

Introduction to Political Theory

POT 2002

Spring 2024

T 3-4:55 pm / Th 4:05-4:55 pm

Fine Arts C 0127

Dr. Stacey Liou (she/hers)

Office Hours: T/Th 5-6 pm (or by appointment)

[Calendly Link](#)

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Description

This course introduces students to key 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 we do under conditions of state and/or social injustice? How do these political ideas change across historical context? We will also explore the extent to which these ideas have influenced and remain relevant to our contemporary politics.

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.

Evaluation

Attendance & Participation (20%)

The success of this class depends in part on your active in-class participation. In-class participation includes bringing personal insight to the readings, using them to consider current events, referencing relevant outside articles, and responding thoughtfully to classmates' comments. You should attend class ready to discuss the reading material assigned for that class meeting. Allow yourself enough time to complete these readings because they are complex and require close attention. We will be using Perusall to engage with our readings; more detail will be provided on the first day of the course.

Attendance is mandatory, and unexcused absences will affect your final grade. Excused absences must be consistent with university policies and require appropriate documentation. Additional information can be found [here](#).

In-Class Exams (80%; 20% each)

You will take four in-class, essay-based exams on the following dates: **February 1, March 7, April 4, and May 1**. Exam material will be cumulative with a focus on recently discussed texts and themes. More detail will be provided in class.

Note that these exam dates cannot be changed. If you foresee a genuine emergency or conflict, 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. Course material and details in this syllabus are subject to change. I will announce any such changes in class and on Canvas.

Grading Policy

Late assignment submissions will not be accepted, except in the case of 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 discuss making up the work.

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-	90–93%
B+	87–89%	B	84–86%
B-	80–83%	C+	77–79%
C	74–76%	C-	70–73%
D+	67–69%	D	64–66%
D-	60–63%	E	< 60%

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.

Health & Wellness Resources

If you or someone you know is struggling with any crisis including but not limited to gender, sexual, racial, or domestic violence, there are many community and University of Florida resources available. Some of these include:

- U Matter, We Care (umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, umatter.ufl.edu)
- RESPECT – UF Division of Student Affairs (respect.ufsa.ufl.edu)
- Counseling and Wellness Center – available 24/7 (352-392-1575, counseling.ufl.edu)
- Student Health Care Center (352-392-1161, shcc.ufl.edu)
- Multicultural & Diversity Affairs (352-392-1217, multicultural.ufl.edu)
- UFPD Office of Victim Services (352-392-1111, police.ufl.edu)
- UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center (352-733-0111)

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 9 (R) Introduction
- January 11 (T) The Greeks
- Thucydides, “Pericles’s Funeral Oration”
 - Plato, *The Republic*, Books I (all), II (357-377c) and III (395b-402c, 412a-417b)
- January 16 (R) Plato, *The Republic*
- Books IV (419a-436e) and V (462-end)
- January 18 (T) Plato, *The Republic*
- Books VI (all) and VII (beginning-521b)
- January 23 (R) Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*
- Dedicatory Letter, chs. 1-14
- January 30 (T) Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*
- Chs. 15-26
- February 1 (R) **In-class Exam**
- February 6 (T) Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*
- Chs. 3, 6, 10, 11, 13-15
- February 8 (R) Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*
- Chapters 17-19, 21, 29
- February 13 (T) John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*
- Chapters 1-8
- February 15 (R) John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*
- Chapters 17-19
 - Declaration of Independence
- February 20 (T) Excursus: Locke, Race, and Revolution
- Frederick Douglass, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?”
 - Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail”
 - Malcolm X, “Message to the Grassroots”
- February 22 (R) Excursus 2: Locke, Property, and Colonialism
- John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, Chapter V (reread)
 - Barbara Arneil, “The Wild Indian’s Venison”
 - Bhikhu Parekh, “Liberalism and Colonialism”

- February 27 (T) Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Social Contract*
- Books I and II (all), III (chs. 1-4, 9-18)
- February 29 (R) Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Social Contract*
- Book IV (chs. 1, 2, 8)
- March 5 (T) Excursus: Rousseau, “The People,” and Gender
- French National Assembly, “Declaration of the Rights of Man”
 - Olympe de Gouges, “Declaration of the Rights of Woman”
- March 7 (R) **In-class Exam**
- March 12, 14 Spring Break
- March 19 (T) The Federalist Papers
- Papers #1, 9, 10, 14, 15, 39, 47, 48, 51
- March 21 (R) The Federalist Papers
- Papers #57, 58, 62, 63, 70
- March 26 (T) Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels
- Marx, “On the Jewish Question”
 - Marx & Engels, *The German Ideology*, Part A (pp. 147-175)
- March 28 (R) Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels
- Marx & Engels, *The German Ideology*, Part B (pp. 176-200)
- April 2 (T) Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels
- Marx & Engels, “Preface to Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy”
- April 4 (R) **In-class exam**
- April 9 (T) Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract*
- Introduction, Part 1 (pp. 9-39)
- April 11 (R) Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract*
- Parts 2 and 3 (pp. 41-133)
- April 16 (T) Carole Pateman & Charles Mills, *Contract and Domination*
- “Contract and Social Change”
- April 18 (R) Carole Pateman & Charles Mills, *Contract and Domination*
- “Race, Sex, and Indifference” and “Intersecting Contracts”

April 23 (T)

Conclusion

May 1 (W)

In-Class Exam