

Poli 2060: Introduction to Political Theory

Tu-Th: 1030-1150am

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This course provides an introduction to the history of political thought, from ancient into modern times. It focuses on five of the most representative political philosophers: Tocqueville, Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, and Locke. As a social science general education elective this course is designed to acquaint students with various views of human nature, as well as how human beings organize themselves into political societies, real and imagined. Students will be expected to achieve an understanding of the informing factors of global interdependence, including economic forces, political dynamics, and cultural and linguistic difference. All general education courses are designed to enhance the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that facilitate the improvement of the civic life of communities.

We will attempt to approach these questions from the point of view of political philosophy. By beginning with Tocqueville, we will examine the intellectual challenges most characteristic of America and its egalitarian society: by turning to Plato, we will consider the highest claims raised on behalf of justice and wisdom. We will investigate Aristotle's defense of the participatory politics of the small, ancient city followed by Machiavelli and Locke's justification of larger, more dynamic societies. Locke's arguments for capitalism, popular government, and religious toleration, which so inspired the American founders, bring us back toward the point where we began.

Bibliography

Please use the assigned editions, available for purchase at the LSU bookstore. Aside from providing accurate translations, they will allow students to follow the references I make in class, and allow me to follow the references you make in your papers.

Tocqueville. *Democracy in America*. Trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop. University of Chicago Press, 2000.

Plato. *Republic*. Trans. Allan Bloom. Second Edition. Basic Books: 1991.

Aristotle. *Politics*. Trans. Carnes Lord. Second Edition. University of Chicago Press: 2013.

Machiavelli, Niccolo. *Prince*. Trans. Harvey C. Mansfield. Second Edition. University of Chicago Press, 1998.

Locke. John. *Second Treatise on Government*. Ed. Richard Cox. Harlan Davidson Inc., 1982.

-*Letter Concerning Toleration*. Ed. Kerry Walters. Broadview Editions: 2013.

Syllabus

Aug. 22: Introduction

Aug. 24: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, pp. 3-15, 172-87

Aug. 29: Tocqueville, pp. 235-64

Aug. 31: Tocqueville, pp. 403-24

Sep. 5: Tocqueville, pp. 587-617

Sep. 7: Plato, *Republic*, pp. 3-34

Sep. 12: Plato, pp. 35-54

Sep. 14: Plato, pp. 54-96

Sep. 19: Plato, pp. 97-125

Sep. 21: Plato, pp. 127-52

Sep. 26: Plato, pp. 152-92

Sep. 28: Plato, pp. 193-220

Oct. 3: Plato, pp. 221-240

Oct. 5: Plato, pp. 240-75

Oct. 10: Plato, pp. 275-303

Oct. 12: Aristotle, *Politics*, pp. 1-24

Oct. 17: Aristotle, pp. 24-34, 38-45, 62-71

Oct. 19: Fall holiday

Oct. 24: Aristotle, pp. 71-96

Oct. 26: Aristotle, pp. 186-222

Oct. 31: Machiavelli, *Prince*, pp. 3-25

Nov. 2: Machiavelli, pp. 26-47

Nov. 7: Machiavelli, pp. 48-82

Nov. 9: Machiavelli, pp. 83-105

Nov. 14: Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*, 1-32

Nov. 16: Locke, 33-74

Nov. 21: Locke, 75-108

Nov. 23: Happy Thanksgiving

Nov. 28: Locke, 109-48

Nov. 30: Locke, *Letter on Toleration*, 45-90

Dec. 8, 10am: Final Exam

Grading

15%: Attendance

Attendance is essential to overall success in the course, so all enrolled students are expected to sign in every class. Attendance will be required after the final drop date has passed. Only one unexcused absence is permitted for each student. Every additional absence will cost one attendance mark, and entail the added risk of missing a pop quiz.

15%: Three in-class pop quizzes on the readings

The purpose of the quizzes is to ensure that everyone has done the readings. They will consist of five short answer questions that require only a basic knowledge of the text. Pop quizzes missed due to unexcused absences cannot be made up.

30%: Mid-term exam

40%: Final exam

Further details about the grading of exams will be discussed, in writing and in speech, as the time approaches.

Grading scale:

90-100: A 97-100: A+ 93-96: A 90-92: A-

80-89: B 87-90: B+ 83-86: B 80-82: B-

70-79: C 77-80: C+ 73-76: C 70-72: C-

60-69: D 67-70: D+ 63-66: D 60-62: D-

Under 60: F

Class Rules

For attendance, see the official policy at <https://sites01.lsu.edu/wp/policiesprocedures/policies-procedures/22/>

Class participation is strongly encouraged: it will both help students engage the material, and help the professor understand the concerns and reactions of students.

Please turn off all electronic devices in class. Exceptions may be granted in certain circumstances: please feel free to ask.

Please do not eat during class: however, drinking non-alcoholic beverages is permitted. Do not leave during class except for an emergency.