

POLITICAL THEORY

Fall 2018

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Lecture: Tues, Thurs 5:30-6:20 JHE 376

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Course Description

This course is an introduction to the area of political science known as political philosophy or normative political theory. It is designed to provide a background for the various Level III and Level IV courses in political theory; it is also a required course for all honours Political Science students.

The course is roughly divided into three parts. In the first part, we will investigate the political-philosophical outlook of classical (Greek) thought by considering Plato's ideally just regime, Aristotle's materialist approach to political philosophy, and, more broadly, the relationship between politics and ethics in ancient political thought. The second section of the course examines the transition from the classical to the modern era, focusing on the shifting foundations of political authority in Machiavelli's "realist" political theory and in Hobbes' skepticist defense of political absolutism. The third part of the course, in Term II, follows this debate into the modern period with John Locke's social contractarianism, turns to the case for radical moral criticism and political transformation being made by Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Karl Marx, and concludes with Max Weber's arguments for modest 'realistic' alternatives.

Course Objectives

This course is designed to provide students with an understanding of a wide range of crucial concepts and themes in a number of leading political theories; to enhance students' ability to read carefully and critically complex theoretical texts; and to further develop the capacity to formulate both orally and in writing an understanding of the concepts and themes of these theories in a conceptually rigorous and systematic fashion

Required Materials and Texts

Fall Term

- Plato, Republic, trans. G.M.A. Grube (Hackett)
- Aristotle, The Politics, ed./trans. Ernest Barker (Oxford)
- Niccolo Machiavelli, The Prince, trans. Harvey Mansfield (Chicago)
- Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, ed. C.B. Macpherson (Penguin)

Winter Term

- John Locke. Second Treatise of Government (Hackett)
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Basic Political Writings (Hackett)
- Karl Marx, Selected Writings (Hackett)
- Max Weber, The Vocation Lectures (Hackett)

Class Format

There are two hours of lectures and one hour of tutorials each week. Students are expected to prepare for lectures and tutorials by carefully reading the assigned material. Although there is some time in the lecture periods to raise and discuss issues, the tutorials provide the main opportunity for this.

Course Evaluation – Overview

1. Fall term, two essay assignments – 25%, Wednesday, October 17 and Wednesday, November 21
2. Winter term, one essay assignment – 25%, due date TBD
3. Fall Term, tutorial participation – 10%
4. Winter Term, tutorial participation – 10%
5. Final Exam – 30%, April 2019

Course Evaluation – Details

Fall Essay Assignments (25%), due Wednesday, October 17 and Wednesday, November 21

Essay assignments (for Term I) are to be approximately 4-5 pages in length (approximately 1250-1500 words), typed, double-spaced, with proper margins and footnotes. Essays will be marked on grammar, clarity of writing, organization of argument, degree of understanding of the material, as well as rigorousness of the argument presented. The topics for the Term I essay assignments, along with detailed instructions regarding how to prepare and submit them, will be provided in an essay assignment hand-out sheet early in Term I. The essays are due by 5:00 pm on Wednesday Oct. 17 and Wednesday Nov. 21. The essay must be uploaded to the designated Dropbox folder on the course's Avenue website by those times and dates. The Term II assignment topics, relevant instructions regarding how to prepare and submit it, and its due date will be provided in a similar hand-out early in Term II.

Final Exam (30%), written April 2019

The final exam will cover the whole year's work and will be held during the normal examination period in April 2019.

Tutorial Participation (20%)

The tutorial participation grade will be gauged by consistent attendance, and by active and informed participation. Students will be expected to have completed the readings and be ready to discuss them. The tutorial aims to provide an opportunity for students to address the material in greater depth, clarify points of confusion, and explore ideas drawn from the texts. All of these things require not only your attendance, but your active engagement; students will be expected to make constructive contributions to the tutorial discussion.

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

Week 1 (September 4, 2018)

September 4 – Introduction: Politics in the ancient world

No readings

September 6 – Plato’s Republic: What is justice?

Readings: Republic, Book I-II.

Week 2 (September 11, 2018)

September 11 – Plato’s Republic: What is justice?

Readings: Republic, Book I-II.

September 13 – Plato’s Republic: Constructing the ideal city

Readings: Republic, Book III-IV.

Week 3 (September 18, 2018)

September 18 – Plato’s Republic: Constructing the ideal city

Readings: Republic, Book III-IV.

September 20 – Plato’s Republic: A question of knowledge

Readings: Book V-VI.

Week 4 (September 25, 2018)

September 25 – Plato’s Republic: A question of knowledge

Readings: Book V-VI.

September 27 – Plato’s Republic: The city/justice in thought

Readings: Republic, Book VII-VIII.

Week 5 (October 2, 2018)

October 2 – Plato’s Republic: The city/justice in thought

Readings: Republic, Book VII-VIII.

October 4 – Plato’s Republic: Justice and happiness

Readings: Plato’s Republic: Book IX.

Week 6 (October 8 – 12, 2018)

October 8 – 12, Reading Week

No readings assigned

Week 7 (October 16, 2018)

October 16 & 18 – Aristotle’s Politics: A political animal

Readings: Politics, Book 1, ch. 1-7, 12-13; Book II, ch. 1-5.

Notes: Assignment 1 due Wednesday, October 17, by 5 pm

Week 8 (October 23, 2018)

October 23 & 25 – Aristotle’s Politics: Citizens and constitutions

Readings: Politics, Book III, ch. 1-13, 16; Book IV, ch. 1, 11.

Week 9 (October 30, 2018)

October 30 – Aristotle’s Politics: What is the best life?

Readings: Politics, Book VII, ch. 1-3, 13-15; Book VIII, ch. 2-3.

November 1 – Machiavelli: Politics and morality

Readings: The Prince; Discourses on Livy, Book I, ch. 9-10 (available on Avenue).

Week 10 (November 6, 2018)

November 6 & 8 – Machiavelli: Politics and morality

Readings: The Prince; Discourses on Livy, Book I, ch. 9-10 (available on Avenue).

Week 11 (November 13, 2018)

November 13 & 15 – topic

Readings: Materialism and Human Nature: Reacting to a Nasty, Brutish World

Week 12 (November 20, 2018)

November 20 & 22 – From Natural Law to Conventional Morality: The Social Contract

Readings: Leviathan, Ch. 13-20.

Notes: Assignment 2 due Wednesday, Nov. 21, by 5 pm

Week 13 (November 27, 2018)

November 27 & 29 – The Life and Death of Commonwealths

Readings: Leviathan, Ch. 21, 26, 29.

Week 14 (December 4, 2018)

December 4 – Semester conclusion/review

Course Policies

Submission of Assignments

Essay assignments must be submitted electronically by uploading them to the course’s Dropbox folder on the Avenue website.

Grades

The final grade will be calculated in percentage terms and converted to a letter grade using the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the due date without an extension granted by the instructor prior to the due date will be penalized 3% per day (including Saturdays and Sundays).

Absences, Missed Work, Illness

Extensions for submitting an assignment will only be granted for medical reasons or on grounds of a disability. In order to obtain an extension, you must submit a request in writing to the instructor prior to the due date and be prepared to submit supporting evidence for the extension to your Faculty/Program Office. Please note, however, that it is only the instructor, not your Faculty/Program Office who has the authority to grant an extension of the due date.

Avenue to Learn

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Turnitin.com

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal plagiarism. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically to Turnitin.com and in hard copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work to Turnitin.com must still submit a copy to the instructor. No penalty

will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, etc.). For more information please refer to the [Turnitin.com Policy](#).

University Policies

Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behavior in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behavior can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University's Policy for [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#).

Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster

account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Course Modification

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.