

POLITICAL THEORY
POLSCI 2006A
Fall 2022, Term 1

Preliminary - subject to change

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Contents

Course Description.....	3
Course Objectives.....	3
Required Materials and Texts	3
Term 1	3
Term 2	4
Class Format.....	4
Course Evaluation – Overview	4
Course Evaluation – Details	4
First Semester Papers (10% and 15%), due Oct. 16 and Dec. 11.....	4
Cumulative Final Exam (30%), exam period April 2023.....	4
Tutorial Participation (20%; 10% per semester)	5
Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings	5
Week 1 (Sept. 7-9) Introduction: Politics in the ancient world.....	5
Week 2 (Sept. 14; NO CLASS SEPT. 16) Plato: What is justice?	5
Week 3 (Sept. 21-23) Plato: Constructing the ideal city.....	5
Week 4 (Sept. 28; NO CLASS SEPT. 30) Plato: A question of knowledge	5
Week 5 (Oct. 5-7) Plato: The city/justice in thought.....	5
Week 6 (Oct. 12-14) NO CLASS – MID-TERM RECESS	5
Week 7 (Oct. 19-21) Aristotle: A political animal.....	5
Week 8 (Oct. 26-28) Aristotle: Citizens and constitutions	5
Week 9 (Nov. 2-4) Machiavelli: Politics in the real world	5
Week 10 (Nov. 9-11) Machiavelli: Princes and peoples.....	5
Week 11 (Nov. 16-18) Hobbes: Materialism and human nature	6

Week 12 (Nov. 23-25) Hobbes: From natural law to social contract.....	6
Week 13 (Nov. 30-Dec. 2) Hobbes: The life and death of commonwealths.....	6
Week 14 (Dec. 7) Conclusion and review.....	6
Course Policies	7
Submission of Assignments.....	7
Grades.....	7
Late Assignments	7
Absences, Missed Work, Illness	7
Courses With an On-Line Element	7
Online Proctoring.....	8
Authenticity / Plagiarism Detection	8
Copyright and Recording	8
Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)	8
Academic Integrity Statement.....	9
Conduct Expectations.....	9
Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities.....	9
Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy	10
Course Modification.....	10
Extreme Circumstances.....	10

Course Description

This course is an introduction to western political theory, which investigates the concepts and values employed throughout the rest of political science – their origins and implications, advantages and disadvantages, and how to use and think about them critically. 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 investigate the political-philosophical outlook of classical (Greek) thought by considering Plato's ideal approach to politics, Aristotle's naturalist approach, 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 Hobbes' skeptical defense of political absolutism. The third part of the course, in the second semester, turns to political thinkers who respond to the distinctive challenges of modernity. We will consider the development of the liberal-democratic model and some of its radical critics and challengers, as well as the social, moral, and political problems that arise in societies in a period of rapid and unprecedented change.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- carefully and critically read complex theoretical texts
- understand a key concepts and themes from major texts and arguments from across the history of western political thought
- summarize these ideas clearly and concisely
- formulate both orally and in writing an understanding of these concepts and themes in a conceptually rigorous and systematic fashion
- interpret and discuss the implications of these ideas and concepts
- recognize cogent arguments, formulate theses, and support arguments with textual evidence
- compare and contrast the ideas of different thinkers, recognize their underlying assumptions, and comparatively evaluate them

Required Materials and Texts

Term 1

- Plato, *Republic*, trans. G.M.A. Grube (Hackett)
- Aristotle, *The Politics*, ed./trans. Ernest Barker (Oxford)
- Niccoló Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. David Wootton (Hackett)
- Thomas Hobbes, *The Essential Leviathan*, ed. Stanlick & Collette (Hackett)

Term 2

- John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* (Broadview)
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Basic Political Writings* (Broadview)
- Karl Marx, *Selected Writings* (Hackett)
- John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (Penguin)

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.

This course has been designed as an in-person class, and regular in-person attendance is expected. However, at the discretion of the instructor and in accordance with the University and provincial authorities, online elements may be introduced through the course of the semester. Any changes to the format of the course will be announced as far in advance as possible in person, by email, and via the course A2L page. Attendance and participation expectations will remain the same however the course is delivered.

Course Evaluation – Overview

1. First Semester Papers – first paper 10%, second paper 15%.
2. Second Semester Paper – outline 5%, third paper 20%.
3. Cumulative Final Exam – 30%.
4. Tutorial Participation – 20% (10% per semester).

Course Evaluation – Details

First Semester Papers (10% and 15%), due Oct. 16 and Dec. 11

Over the course of the year, you will write three papers. The first semester essays assignments are to be approximately 4-5 pages in length (1250-1500 words), double-spaced, with standard margins and footnotes. They will be graded on grammar, clarity of writing, organization of the argument, understanding of the material, and rigor of the argument. Term I essay topics, along with detailed instructions, will be provided at least three weeks ahead of the deadline. **Essays are due by the end of Sunday Oct. 16 and the end of Sunday Dec. 11. The essays must be uploaded to the designated Assignment folder on the course's A2L website by those times and dates.**

Cumulative Final Exam (30%), exam period April 2023

The final exam will cover the whole year's work and will be held online or in person, depending on circumstances, during the normal examination period in April 2023.

Tutorial Participation (20%; 10% per semester)

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

Term II topics, instructions, and due dates will be provided in Term II.

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

Week 1 (Sept. 7-9) Introduction: Politics in the ancient world

Reading: *Republic*, Book I.

Week 2 (Sept. 14; NO CLASS SEPT. 16) Plato: What is justice?

Reading: *Republic*, Books II-III.

Note: Tutorials begin Sept. 15.

Week 3 (Sept. 21-23) Plato: Constructing the ideal city

Reading: *Republic*, Books IV-V.

Week 4 (Sept. 28; NO CLASS SEPT. 30) Plato: A question of knowledge

Reading: *Republic*, Books VI-VII.

Week 5 (Oct. 5-7) Plato: The city/justice in thought

Reading: *Republic*, Books VIII-IX.

Week 6 (Oct. 12-14) NO CLASS – MID-TERM RECESS

Note: First essay due Sunday, Oct. 16.

Week 7 (Oct. 19-21) Aristotle: A political animal

Reading: *Politics*, Book I, chs. 1-7, 12-13; Book II, chs. 1-5.

Week 8 (Oct. 26-28) Aristotle: Citizens and constitutions

Reading: *Politics*, Book III, chs. 1-13, 16; Book IV, chs. 1, 11.

Week 9 (Nov. 2-4) Machiavelli: Politics in the real world

Reading: *The Prince*, Letter, Intro., chs. 1-13.

Week 10 (Nov. 9-11) Machiavelli: Princes and peoples

Reading: *The Prince*, chs. 14-23; *Discourses on Livy*, Book I, Letter, chs. 2-5.

Week 11 (Nov. 16-18) Hobbes: Materialism and human nature

Reading: *Leviathan*, Introduction-ch. 12.

Week 12 (Nov. 23-25) Hobbes: From natural law to social contract

Reading: *Leviathan*, chs. 13-20.

Week 13 (Nov. 30-Dec. 2) Hobbes: The life and death of commonwealths

Reading: *Leviathan*, chs. 21, 26, 29.

Week 14 (Dec. 7) Conclusion and review

No reading

Notes: Second essay due Dec. 11; tutorials end Dec. 8.

Course Policies

Submission of Assignments

Essay assignments must be submitted electronically by uploading them to the relevant Dropbox folder on the course's A2L website.

Grades

Grades will be based on 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

McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF): In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar "Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work".

Courses With an On-Line Element

Some courses may use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, 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 a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Online Proctoring

Some courses may use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the test/exam begins.

Authenticity / Plagiarism Detection

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software.

All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster's use of Turnitin.com please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

Copyright and Recording

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the [RISO](#) policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office **normally within 10 working days** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. **It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.**

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 behaviour 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. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/), located at <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- improper collaboration in group work.
- copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Conduct Expectations

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the “Code”). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online.**

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students’ access to these platforms

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or sas@mcmaster.ca to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University’s [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

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.

Extreme Circumstances

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.