

## POT 2002: Introduction to Political Theory (Summer 2024)

Instructor: Yuanxin Wang  
Meeting Times: M, T, W, R, F 6 (3:30PM-4:45PM)  
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Classroom: Anderson 0134  
OH: T & R 5-6PM, [By Appointment](#)

### Course Description

This course introduces students to political theory as a distinct field of political inquiry. By surveying key thinkers and texts in the history of Western political thought, we will ask the following questions: What is politics, and what should it be? Who is involved in politics, and how should one live under political conditions? What is the nature of freedom, equality, democracy, power, and citizenship? Our approach will be mainly historical and conceptual. We will investigate how past political thinkers constructed theories of politics in their respective historical contexts, while attending to the contemporary relevance of these theoretical interventions reflectively.

This course qualifies for [UF's Humanities \(H\) Gen Ed requirement](#). It provides instruction in the history, key themes, principles, and terminology in the study of political theory. It emphasizes clear and effective analysis and approaches issues and problems from multiple perspectives. No lesson is intended to espouse, promote, advance, inculcate, or compel a particular feeling, perception, viewpoint or belief.

### Course Objectives

Students are expected to understand key concepts, ideas, and themes in the development of Western political tradition. By the end of the course, they will be able to analyze the internal logic of each political thinker's theoretical project in particular historical contexts as well as their practical significance in understanding contemporary social and political phenomena. Moreover, students are expected to develop a reflexive perspective on the reading material. They will be encouraged to think critically and differently, and to construct their own arguments logically and persuasively.

### Course Requirements

#### 1. Attendance and participation (15%; 5%, 10%)

Attendance (5%) in this course is expected. Role will be taken at the beginning of each class meeting. Excused absences must be consistent with university policies and require appropriate documentation. Additional information can be found [here](#). Students who miss more than 30% of the class (9 class meetings) will not be able to complete/pass the course.

Active in-class participation (10%) is essential to your achievement in this course. When you come to class, you should come prepared to discuss the material that has been assigned for that class. This means that you are expected to do the reading to be covered during a given class in advance and bring your personal insights to an open and fruitful discussion.

#### 2. Weekly reflections (30%; 5% each)

In addition to participating during class, you are required to prepare a short reflection (6 in total) for each Friday class meeting which is based on a seminar format. The reflection paper should be based on the week's reading and highlight some passages/arguments/ideas that you

find important and/or unclear. Each reflection paper should consist of three components: (i) passage(s) from the reading (with page number, if available) that have drawn your attention; (ii) a brief explanation of how certain arguments/concepts/assumptions in this passage are puzzling (no more than 100 words); (iii) your interpretation of the passage and tentative response to the puzzle (300-400 words). Please note that this is the most important element of the weekly reflection, which requires your own labor of interpretation to unpack the selected passage(s) and, sometimes, cross-reference to other passages and/or authors.

These weekly reflections must be turned in (as a PDF or as a Microsoft Word document) via Canvas **by 8PM on Thursday** of each week. Given the timely nature of this assignment, no late submission or retrospective make-up will be accepted. If you foresee a genuine emergency or conflict, get in touch with the instructor as soon as possible to discuss appropriate accommodation.

3. Essays (40%; 20% each)

You are required to write 2 longer essays (1500-1800 words) on topics covered by the course. The essays must remain grounded in the details of the texts and examine their broader theoretical import. Prompts and rubric will be provided in advance.

The first essay must be turned in by **July 21**, and the second essay by **August 10**. The highest grade for a late essay in the absence of a legitimate excuse is C+. 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).

4. In-Class Presentation (15%)

Each group is expected to give a thematic presentation at the beginning of the Friday seminar. The presentation should have three components: (i) a synopsis of required reading for the week; (ii) one empirical case (e.g. recent or historical events, novels, dramas, movies, music) that is related to that week’s general topic and/or arguments in any particular readings; (iii) well-articulated questions for class discussion (which can be based upon weekly reflections of group members). You will have 15-20 minutes to present before holding a Q&A session. At 20 minutes, your group will be asked to stop the presentation regardless of your progress.

Your presentation grade breaks down into three parts: (i) the overall performance of the group (5%); (ii) your individual performance during the presentation and the Q&A (5%); (iii) peer review of other members of the group (5%). A sign-up sheet for group assignment and presentation schedule will be circulated at the beginning of the semester. The presentation should be facilitated by PowerPoint slides, which must be uploaded by **10AM on Friday**. DO NOT read what is on the slides verbatim. Talking directly to your audience is essential to an interactive and appealing presentation.

### **Grading Policy**

The course is out of 100 total points, and the Grading Scale is as follows: 93-100 (A); 90-92 (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)

More information on UF grading policy may be found at [Grades and Grading Policies](#). Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with [university policies](#).

### **Required Texts**

All readings can be found on the course's Canvas page. Course material and details in this syllabus are subject to change. Any such changes will be announced in advance on Canvas.

### **Course Evaluation**

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

### **Academic Integrity**

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](#) specifies a number of 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.

### **Policy Regarding In-Class Recording**

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 (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, 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.

## **Resources**

### Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect 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 in the semester.

### Health and Wellness Resources

- *U Matter, We Care*: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu), 352-392-1575, or visit [U Matter, We Care website](#) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
- *Counseling and Wellness Center*: [Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website](#) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.
- *Student Health Care Center*: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or [visit the Student Health Care Center website](#).
- *University Police Department*: [Visit UF Police Department website](#) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
- *UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center*: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; [Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website](#).
- *GatorWell Health Promotion Services*: For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit the [GatorWell website](#) or call 352-273-4450.

### Academic Resources

- *E-learning technical support*: Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at [helpdesk@ufl.edu](mailto:helpdesk@ufl.edu).
- *Career Connections Center*: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.
- *Library Support*: Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.
- *Teaching Center*: Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.
- *Writing Studio*: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
- *Student Complaints On-Campus*: [Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage for more information](#).
- *On-Line Students Complaints*: [View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process](#).

## Readings and Assignments Schedule

\*\*\*Please note that the syllabus can be changed as needed during the semester. \*\*\*

\*\*\*These mandatory readings might be complemented with additional readings through the semester, provided by instructor. \*\*\*

### Week 1 (Jul 1-5)

Jul 1 (M) Introduction & Syllabus Walkthrough

Jul 2 (T) Plato, *The Republic*

Jul 3 (W) Plato, *The Republic*

Jul 4 (R) No Class (Independence Day)

Jul 5 (F) In-Class Presentation & Discussion

### Week 2 (Jul 8-12)

Jul 8 (M) Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*

Jul 9 (T) Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*

Jul 10 (W) Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*

Jul 11 (R) Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*

Jul 12 (F) In-Class Presentation & Discussion

### Week 3 (Jul 15-19)

Jul 15 (M) John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*

Jul 16 (T) John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*

Jul 17 (W) Locke in/and America

- John Locke, *Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina*
- Thomas Jefferson, *Declaration of Independence*
- Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the state of Virginia*
- Frederick Douglass, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July”

Jul 18 (R) Locke in/ and America

- Thomas Jefferson’s letter to James Madison
- James Madison’s Letter to Thomas Jefferson

- Abigail Adams’s letters to John Adams and Mercy Otis Warren

Jul 19 (F) In-Class Presentation & Discussion

**Week 4 (Jul 22-26)**

Jul 22 (M) Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*

Jul 23 (T) Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*

Jul 24 (W) Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*

Jul 25 (R) Rousseau and the Revolution(s)

- French National Assembly, *Declaration of the Rights of Man*
- Olympe de Gouges, *Declaration of the Rights of Woman*
- Toussaint L’Ouverture, “Proclamation”, “Letter to the General Assembly from Biassou”, “Toussaint L’Ouverture to His Brothers and Sisters in Varettes”

Jul 26 (F) In-Class Presentation & Discussion

**Week 5 (Jul 29-Aug 2)**

Jul 29 (M) Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*

Jul 30 (T) Edmund Burke, Revolution, and Beyond

- Edmund Burke, *Inquiry into the Sublime and the Beautiful*
- Edmund Burke, *An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs*
- Edmund Burke, *Letter to Member of National Assembly*

Jul 31 (W) Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*

Aug 1 (R) Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*

Aug 2 (F) In-Class Presentation & Discussion

**Week 6 (Aug 5-9)**

Aug 5 (M) W.E.B. Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*

Aug 6 (T) W.E.B. Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*

Aug 7 (W) Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract*

Aug 8 (R) Struggles against the Color Line

- Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail”
- Malcolm X, “Message to the Grassroots”

- Stokely Carmichael, “Toward Black Liberation”

Aug 9 (F) In-Class Presentation & Discussion