

Introduction to Political Theory

POT 2002 (Honors)

Spring 2026

T 1:55-2:45pm / Th 1:55-3:50pm

Turlington Hall 2319

Prof. Stacey Liou (she/hers)

Office Hours: W 2-4, or by appointment

Appointments via [Calendly](#)

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Honors Program

Honors Village Complex #4

Tel: 352-392-1519

[Honors Advisor Email](#)

[Honors Advising Scheduling](#)

[Honors Program Event Calendar](#)

Description

This course introduces students to canonical thinkers, texts, and themes in the history of Western political thought. We will encounter these thinkers in historical sequence, asking questions such as: Who should rule, and why? What is the nature of freedom, and how is it practically enacted? What is the nature of citizenship, and how is it practiced? How are politics and economics intertwined? What should citizens do under conditions of tyranny or inequality? How do these political ideas change across historical context? As an honors offering, this course will also consider contemporary scholarly responses to the canon and explore the extent to which these texts and themes remain relevant in U.S. political culture today.

This course qualifies for UF's Humanities Gen Ed requirement.

Goals

By the end of this course, you will be able to speak intelligently about the key themes, principles, and theories that have shaped the Western political tradition. These include questions about the nature, use, and justification of political power, as well as theories of human nature, social contract, liberty, citizenship, sovereignty, rule of law, equality, property, race, and gender. You will be able to analyze how major thinkers dealt with problems that arose from their particular social and historical contexts, and to consider how the problems and concepts from this tradition may be relevant to understanding contemporary political and social phenomena. You will be required to think clearly and critically, and to support your arguments effectively with logic and evidence.

Assessment

1. In-Class Activities (25%)

There will be different in-class individual and small group activities during the semester. Since these activities will take place during class times, there will be no make-up opportunities for them. In other words, completing these activities means attending class, and unexcused absences will affect your final grade.

Completing these activities successfully will require that you complete the readings before class on the dates listed below. Allow yourself enough time to do so, because they are complex and require close attention.

Excused absences must be consistent with university policies and require appropriate documentation. Additional information can be found [here](#).

2. In-Class Exams (75%)

There will be four in-class exams on the following dates: **February 5, March 5, April 2, and April 21**. The first three exams are cumulative and each worth 20% of your final grade. They will focus on recently discussed texts and themes, which you may be asked to consider alongside earlier course material. These exams will be primarily essay-based but may also include short-answer and multiple-choice questions. The final exam is non-cumulative and worth 15% of your final grade.

These exam dates cannot be changed. For documented conflicts, speak to me as soon as possible so that we can make appropriate accommodation.

Required Texts

All readings can be found online or as PDFs on the course's Canvas page. There are no anticipated materials or supplies fees.

Note: Course material and details in this syllabus are subject to change. I will announce any such changes in class.

Grading Policy

Requirements for class attendance and assignments are consistent with university policies that can be found at: catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/.

The following cutoffs will be used for grades:	A 94-100%	A- 90-94%	
B+ 87-90%	B 84-87%	B- 80-84%	
C+ 77-80%	C 74-77%	C- 70-74%	
D+ 67-70%	D 64-67%	D- 60-64%	E < 60%

A minimum grade of B is required to earn Academic points towards Honors Completion Requirements. Once you have earned your final grade in this course, please upload the course information and final grade from your Unofficial Transcript into your Honors Canvas Cohort: Honors Requirements module to earn Honors Milestone / Completion credit.

A minimum grade of C is required for general education credit.

Accommodations

Students requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, you will receive an accommodation letter to share with me. If you need accommodation, please follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/>. I take this feedback seriously and use your constructive feedback to improve the course for future offerings. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester; you will be notified when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at the link provided above.

Resources

Accommodations

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, you will receive an accommodation letter to share with me. If you need accommodation please follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Additional policies and resources are available online at <https://syllabus.ufl.edu/syllabus-policy/uf-syllabus-policy-links/>.

Academic Integrity

All students are required to abide by the University of Florida's Academic Honesty Guidelines, which may be viewed at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/procedures/honestybrochure.php>. Most obviously, this means cheating on exams and plagiarism on papers is unacceptable. Examples of plagiarism include but are not limited to: submitting entire papers written by others, submitting portions of papers written by others, copying text without quotations and proper citation, or paraphrasing text without proper attribution in a footnote. In addition to harming your professional career, academic dishonesty will destroy your ability to learn from this class.

In other words, you must be the one producing all submitted assignments, and you must appropriately reference all source material, including the assigned texts. If you do not do both of these, you are committing academic dishonesty, which is grounds for a failing grade. If you're unsure, you should just cite it. If you have any questions about whether something counts as academic dishonesty, please contact me. I am happy to clarify these rules further.

In-Class Recording

While students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures, the ways these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only purposes allowed are for personal educational use, in connection with a complaint to the university, or as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Students may not publish recorded lectures without the instructor's written consent.

Schedule

- January 13 (T) Introduction
- January 15 (R) The Greeks
- Thucydides, “Pericles’s Funeral Oration”
 - Plato, *The Republic*, Books I (all), II (357-377c) and III (395b-402c, 412a-417b)
- January 20 (T) Plato, *The Republic*
- Books IV (419a-436e) and V (462-end)
- January 24 (R) Plato, *The Republic*
- Books VI (all) and VII (beginning-521b)
- January 27 (T) Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*
- Dedicatory Letter, chs. 1-14
- January 29 (R) Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*
- Chs. 15-26
- February 3 (T) Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*
- Begin reading Chs. 3, 6, 10, 11
- February 5 (R) **In-Class Exam** (cumulative)
- February 10 (T) Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*
- Chs. 13-15
- February 12 (R) Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*
- Chs. 17-19, 21, 29
- February 17 (T) John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*
- Chs. 1-8
- February 19 (R) John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*
- Chs. 17-19
 - Declaration of Independence
- February 24 (T) Locke, Property, and Colonialism
- Barbara Arneil, “The Wild Indian’s Venison”
 - Bhikhu Parekh, “Liberalism and Colonialism”
- February 26 (R) Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Social Contract*
- Books I and II (all), III (chs. 1-4, 9-18)

March 3 (T) Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Social Contract*
 • Book IV (chs. 1, 2, 8)

March 5 (R) **In-Class Exam (cumulative)**

March 10 (T) The Federalist Papers
 • Papers #1, 9, 10, 14, 15, 39, 47, 48, 51

March 12 (R) The Federalist Papers
 • Papers #57, 58, 62, 63, 70

March 17, 19 Spring Break

March 24 (T) Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels
 • Marx, "On the Jewish Question"
 • Marx & Engels, *The German Ideology*, Part A (pp. 147-175)

March 26 (R) Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels
 • Marx & Engels, *The German Ideology*, Part B (pp. 176-200)

March 31 (T) Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels
 • Marx & Engels, "Preface to Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy"

April 2 (R) **In-Class Exam (cumulative)**

April 7 (T) Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract*
 • Introduction, Part 1 (pp. 9-39)

April 9 (R) Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract*
 • Parts 2 and 3 (pp. 41-133)

April 14 (T) Contract, Race, and Gender
 • Carole Pateman and Charles W. Mills, "Contract and Social Change"

April 16 (R) Contract, Race, and Gender
 • Carole Pateman, "Race, Sex, and Indifference"

April 21 (T) **In-Class Exam (non-cumulative)**