

POLI 2060: Introduction to Political Theory
M W F 9:30 – 10:20
Audubon Hall: 104
Spring 2020

Instructor: Thomas Cloud
Stubbs 217: email: tcloud4@lsu.edu

Office Hours: Monday 12:30 – 1:30, Thursday 3 – 4, and by appointment. Office hours will be held via Zoom.

Introduction:

This course could just as easily be called “Intro to Critical Reading.” Critical reading is a skill like any other. It requires dedication and good practice. I say “good” practice because you need to practice the right way in order to master it. I will coach you in this. Practicing right is important. Like any other skill, it will be awkward or difficult in the beginning. Do not let that discourage you. Whenever you hear someone say something is “second nature” to them, remember that it is “second” nature and that they were not born with that skill. At the end of the semester you will have a new skill you can continue to hone and to use for the rest of your life.

Specific to our course, it is important to know that authors at the highest level choose every word with utmost care. Very important information can be “hidden” in plain sight or buried in a footnote. Most of the authors we will read lived before free speech was a normal legal protection and had to fear being punished for what they wrote. Even those who wrote when free speech became common still wrote with care (and still write with care today).

Purpose:

The purpose of this course is to explore what politics is in order to gain more clarity on what politics should aim at. Great minds have wrestled with these questions for thousands of years. It is no wonder why. Even if we struggle to answer these questions we have to act as if we have answers. How we answer these two questions, in our words and our actions, touches every aspect of our own lives and the lives of all who come after us.

Throughout the semester we will meet some fascinating, subtle, and sometimes troubling figures each with their own explanations of what politics is and the way of life it demands. Often these figures will disagree with each other (and you with them!). With every disagreement ask “Why?” because your answer matters.

Course requirements:

- Class participation in class discussion [10%]
- Reading Reflections and Questions [10%]
- Quizzes [20%]
- Two in-class midterms. (October 2, November 6) [40%]
- Final [20%]

Class Participation:

Learning is best when done in community. My hope and goal is to open the world of political theory for your exploration. On the way you will find that part of the joy of exploring is sharing your discoveries and frustrations with your classmates. Perhaps you may discover a shared interest. Perhaps you will disagree and challenge each other's interpretation. Both will help you learn. Politics deals with the greatest moral matters. Every single one of us finds it interesting on some level and has something to say on it.

Reading Reflections and Questions:

Starting with the second day of class (August 26) students are expected to submit questions and reflections on the day's reading prior to every class. I grade questions on a point scale of 0 to 3. Reading reflections are a way for me to keep track of how students are reading a text. They also create a more interesting course and allow every student to have his or her say. I do not need more than a paragraph. Please give the page numbers for any citations or quotes.

These reading reflections are crucial to your success. They are designed to help build your learning scaffold upon which you can hang your knowledge. A musician has to practice playing music. A critical reader has to practice critical reading.

I will provide some sample reading reflections on Moodle to help clarify my expectations. At the outset though, I want to see effort. Effort is more important than being "right" in your reflections. If I think the student did not make enough effort or clearly did not read the assignment the student will not earn full credit.

The reading reflections and questions are found on Moodle.

Quizzes with Cumulative Questions:

Quizzes start on the second week of class and are noted in the calendar. Starting with the second quiz students may expect to see (but may not necessarily get) some questions from previous quizzes. For example quiz 4 will have new questions and

could have questions from quizzes 1 through 3. Like math, we never really “leave” a section but instead build upon it.

Policy on laptops, iPad, smartphone, etc.:

Given the odd circumstances of this semester, I will allow electronic devices. These devices must be used for classroom purposes however.

Required Paper Notebook:

A notebook for notetaking is required. Notes are not required but strongly urged. We will use the notebooks for other in class activities aside from notetaking. My policy for taking notes is that you listen while I speak and then take notes when I give you an extended pause.

Required Flashcards:

Bring a set of flashcards to class. I will set aside one to two minutes each class for writing a flashcard. We will not use these flashcards in class. These are for your personal use. You must write a flashcard each class.

Midterms:

I will give two take home midterms (October 2 and November 6). As we get closer I will decide on the exact format of both but students can expect an essay portion.

Final:

The final will be a take home final. Students will write an essay between 1400 and 1500 words in length. **The essays will be due on Wednesday, December 9th at 5 pm.** As this is the date set by the registrar it is also the latest possible date the essays can be turned in. The instructor will send out prompts to the students the Monday following Thanksgiving break. Students will receive further guidance at that time about the essays.

Grading scale:

A+ (98%-100%), A (93%-97%), A- (90%-92%)
B+ (88%-90%), B (83%-87%), B- (80%-82%)
C+ (78%-80%), C (73%-77%), C- (70%-72%)
D+ (68%-70%), D (63%-67%), D- (60%-62%)
F (below 60%)

University Policies:

[Attendance](#), [Integrity](#), and [Access](#)

University education is a great privilege, offered to all with the ability and the willingness to learn, without obstacles based on race, sex, or other aspects of personal identity. Students would be foolish to squander their opportunity by unexcused absence from class or by academic dishonesty. Please consult linked LSU policies.

I will emphasize that plagiarism is a serious violation of academic integrity and will not be tolerated. Students should familiarize themselves LSU's plagiarism policies.

University Statement on Integrated Learning:

Integrated learning allows students to make simple connections among ideas and experiences and across disciplines and perspectives. The LSU Integrative Learning Core (ILC) curriculum is designed to develop student abilities to transfer their learning to new situations, and demonstrate a sense of self as a learner. A fundamental goal of the ILC is to foster students' practical and intellectual capacities associated with integrative learning in preparation for high competence and functionality in their post-baccalaureate careers. This course fulfills the BOR Area of *Social/Behavioral Sciences* and provides students experience with the ILC proficiency of *Inquiry and Analysis*.

COVID Guidelines and Precautions:

COVID-19 Statement We remain under pandemic conditions and expect to be in this state for the entire semester. In order to consistently provide the highest quality LSU education, all students should follow current LSU guidelines. These include the following:

1. If you have any signs of illness, do not come to class.
2. In order to protect all campus community members, the University requires everyone to wear facemasks/cloths on campus. Failure to do so is a violation of the code of student conduct.
3. Wash hands with soap and water or clean with sanitizer frequently, and refrain from touching your face.
4. If you have to cough or sneeze unexpectedly, please be mindful of others nearby and cough or sneeze into your elbow or shield yourself the best you can.

5. If you have been exposed to others who have tested positive for COVID-19, self-quarantine consistent with current CDC guidelines.

Precautions Specific to our class:

- Students may choose to stay home and stream the course via Zoom. I urge any students who feel sick or are otherwise concerned about attending class in person to stay home and stream the course. I will monitor the Zoom participants during the lecture.
- Students are required to wipe down their desks at the beginning and end of each class. The classroom is provided with cleaning supplies as well as hand sanitizer. Students are of course welcome to bring their own hand sanitizer.
- The seat you choose for the first day is where you should plan to sit for the rest of the semester. This university recommendation is inspired by health precautions but in general it is better to sit in the same seat. Research seems to show learning retention is improved when you have a sense of ownership over your space.

Daily Symptom Checker:

You are required to respond to a daily symptom check request sent via email or text message each morning. Completing the symptom checker will take approximately one to two minutes. Once you have provided information about your symptoms, you will be given feedback on whether or not you are certified to return to campus and attend your classes. Additionally, if you test positive for COVID-19, you are required to report it in your daily symptom checker application.

Resources for Students:

Your health and safety are LSU's top priority. If you are feeling ill or overwhelmed with anxiety, please contact the [LSU Student Health Center](#) for medical advice and mental health support. General health care and mental health support are available for all enrolled students through telehealth appointments.

Required Books:

Students should always bring the text we are discussing to class.

A Student's Guide to Political Philosophy by Harvey C. Mansfield ISI ISBN:978-1882926435

The Prince by Niccolo Machiavelli translated by Harvey C. Mansfield, second edition ISBN: 978-0226500447

Four Texts on Socrates translated by Thomas G. West and Grace Starry West ISBN: 978-0801485749

Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics Oxford World Classics translated by Sir David Ross & Lesley Brown ISBN: 978-0199213610

Leviathan by Thomas Hobbes, Hackett edition ISBN: 978-0872201774

Gentlemen Prefer Blondes by Anita Loos Penguin 20th Century Classics ISBN: 978-0141180694

Recommended: *The Federalist Papers*, Signet Classics edited by Charles Kessler ISBN: 978-0451528810

Readings on Moodle:

Throughout the course (and especially in the second half) I will post readings on Moodle. I encourage students to print them if possible and to bring them to class on the day they are assigned.

Research demonstrates that reading retention is in general higher when reading from paper than from a screen. I encourage students to print the Moodle readings if possible and take notes directly on the printouts.

Course Calendar:

Intro to Political Philosophy

Friday August 28 – *A Student's Guide to Political Philosophy* by Harvey C. Mansfield (pp. 1-54)

Machiavelli: Politics as we know it?

Monday August 31 – Practice Quiz and Dedicatory Letter and Chapters 1 to 3 of *The Prince* translated by Harvey C. Mansfield second edition.

Wednesday September 2 – Chapters 4 to 7 of *The Prince*

Friday September 4 – Quiz 1 Chapters 8 to 11 of *The Prince*

Monday September 7 – **Labor Day. No Class**

Wednesday September 9 – Chapters 12 to 14 of *The Prince*

Friday September 11 – Quiz 2 Chapters 15 to 19 of *The Prince*

Monday September 14 – and Chapters 20 to 23 of *The Prince*

Wednesday September 16 – Chapters 24 to 26 of *The Prince* and Letter to Vettori

Friday September 18 – Quiz 3 Selections from *Discourses on Livy* (Moodle)

Monday September 21 – Tocqueville Letter to Kergolay, Constant “Liberty of the Ancients compared with that of the Moderns.” Moodle

Return to the Ancients

Wednesday September 23 – Leo Strauss “Classical Political Philosophy” Moodle

Friday September 25 – Quiz 4 *The Clouds* by Aristophanes (*Four Texts* pp.

115-148) Monday September 28 – and *The Clouds* (*Four Texts* pp. 149-176)

Wednesday September 30 – *Apology of Socrates* (*Four Texts* pp. 63-78)

Friday October 2 – Quiz 5 *Apology of Socrates* (*Four Texts* pp. 79-97)

Monday October 5 – **Midterm 1**

Wednesday October 7 – *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* by Anita Loos

Friday October 9 – Quiz 6 Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 1

Monday October 12 – Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 2

Wednesday October 14 – Ethics Book 3

Friday October 16 – Quiz 7 Ethics Book 4

Monday October 19 – Ethics Book 5

Wednesday October 21 – Ethics Book 6

Friday October 23 – Quiz 8 Ethics Book 7

Monday October 26 – Ethics Book 8

Wednesday October 28 – Ethics Book 9

Friday October 30 – Quiz 9 Ethics Book 10

Modernity, America, and Progress

Monday November 2 – Thomas Hobbes *Leviathan*

- Introduction (pp. 3-5)
- Ch. 1 (pp. 6-7)
- Ch. 2 ¶¶1-2, 7-10 (pp.7-8, 10-11)
- Ch. 6 ¶¶6-7 (pp.28-29)
- Ch. 8 ¶¶14-16 (pp. 40-41)
- Ch. 11 ¶¶1-5, 19-27 (pp. 57-58, 61-63)
- Ch. 13 (pp. 74-78)

Wednesday November 4 – Hobbes

- Ch. 14 ¶¶ 1-8, 18-19 (pp. 79-82, 84-85)
- Ch. 15 ¶¶ 1-8, 21-22 (pp. 89-93, 96-97)
- Ch. 17 (pp. 106-110)
- Ch. 18 ¶¶ 1-9, 20 (pp. 110-14, 117-118)
- Ch. 19 ¶¶1-12 (pp. 118-24)

Friday November 6 – Quiz 10 Hobbes

- Ch. 20 ¶¶ 1-2, 10-11, 18-19 (pp. 127-28, 130-31, 135)
- Ch. 21 (pp. 136-145)

- Ch. 26 ¶¶ 1-9, 13, 23-24 (pp.172-175, 177, 181-182)
- Ch. 27 ¶¶ 1-8 (pp.190-192)
- Ch. 29 ¶¶ 6-16 (212-217)

Monday November 9 – **Midterm 2**

Wednesday November 11 – G.K. Chesterton “What is America?” Moodle

Friday November 13 – Quiz 11 Declaration of Independence, John Jay “Letter on Manumission of Slaves.” Moodle

Monday November 16 – Selections from the Federalists Moodle

Wednesday November 18 – Selections from Calhoun and Lincoln Moodle

Friday November 20 – Quiz 12 “The Study of Administration” by Woodrow Wilson. Moodle

Monday November 23 – Condorcet “Progress” Moodle

Wednesday November 25 – No Class Thanksgiving Break. Students are to return home for the rest of the semester.

Friday November 27 – No Class

Monday November 30 – “Idea for a Universal History” by Immanuel Kant, Moodle

Wednesday December 2 – TBA, Moodle

Friday December 4 – Quiz 13 and TBA, Moodle

Wednesday December 9 – Take home essay due at 5 pm.

(The instructor reserves the right to change any portion of this syllabus during the course)