Welcome to Political Science 103! In the next sixteen weeks, we will explore the history of Western Political Thought from Plato to Marx and time permitting, well beyond Marx. More importantly, we will explore your relationship with the state and society. It is my hope that you will leave more perplexed and confused about legitimate government and your role as a citizen, than when you entered. Do not despair, as Socrates argued, the wise individual recognizes that he/she knows little.

Assignments are designed to make you engage the material and political theory in general. Students often find RPOS 103 challenging for several reasons. First, this course is not like most survey courses where the students learn from a textbook, which lays out concepts and ideas in a very direct way. In political theory we read the original text and must develop our own interpretations of sometimes complex, cryptic, and esoteric readings. For that reason, the assignments are better digestible in small chunks but you should also be able to see the big picture (if there is one). Second, you will be asked to think beyond common sense and socially accepted norms. This is not so easy and often brings about great angst to the student.

**Exploratory Journal:** You must keep a journal of your thoughts and responses regarding the readings, lectures, and class discussions. A “C” grade will merely summarize the material and lectures; a “B” grade will not only summarize the material, but also include commentary and applications to events hypothetical or actual; and an “A” grade will dazzle me. I will collect these journals every 4 to 5 weeks (Oct. 1, Nov. 4th, & Dec. 9th)

**Papers:** You have three opportunities to turn in two papers. You may turn in more than two papers if you desire to explore your ideas further. I will record your two highest paper grades.

Take the papers seriously! In your papers, you must clearly state your claim in the first paragraph; provide a coherent argument; and present your ideas clearly and concisely (which entails using proper grammar and avoiding typos). A “B paper” goes beyond simply summarizing the lecture by criticizing the arguments presented and/or by expanding on them. An “A paper” requires exceptional work replete with brilliance and profound insight.

**Participation:** To properly engage political theory, you must actively participate in the conversation. Hence, the best political philosophizing often occurs 3:00 AM in a dorm room when two friends ponder the meaning of life, or over dinner where the participants are not only devouring food but ideas, or even in prison when one is in deep conversation with oneself. Since, I cannot move the class to a dorm room, I
cannot afford to buy dinner, and I find jail inconvenient, we will have to settle with discussions in class
and during my office hours; make the most out of it. Engage the thoughts of other students; you will
make a few friends and perhaps some frenemies, but in the process you might learn something about
yourself.

If you fear public speaking, RPOS 103 is a good place to overcome that fear. However, if you choose not
to speak because of your fear, we can make other arrangements so that you can still actively explore
political theory (let alone so that you will not lose participation points).

Plagiarism: Don’t do it!!! Plagiarism means to pass off someone else’s work as your own or to pass off
the work from one course for another (even if the work is your own). Any student who plagiarizes will be
failed from the course and be reported to Judicial Affairs where further action may be taken.

Problems: Please inform me of any difficulties you might have that might impede on your performance
in this course. These problems include, but are not limited to: physical disabilities, learning disabilities,
medical problems, legal misfortunes, jury duty, military obligations, etc.

Success in This Class: If you receive an “A” in the course and next semester you have not retained one
shred of wisdom passed down from the great philosophers and from your classmates, then you have
failed. But if you received an “E” in this course, and some idea or discussion has made you question your
life, has perhaps changed or strengthened your beliefs and pursuits, if in this course you had some
philosophical thought that makes your life more meaningful, then you have succeeded. Remember, you
do not attend school to get good grades, but you attend school to learn.

Now sit back and enjoy the ride!!!