

POT 2002: Introduction to Political Theory

University of Florida

Fall 2024

Instructor:	Cristian Pérez Muñoz
E-mail	cperezmunoz@ufl.edu
Office	Anderson 334
Class Hours	Mondays and Wednesdays (10:40 a.m. - 11:30 a.m).
Classroom	PUGH 170
Office Hours	Mondays (1 pm–4 pm) (by appointment)
TAs	Walleign Hassen (whassen@ufl.edu); Timothy Stolz (stolzt@ufl.edu), Anna Verma (annaverma@ufl.edu), Yuanxin Wang (yuanxin.wang@ufl.edu)
Discussion Sections	R 17010 (9:35 AM - 10:25 AM) - Walleign Hassen R 17009 (10:40 AM - 11:30 AM) - Walleign Hassen R 17007 (11:45 AM - 12:35 PM) - Anna Verma R 17005 (12:50 PM - 1:40 PM) - Anna Verma F 17006 (9:35 AM - 10:25 AM) - Timothy Stolz F 17011 (10:40 AM - 11:30 AM) - Timothy Stolz F 17008 (1:55 PM - 2:45 PM) - Yuanxin Wang F 17028 (3:00 PM - 3:50 PM) - Yuanxin Wang

Course Description

This is an introductory course to the field of political theory. We will cover topics that are central to political thought and crucial to understanding human societies. In particular, we will study the ideas of freedom, power, equality, justice, democracy, nationalism, citizenship, and human rights. By the end of the course, students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of key political ideas and thinkers.

Humanities (H)

This course qualifies for UF's Humanities Gen Ed requirement. Humanities courses provide instruction in the history, key themes, principles, terminology, and theory or methodologies used within a humanities discipline or the humanities in general. Students will learn to identify and to analyze the key elements, biases, and influences that shape thought. These courses emphasize clear and effective analysis and approach issues and problems from multiple perspectives.

Course Objectives:

- Be familiar with important political ideas and thinkers
- Learn to identify and analyze complex theoretical arguments
- Apply analytical tools to address controversial issues and make informed choices about them.

Course Assessment Criteria

1. Midterm Examination:

- *Location:* PUGH 170.
- *Date:* Wednesday, 10/16.
- *Duration:* 50 minutes.
- *Format:* Two questions will be randomly selected from a set of questions distributed to students a week prior to the examination.
- *Weight:* 25% of the final grade.

2. Class Presentations:

- Students are required to prepare two presentations (one oral and the other written) to be delivered during the discussion sections.
- *Submission:* Presentations must be submitted in advance to the entire discussion section and to the Teaching Assistant leading the section.
- *Format:* PowerPoint or a similar presentation format.
- *Weight:* Each presentation will account for 15% of the final grade, totaling 30%.

3. Attendance & Class Participation:

- Active participation in discussion sections is crucial for understanding and engaging with the course material.
- *Weight:* 20% of the final grade.

4. Final Examination:

- *Location:* PUGH 170.
- *Date:* 12/10/2024.
- *Time:* 10:00 AM - 12:00 AM.
- *Format:* Similar to the midterm, two questions will be randomly chosen from a set of questions provided to students a week before the examination date.
- *Weight:* 25% of the final grade.

5. Late Work/Make up Exams:

- *Missed Exams:* If you cannot take an exam, you must:
 - (a) Email the instructor before the exam
 - (b) Provide official documentation explaining your physical inability to take the exam
 - (c) If an emergency occurs on exam day, email the instructor and the TA immediately
 - (d) Under no circumstances we can reschedule the final exam. The date is determined by UF and it is not possible to change it.
- *Makeup exams:* Must be taken within seven calendar days of the original exam date (no exceptions), and may incur a late penalty at the instructor's discretion.
- *Late Assignments:* No work will be accepted more than seven calendar days after the due date. A 5% per day late penalty will be applied.
- *Important Notes:* No early exams will be permitted.

Grade Distribution:

Midterm exam	25%
Class presentations	30%
Attendance and class participation	20%
Final Exam	25%

Letter Grade Distribution:

>= 94	A	74 - 76	C
90 - 93	A-	70 - 73	C-
87 - 89	B+	67 - 69	D+
84 - 86	B	64 - 66	D
80 - 83	B-	60 - 63	D-
77 - 79	C+	<61	F

Important Dates:

Midterm exam: Wednesday 10/11
Final exam: 12/10/2024 (10:00 AM - 12:00 AM)

Course Policies¹

During Class

Unless I explicitly declare so, nothing I say in this class will be my personal opinion on the topics covered. Instead, I will focus on presenting different points of view on the topics discussed. When issuing a subjective opinion on a given issue, students will hear me say something along the lines of "I personally believe," "according to how I see this issue," and so on. In any case, my personal opinions will be announced and infrequent. I have carefully chosen a manageable number of readings and references that come from academic sources. These viewpoints have been discussed and debated within political science or other academic disciplines and have been

¹The items with an asterisk(*) are textually copied from [UF Policy on Course Syllabi](#).

collectively judged by experts in that field to be well-argued and rigorous. While I have chosen a wide range of viewpoints to present to you, it would be impossible to show all viewpoints on all issues. The debate in class will help us to identify, address and evaluate any alternative perspective on the topics covered in class.

We are a diverse group of people, and every one of us has a different opinion. It is crucial to treat your instructors and classmates with respect and kindness during class meetings and activities. For more information on netiquette guidelines, see the [UF Netiquette Guide for Online Courses](#).

Attendance Policy*

Attendance at all discussion sections is mandatory and will be registered. A penalty of one point will be subtracted from the final grade for each unexcused absence. Late work is not accepted. Exceptions include documented illness, legal, or civic/university duty situations. If you miss an assignment and have a valid excuse, please email me within the same week to evaluate the situation and eventually arrange a makeup. "The requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies". [Click here to read the university attendance policies.](#)"

In-Class Recording

All students are advised to refer to the University of Florida's current policies concerning course recording. This course adheres strictly to the rules and guidelines established by the University of Florida on this matter. 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.

Grading Policy*

This course is consistent with current UF grading policies for assigning grade points. For detailed information, visit this [link](#).

Academic Integrity and Honesty*

"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. [Click here to read the Honor Code](#). 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 or TAs in this class."

Accommodations for Disabilities*

“Students with disabilities 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 in the semester.”

Online 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. [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 their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via ufl.bluera.com/ufl/. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students here.”

Technical Support*

E-learning technical support: Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.

Health and Wellness*

- U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact 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](#).

Disclaimer

The syllabus is a statement of intent. Please note that the schedule of activities and procedures in this course are subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances. Any change in the syllabus will be communicated to all students in the class. Changes will be posted on Canvas and announced in class.

Course Outline

Readings: All the required readings are available in [Canvas](#).

Week	Content/Reading assignments
Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freedom (I) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – (Monday, 08/26– Wednesday, 08/28). – John Stuart Mill <i>On Liberty</i> (chapters 1 and 2)
Week 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freedom (II) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – (Monday, 09/02 (Holiday) – Wednesday, 09/04) – Isaiah Berlin. 1969. “Two concepts of Liberty”, in <i>Four Essays on Liberty</i>. pp, 118–172
Week 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freedom (III) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – (Monday 09/09 – Wednesday, 09/11) – Charles Taylor. 1979. “What’s wrong with Negative Liberty?” in <i>The Idea of Freedom</i>, ed. Alan Ryan (Oxford University press, 1979), 175–193 – Philip Pettit. 1996. “Freedom as anti-power”. <i>Ethics</i> 106: 576–604
Week 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – (Monday, 09/16 – Wednesday, 09/18) – Robert Dahl. 1957. “The concept of power.” <i>Behavioral science</i> 2 (3): 201–215. – Steven Lukes, <i>Power: A Radical View</i>, 2nd edition, (Chapters 1 and 2)

Week	Content/Reading assignments
Week 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality (I) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – (Monday, 09/23 – Wednesday, 09/25) – Harry Frankfurt. “Equality as a Moral Ideal”, <i>Ethics</i> 98, 1987 – Walzer, Michael. 1983. “Complex Equality“, <i>Spheres of Justice</i>, Martin Roberson, pp. 3-30.
Week 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality (II) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – (Monday, 09/30 – Wednesday, 10/02) – Elizabeth Anderson. 1999. “What is the Point of Equality?.” <i>Ethics</i> 109.2 (1999): 287–337. – Jan Narveson. 1997. “Egalitarianism: partial, counterproductive, and baseless.” <i>Ratio</i> 10, no. 3 (1997).
Week 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Justice (I) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – (Monday, 10/07 – Wednesday, 10/09)) – John Rawls. 1958. “Justice as Fairness”, <i>Philosophical Review</i>, 67 (1958) – John Rawls. 1985. “Justice as Fairness: Political Not Metaphysical”, <i>Philosophy and Public Affairs</i>, 14 (3): 223-251
Week 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Justice (II) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – (Monday, 10/14) – Robert Nozick. 1973. “Distributive Justice”. In <i>Philosophy and Public Affairs</i>, 45–126. – Midterm exam in class: Wednesday, 10/16

Week	Content/Reading assignments
Week 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Justification of the State <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (Monday, 10/21 – Wednesday, 10/23) - Quentin Skinner. 2010. "The sovereign state: a genealogy" in <i>Sovereignty in fragments: The past, present and future of a contested concept</i> edited by Hent Kvalmo and Quentin Skinner, Cambridge University Press, vol. 2, pp. 26–46. - Robert Paul Wolff. 1998. <i>In Defense of Anarchism</i>, University of California Press. (Chapter 1)
Week 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democracy (I) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (Monday, 10/28 – Wednesday, 10/30) - Joseph Schumpeter "Two Concepts of Democracy" - Jon Elster. 1986. "The Market and the Forum: Three Varieties of Political Theory", in <i>Foundations of Social Choice Theory</i>, Jon Elster and Aanund Hylland (Cambridge, 1986), 103–132
Week 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democracy (II) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (Monday, 11/04 – Wednesday, 11/06) - Lynn Sanders. 1997. "Against deliberation". <i>Political Theory</i> 25 (3): 347–376. - Chantal Mouffe. 2000. <i>The Democratic Paradox</i>. verso, 2000. (Chapters 1 and 4)
Week 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nationalism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (Monday, 11/11 (Holiday) – Wednesday, 11/13) - David Miller. 1993. "In Defence of Nationality", <i>Journal of Applied Philosophy</i> 10, no. 1, 1993. - Robert Goodin. 1988. "What is so Special About Our Fellow Countrymen?", <i>Ethics</i>, 98: 663–86.

<p>Week 13</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizenship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>(Monday, 11/18 – Wednesday, 11/20)</u> - Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman. 1994. "Return of the citizen: A survey of recent work on citizenship theory." <i>Ethics</i> 104.2 (1994): 352-381.
<p>Week 14</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Rights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>(Monday, 12/02 – Wednesday 12/04)</u> - Michael Ignatieff. 2000. <i>I. Human Rights as Politics II. Human Rights as Idolatry</i>. The Tanner Lectures on Human Values, 287-349. - Martha Nussbaum. 2007. "Human rights and human capabilities." <i>Harv. Hum. Rts. J.</i> 20 (2007): 21.