6</td>
<td>Locke, <em>Second Treatise</em>, chapters 13-14, 19</td>
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<td>December 6</td>
<td>Papers Due</td>
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<td>Tuesday, December 11</td>
<td>Final Exam</td>
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<td>10:00-11:50am – regular classroom</td>
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