

University at Albany, State University of New York

Theorists & Theorizing: John Locke
POS 308 (8831)
CH 151

Jason Di Gianni
Spring '08
Tuesday 5:45-8:35

Course Description

The focus of this course is the political philosophy of John Locke. While the ideas in his famous Two Treatises of Government should be familiar to any student studying American politics, there are many ways to interpret this classic text. Students will read all of Locke's political writings and a few studies of the context within which he wrote. We will pay special attention to the evolution of his political thought, the historical context that may have influenced his thought, and the influence politics may have had on his writing. The purpose of this course is to gain a detailed understanding of Locke's political thought, to explore the external stimuli that influence how a philosopher arrives at certain conclusions and more generally, to observe the fluidity of interpretation.

Required Texts

The texts are available at Mary Jane's Books, located at the corner of Western Avenue and Quail Street. These texts should also be readily available at the library and some bookstores. Any edition of the works may be used. Links to online versions, if available, will be posted on BLS. Additional readings will be added to BLS or made available as a packet.

Two Treatises of Government, John Locke, edited by Peter Laslett (Cambridge)
Political Essays, John Locke, edited by Mark Goldie (Cambridge)
Locke: A Very Short Introduction, John Dunn (Oxford)

The nature of our subject matter demands careful and critical reading. The reading load will be moderate, approximately 70 pages per week, with a few exceptions. Students cannot pass this course if they do not complete the assigned reading. I expect you to read and think about every assigned reading before each class meeting. Be sure to bring the texts to class.

Papers & Quizzes

Students are to write one papers after each section of the course, for a total of three papers. I will discuss and distribute paper assignments in class. The papers will be worth 25% each, totaling 75% of your final grade. The papers will be around five pages in length, double-spaced, using Times New Roman font in 12-point typeface, with standard margins. All written assignments are to use footnotes as outlined in *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

The other 25% of your final grade will come from unannounced quizzes. These quizzes will specifically test whether or not you have read the assigned reading for the day. If you are absent for a quiz, without a documented excuse, you will get a zero. Students can drop their lowest quiz score.

Cheating, plagiarism, and all forms of academic dishonesty will be grounds for failure of the course—and possibly worse. Refer to the *Undergraduate Bulletin* for the University's guidelines.

I will only accept late assignments if they are accompanied by a letter from the Dean of Undergraduates students.

Students with disabilities who require special accommodations should inform me and express their needs during the first few days of class.

Attendance

There is no formal attendance policy for this class. While I expect you all to attend regularly, I will not be taking roll. However, students will find it difficult to get through the course without regular attendance and participation through discussion and questions and will not earn credit for missed quizzes.

Expectations

I expect students to complete all readings and be prepared to discuss them in class. Completion of the readings in a timely matter is critical to the success of this class. Without a proper foundation, we cannot have meaningful lectures and discussions. If you do not expect to keep up with the readings, do not take this class.

Participation in class through discussions and questions during lecture is a crucial element to a successful course. I expect everyone to participate regularly. I will frequently interrupt class so that we may respond to something from lecture, a reading, or a student question. Therefore, I encourage you all to bring up comments, criticisms, or questions as they arise.

BLS, Contact Information, & Office Hours

This course has a BLS site. Students enrolled in the course will have access to the site. This site allows me to communicate with all of you, you to communicate with me, and for you to communicate with each other. Students should regularly check this website to see if there are any added or changed assignments or announcements. I will post paper assignments and a copy of this syllabus there.

All contact that I make with you will be through BLS. Any changes to assignments, cancellation of class, or announcements will be posted BLS. Therefore, it is your responsibility to regularly check the site for any news. If you miss any announcement or message sent to you through the site, you are accountable.

My direct e-mail address is jd6256@albany.edu. It is the best way to contact me.

I will be available for office hours by appointment.