

POT 20202: Introduction to Political Theory

Instructor: Glen Billesbach

Email: gbillesbach@ufl.edu

Meeting Times: M, T, W, TH, F (12:30- 1:45 PM)

Classroom: [Anderson Hall 0134](#)

Office Hours: T & TH, 2-3 PM / By Appointment

Office: Anderson Hall 10 / ufl.zoom.us/j/3337403662

Epigraphs:

“Tiger got to hunt, bird got to fly; Man got to sit and wonder 'why, why, why?' Tiger got to sleep, bird got to land; Man got to tell himself he understand.” -Kurt Vonnegut

“What I propose, therefore, is very simple: it is nothing more than to think what we are doing.” -Hannah Arendt

“As writers, what we do is remember. And to remember this world is to create it. The writer’s responsibility (whatever his or her time) is to change the world—improve his/her own time.” -Toni Morrison

“These philosophical investigations thus stand in a reciprocal relation to the present, as a kind of permanent critique of the relations of meaning, power, and subjectivity in which we think and act politically and the practices of freedom of thought and action by which we try to test and improve them.” -James Tully

Description and Goals:

This course aims to familiarize students with six thinkers who are recognized as foundational to the development of political theory. It is not intended to be exhaustive in its scope, but each author we read has been central to the traditions that continue to exert a profound impact on contemporary Western political theory and practice. Ideologies to be discussed include (but are not limited to): absolutism, liberalism, democracy, conservatism, feminism, and black political thought. We will also discuss competing conceptions of statecraft, freedom, revolution, history, equality, and education. The topics presented and questioned in this course constitute, in part, the political, cultural, economic, and social situations that we exist within right now—that is, they help determine how we experience and understand our everyday lives. Thus, our broader goal in this course is to come to grips with, at least in some small measure, how we have become what we are and to think critically about the ways theoretical texts might inform our approach to political life today.

Modules and required books in the order you will need them (please purchase physical copies of specific editions listed):

1. Plato- Republic (Translated by C.D.C Reeve); Publisher: Hackett; ISBN: 9780872207363
2. Locke- Second Treatise of Government (Edited by C.B. McPherson); Publisher: Hackett; ISBN: 0915144867
3. Rousseau- The Social Contract and Discourses (Translated by G.D.H. Cole); Publisher: Everyman; ISBN: 9780679423027
4. Burke- The Portable Edmund Burke (Edited by Kramnick); Publisher: Penguin; ISBN: 0140267603
5. Wollstonecraft- A Vindication of the Rights of Woman; Publisher: Oxford; ISBN: 9780199555468
6. Du Bois- The Souls of Black Folk; Publisher: Dover; ISBN: 9780486280417

Assessments, percent of grade, brief description (details for each can be found on Canvas):

Attendance and Participation (20%)- As of now, this course is entirely face-to-face. As such, attendance will be recorded each class and will be assessed out of 10 points at the midway point and end of the semester. Unexcused absences result in the deduction of half a point. Participation will be assessed via letter grade at the midway point and end of the semester. Rubric and details will be provided.

Worksheets (40%)- Students will be required to complete a one-page worksheet each week. To complete the worksheets, reading is required. Students are expected to come to lecture (bolded days) having read the assigned pages. On average, required reading is 32 pages a day. Worksheets function as a guide for the readings and a prelude for discussions. They are due Thursdays at 11:59 PM.

Essay 1: (15%)- Students will be required to write 1,500 words on topics covered in module 1. Questions/rubric will be provided.

Essay 2: (25%)- Students will be required to write 2,000 words on topics covered in module 2. Questions/rubric will be provided.

Reading Schedule-

Module 1. We Hold These Truths... Philosopher Kings and Natural Law

June 27 (M)- Introduction to the Art and Craft of Political Theory

June 28 (TU)- **Plato:** *Book I* {all} (1-36)

June 29 (W)- **Plato:** *Book II* {367d- 376d}, *Book III* {from 412a}, *Book IV* {up to 434d} (45-56, 96-102, 103-121)

June 30 (TH)- **Plato:** *Book V* {from 471c}, *Book VII* {up to 521b}, *Book VIII* {from 555b} (164-175, 208-215, 251-269)

July 1 (F)- Discussion

July 4 (M)- No Class, Independence Day

July 5 (TU)- **Locke:** *Two Treatises of Government* (5-30)

July 6 (W)- **Locke:** *Two Treatises of Government* (30- 68)

July 7 (TH)- **Locke:** *Two Treatises of Government* (68-90, 100-106, 107-113,123-124)

July 8 (F)- Discussion

Module 2. Reflections on Revolution... Democracy, Conservatism, and Feminism

July 11 (M)- **Rousseau:** *Discourses on Inequality – Preface, Part I* (43-83)

July 12 (TU)- **Rousseau:** *Discourses on Inequality - Part II, Appendix* (84-125)

July 13 (W)- **Rousseau:** *The Social Contract- Book I, Book II, Book III* (181-182, 190-198, 199-212, 212-218, 225-226, 227-237)

July 14 (TH)- **Rousseau:** *The Social Contract- Book III, Book IV* (261-270, 271-277, 295-306)

July 15 (F)- Discussion

July 18 (M)- **Burke:** *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (417-446)

July 19 (TU)- **Burke:** *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (446-474)

July 20 (W)- **Burke:** *Inquiry into the Sublime and the Beautiful, An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs* (63-81, 489-499)

July 21 (TH)- **Burke:** *Letter to Member of National Assembly, On Regicide Peace, Details on Scarcity* (507-516, 517-530, 195-203)

July 22 (F)- Discussion

July 25 (M)- **Wollstonecraft:** *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (5-14, 29-33, 37-47, 50-62)

July 26 (TU)- **Wollstonecraft:** *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (65-68, 71-83, 84-96, 119-126, 130- 133)

July 27 (W)- **Wollstonecraft:** *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (144-150, 191-197, 221-231, 258-265, 280-283)

July 28 (TH)- **Wollstonecraft:** *An Historical & Moral View of the French Revolution* (287-301, 313-319, 320-328, 365-371)

July 29 (F)- Discussion

Module 3. Statecraft as Soulcraft... Reconstruction and Emancipation

August 1 (M)- **Du Bois:** *Forethought, Of Our Spiritual Strivings, Of the Dawn of Freedom* (v-vi, 1-24)

August 2 (TU)- **Du Bois:** *Of Mr. Booker T Washington, Of the Meaning of Progress, Of the Training of Black Men*, (25-45, 55-67)

August 3 (W)- **Du Bois:** *Of the Sons of Master and Man, Of the Faith of the Fathers* (99-131)

August 4 (TH)- **Du Bois:** *Passing of the First-Born, Alexander Crummell, The Coming of John, Sorrow Songs* (133-165)

August 5 (F)- Discussion

University and departmental policies:

The course is out of 100 total points, and the Grading Scale is as follows: 94-100 (A); 90-93 (A-); 87-89 (B+); 83-86 (B); 80-82 (B-); 77-79 (C+); 73-76 (C); 70-72 (C-); 67-69 (D+); 63-66 (D); 60-62 (D-); 0-59 (E; failing). The highest grade a late assignment can receive in the absence of a legitimate excuse is a “C+.” An example of a legitimate excuse would be an illness for which you have a signed doctor’s note. Please be aware: a “C+” is not the lowest grade a late assignment can receive; it is the highest (i.e., it is the ceiling, not the floor). Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies- [Attendance Policies < University of Florida \(ufl.edu\)](#)

Academic Integrity Policy: All students are required to abide by the University of Florida’s Academic Honesty Guidelines. UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code.” On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conducthonor-code>) specifies several behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor in this class. Among other things, this policy means that cheating on exams is totally unacceptable, as is plagiarism. Plagiarism is the act of portraying as your own the words or ideas of other people. Examples include submitting entire papers, or portions of papers, that you did not write (e.g., old papers written by other students, new papers written by other students, papers which you paid a “research” service to write for you, papers or portions of papers downloaded from the Internet).

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Students who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center. [Click here to get started with the Disability Resource Center.](#) It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs as early as possible.

Course Evaluation Process: Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. [Click here for guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner.](#) Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in the Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via ufl.bluera.com/ufl/.

Counseling and Wellness Center contact information: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, 352-392-1575

Class Demeanor: Students are expected to arrive to class on time and behave in a manner that is respectful to the instructor and to fellow students. Opinions held by other students should be respected in discussion. Phones should be turned off prior to class. Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor. A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session. Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third-party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code. If students have concerns about classroom issues, disagreements or grades, their first point of contact is the classroom instructor whose contact information appears on the syllabus. If the problem cannot be resolved, the student should email the next departmental contact: Michael Martinez. That email should include a clear description of the student’s concern. Most concerns are resolved at this level. If a resolution cannot be reached at the departmental level, the student will be referred to the Office of the UF Ombuds. People learn best when they are encouraged to ask questions and express their diverse opinions on course content, which may include images, texts, data, and theories from across the disciplines. This is especially true in courses that deal with provocative or contemporary issues. UF offers many such courses, in which students encounter concepts of race, color, sex, and/or national origin. We teach these important issues because understanding them is essential for anyone who seeks to make economic, cultural, and societal contributions to today’s complex world. With this in mind, we do not limit access to, or classroom discussion of, facts, ideas, and opinions—including those that some may find uncomfortable, unwelcome, disagreeable, or even offensive. In response to challenging material, students and instructors are encouraged to ask honest questions and thoughtfully engage one another’s ideas. But hostility, disruptive and disrespectful behavior, and provocation for provocation’s sake have no place in a classroom; reasonable people disagree reasonably. These guidelines can help instructors and students as they work together to fulfill the mission of the University of Florida, which includes the exploration of intellectual boundaries, the creation of new knowledge and the pursuit of new ideas.