Course Description

This course introduces students to political theory as a historically developed theoretical framework of Western political thought. It is an essential and indispensable element for studying and understanding politics in general. Political theory involves analyzing concepts, deconstructing and re-constructing their meaning, and seeking to understand historical and social context of ideas, values and ideals that have driven the development of key themes, areas and arguments in Western political thought. We will engage with primary texts by the authors of a “canon” of western political thought: Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau. We will study those texts and they key arguments from the perspective of the notion of political community and principles of its organization. We will engage with the following questions: What is “community” in the political context? What are the key terms and concepts that determine such community being political? Who are and are the members of such community and who are not and why? What are the grounds for inclusion or exclusion? What are the rights and responsibilities of its members? How are the relationships between individual members and community at large regulated? Do certain principles and ideas affect and shape forms that political communities take? In the course, we will proceed by analyzing these questions with reference to the arguments presented in the above-mentioned texts on one hand and their comparison and linkage to contemporary politics on the other.

Learning Objectives

✓ Learning Objectives
✓ To understand and be able critically evaluate and argumentatively utilize concepts, key questions and main arguments presented in major texts of Western political theory.
✓ Learn to interpret political theory texts – their arguments, style, and different levels of meaning.
✓ To identify, evaluate and analyze competing ideas that determine the principles of existence and functioning of political communities and their different political forms
✓ To theoretically enrich the understanding of the concept of politics.

Course Requirements

As a student registered for this class and receiving course credit, your responsibilities are:
✓ Attend all lectures.
✓ Arrive to lectures on time.
✓ Complete all readings by the assigned date, and come to class prepared.
✓ Contribute to a respectful academic environment, refraining from unrelated conversations or use of technology (cell phones, laptops and other devices)
✓ Bring assigned readings to class with you.
✓ Be an active listener during the lectures: take notes, ask questions, raise points of critique.
**Required Books:**

Reading and writing are essential tools and of crucial importance in theoretical academic work. Through reading we engage with ideas of different thinkers each of whom interpret different subjects of their studies in their own way, using specific methodologies and constructing particular arguments. Through close reading of assigned texts you should be able to deconstruct these arguments, critically evaluate and use the knowledge and understanding of them to formulate and develop your own ideas. There is a list of required books for this course. We will not read all of them in their entirety, but selected chapters and sections. Additional readings will be placed on Blackboard for your convenience. (These are marked “online” in a class schedule) When assignments include reading material placed online on a Blackboard, you should print them out, read them carefully and bring them to class with you. The required books have been ordered and are available for you in University’s bookstore. If you decide to acquire books from other sources, make sure you have the same exact editions as in a bookstore as we want to make sure we are literally on the same pages of the text during the lectures and discussion sections. It is important you have the exact same editions as stated in this syllabus. If you order books from somewhere else, make sure you time your orders properly so books arrive on time when you need them for the class and not later.

**Note:** Books are a must for this course. There will be virtually no additional study material such as power points, summary tables and alike. Books are the primary and only necessary “tool” for this course.

**Plato**
*The Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014)  
ISBN – 978-0-521-48173-1 Hardback  

**Aristotle**  
*Politics* (Mineola: Dover Publications, Inc. 200)  
ISBN – 0-486-41424-8 (pbk)

**Niccolo Machiavelli**  
ISBN – 0-226-50043-8  
ISBN – 0-226-500-44-6

**Thomas Hobbes**  

**John Locke**  

**Jean-Jacques Rousseau**  
ISBN – 0-300-09140-0  
ISBN – 0-300-09141-9

**Office Hours:**
You should not feel any hesitation to come see me to talk about the course material during my office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:35 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. in Humanities B16 office. You are also very welcome to approach me for a conversation after or before class if you have time.
Blackboard and SUNY E-mail inboxes

A few readings at the very beginning of the course will be placed Blackboard. Short homework assignments will also be posted on Blackboard in addition to being e-mailed to your “suny.edu” electronic mailboxes. Make sure you check blackboard regularly for course updates, changes in syllabus and other announcements as well as your SUNY e-mails.

Exams and Homework Assignments.

There are two in-class exams in this course. One mid-term and one final exam. In addition, there will be five short essay-type homework assignments. See the outline of the course for the exact dates for homework assignments and midterm and final exams. Short homework assignments will be in a form of a question requiring your response in a short essay format and will be e-mailed to you as well as posted on Blackboard. Make sure you check your SUNY e-mail and Blackboard regularly! Your answers will require a short, 2.5 – 3 page (no more than 3 pages) academic essay form answer. You will have to print out your answers, and hand them in (a hard copy) to your TA’s on the assigned date at the end of the lecture. Remember, it is a political theory course. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers. What is required is your own thinking, critical interpretation and close analysis of texts. You are required to demonstrate your own critical and analytical thinking. You will do well if these aspects will be reflected in your homework assignments.

**All written homework assignments should be typed up using Times New Roman, 12pt. size font, double spaced, pages numbered and stapled. Each assignment should have your first and last name, course title and number and professors name. You should copy and paste the actual question you will be engaging with before writing your answers. **

Exam Review Sessions

There will be two exam review sessions before each exam which will take place at the same time and place of the lecture. Do not count on exam reviews to pass your exams. You should be attending all lectures and discussion sections if you want to do well on exams. Discussion sections are important as they will allow you to analyze material more closely, discuss it with your TA's and fellow students, and clarify any questions you may have.

Teaching Assistants, Discussion Sections, Attendance

Teaching assistants, who will be assisting you and me throughout the course and will be leading discussion sections are: Nels Frantzen (E-mail: nfrantzen@albany.edu) and Zheng Whang (E-mail: zwang25@albany.edu) Nels and Zheng are experienced teacher assistants, graduate students both of whom are proficient in Western political theory and very well versed in topics, texts and arguments of thinkers we will be covering in the course. Teacher assistants are your best academic support and companions in this course. You should feel free to see them during their office hours, talk to them after class, or contact them by e-mail if you have questions. They will be happy to discuss course material with you as well as help you with any problems you may be having in this course.

Attendance in discussion sections together with active participation in them is essential to your success in the course. Attendance will be taken in every discussion section. Your attendance is part of the overall grade. Poor attendance of lectures and discussion sections will negatively affect your course grade. Additionally, the greater the quality and quantity of your participation, the more rewarding the class will be for everyone. Participation in discussion sections is the best place and time to bring questions about specific arguments or key terms and concepts you come across in the texts. You are strongly encouraged to participate in discussions by respectfully responding to your fellow students’ thoughts and opinions. Asking questions during the lecture or attending office hours with a TA or professor will also improve your overall course experience. Be an active participant in sections and lectures and not just a passive listener.

As a student enrolled in the course for credit, you are responsible for reading and familiarizing yourself with the material covered in both: lectures and discussion sections. If you miss a lecture of discussion section, you should
make arrangements with other students to share notes. If you have an excused absence, make sure you do assigned readings before you come to see me or your TA to discuss missed material.

**Missing more than 2 discussion sections repeated lateness, or arriving unprepared will lower your final grade by one letter grade. Missing more than 4 discussion section meetings will result in 2 letter grades lower on the final course grade. **

Plagiarism

Plagiarism means to pass off someone else’s work as your own. Please be warned that if found guilty of plagiarism, you will automatically fail the course and receive an E grade. Further actions will be taken, including sending your case before a university committee. Remember, taking text off internet sites such as Sparknotes, Wikipedia and others and "reworking them" will also earn you an E along with further disciplinary actions. The whole idea of this course is for you to engage in active, critical thinking of your own and to demonstrate that you worked with the texts, understood them and, based on understanding and knowledge acquired, are able to develop your own argumentation. Any attempt to plagiarize in this course will be taken very, very seriously by me and by TA’s.

Course grade breakdown

Midterm exam: 15%
Five short homework assignments: 10% each. (50% all together)
Final exam: 20%
Discussion sections (attendance and participation): 15%

Exams

Your ability to understand and critically analyze the course material will be assessed through a midterm and final examination. These are in-class, pen and paper only, “blue book” type of examination. Both exams will have questions requiring short and longer, essay type answers, ability to recognize authors of various quotes and some choice based answers.

**Make-up examinations, early examinations, or incomplete grades will be given only in the event of serious personal or family illness or other unusual circumstances approved by the dean of undergraduate studies. **

For more information on the University's Standards of Academic Integrity see:
http://www.albany.edu/health_center/medicalexceluse.shtml

Lectures

Lecture is a time for a professor to present the readings and unpack the arguments presented in texts at hand. However, I strongly value the benefits of a seminar type lectures. The form of intellectual dialogue is the most rewarding academic practice. I strongly encouraged you to participate in a dialogue about the material during the lecture. Feel free to interrupt me by raising your hand and asking questions. Feel free to respectfully respond to other students’ arguments and engage in a discussion.

Grade Appeals

In order to appeal a grade on a particular assignment, you should contact your TA or the professor during office hours within 2 weeks of receiving the assignment back and submit a written explanation of your reasons for believing that the grade should be changed, not to exceed 2 pages. A grade appeal may result in the grade being raised, or left as is, depending on the results of the review. After two weeks, grade complaints will not be considered unless there are mitigating circumstances like a serious illness.
What do I do if I am sick or need alternate arrangements to fulfill course requirements?
Any mitigating circumstances should be brought to the attention of the professor or a TA as soon as possible. Any foreseeable circumstances (athletic event, religious holidays, travel, etc…) must be raised at the beginning of the semester or as early as possible.

Excused Absences
If you must miss an exam or more than two normal classes, you must have documentation from the dean of undergraduate studies (Lecture Center 30 Phone: 518-442-3950) or your grade will be adversely affected. For more on University's Medical Excuse Policy see: http://www.albany.edu/health_center/medicalexcuse.shtml

Reasonable accommodation
Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with documented physical, sensory, systemic, cognitive, learning and psychiatric disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation in this class, please notify the Director of Disabled Student Services (Campus Center 137, 442-5490). That office will provide the course instructor with verification of your disability, and will recommend appropriate accommodations (http://www.albany.edu/studentlife/dss/Accommodation.html).

If you wish to discuss academic accommodations, for the above reasons or other cases including religious holidays, inform the instructor at the beginning of the term. Reasonable accommodations are generally established well in advance and rarely granted retroactively.

What can I do to succeed academically in this course?
The Basics: Show up, read, listen, take notes, ask questions
The most important factor for success is studying assigned readings, regular attendance of lectures and discussion sections and participation in the course in a form of paying attention, taking, participating in discussion.

Writing Center Services (Humanities 140)

Academic Support Services (Library Room 94)
Arrange individual and group tutorial as well as study skills workshops on time management, how to improve your concentration, essay exam skills, listening skills, and overcoming procrastination. Visit their website: http://www.albany.edu/oass/support_services.htm or contact them at 442-5180.

Course Outline
PART I

What is “Political Theory”? Polis and Theoria

1) Jan.23, Tuesday
- Introduction. Course and syllabus overview.
  ** Discussion Sections do not meet Friday, January 26th. **

2) Jan. 25, Thursday
What is Theoria?

3) Jan. 30, Tuesday
What is Polis?
- First short homework announced (E-mailed to you by the end of the day)
PLATO (427 BC – 347 BC)

Philosophy and Political Community

4) Feb. 1, Thursday
The beginnings of the just city
- First homework due (Hard copy submitted to your TA at the end of a lecture session)

5) Feb. 6, Tuesday
Rulers of the just city: the emergence of the guardians and justice as ordering of classes.
- Plato. The Republic. Book III. Pages 70 - 110

6) Feb. 8, Thursday
- Plato. The Republic. Book IV. Pages 111 - 143

7) Feb. 13, Tuesday
- Plato. The Republic. Book V. Pages 144 - 186

8) Feb. 15, Thursday
Political forms, the trajectory of decay, democracy and emergence of Tyranny
- Second homework announced (E-mailed to you by the end of the day)

ARISTOTLE (384 BC – 322 BC)

Citizen, Political Community and the Forms of the State

9) Feb. 20, Tuesday
What is the state and who are the citizens?
- Second homework due (Hard copy submitted to your TA at the end of a lecture session)

10) Feb. 22, Thursday
Political forms of the state. True and perverted

12) Feb. 27, Tuesday
Preservation of the form of political community. Revolutions and their causes
- Third homework announced (E-mailed to you by the end of the day)

NICCOLLO MACHIAVELLI (1469 – 1527)

Political Realism and Praxis of Governance

13) March 1, Thursday
- Third homework due (Hard copy submitted to your TA at the end of a lecture session)

14) March 6, Tuesday
- Niccolo Machiavelli, The Prince. Parts VI, VII, VIII, IX, XIII,

15) March 8, Thursday
- Niccolo Machiavelli, The Prince. Parts XIV, XV, XVII, XVIII, XIX, XXV.

- March 12 – March 18

*********** SPRING BREAK ***********
13) March 20, Tuesday
• Midterm Exam Review

14) March 22, Thursday
• Midterm Exam

THOMAS HOBBES (1588 – 1679)
Human Nature, Social Contract and the Basis of Political Society

15) March 27, Tuesday

16) March 29, Thursday
• Hobbes, Leviathan. Part II. Chapters 17, 18.

17) April 3, Tuesday
• Fourth homework announced (E-mailed to you by the end of the day)

JOHN LOCKE (1632 – 1704)
Social Contract, Government and Civil Society

18) April 5, Thursday

19) April 10, Tuesday
• Fourth homework due (Hard copy submitted to your TA at the end of a lecture session)

20) April 12, Thursday
• Fourth homework due (Hard copy submitted to your TA at the end of a lecture session)

21) April 17, Tuesday

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU (1712 – 1778)
Human Nature Reconsidered. General Will and Sovereign Political Community of Citizens

22) April 19, Thursday

23) April 24, Tuesday

24) April 26, Thursday
• Fifth homework announced (E-mailed to you by the end of the day)

24) May 1, Tuesday
• Fifth homework due (Hard copy submitted to your TA at the end of a lecture session)
25) May 3, Tuesday


26) May 8, Thursday

- Final Exam Review

  MAY 14

  Final Exam

Final exam will take place in the same lecture hall on MONDAY, MAY 14th between 10:30 and 12:30