

Political Science 150.01  
Introduction to Political Thought  
Fall '16  
12-12:50 PM  
Maybank 111

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Hours: Thursdays 11-3

Perhaps the simplest way to get a sense of what political theory (or political thought) is about is to say it addresses what values or norms should guide us in our collective life. I here emphasize this is about our collective lives life to make you aware that is the key question and not what we as individuals might prefer. In group decisions about many things we seldom get what we individually might prefer. That is, we have to agree what the rules and guiding principles are that will apply to all of us, how we will make them, and then figure out how to enforce them.

You should know that 'values' or 'norms' are generally not static concepts. They have mutated throughout history. We can take punishment as one extreme example. At one time in history many thought witches should be burned at the stake (or dunked while tied to a chair on the theory that if they were a witch they would live and if not, they would drown). We now not only would laugh at the belief in witches, but also can note that the punishment is both cruel and unusual.

Problems are not static either. Just now, we are wrestling as a nation with what many think (or are perceived as) are overly aggressive policing tactics that seem to be race-based. Human trafficking has changed and now grows particularly in the sex industry because it is easier to move people held in bondage around. Slavery still exists but not as extensively as it did in 1800. We face historically unparalleled problems in the form of environmental degradation and global warming.

What should be the role of political science in dealing with such things?

I take the following quote from David Easton as the guiding touchstone in this course:

If we take seriously the conclusions of the sociologists of knowledge, then our scientific output is very much shaped by the ethical perspectives we hold. In that event, by failing to encourage within the discipline creative speculation about political alternatives in the largest sense, we cannot help but imprison ourselves within the limitations of the ongoing value framework. As that framework begins to lose its relevance for the problems of society, its system-maintenance commitments must blind us to the urgent questions emerging even for the immediate future.

David Easton, 1969  
"The New Revolution in Political Science"  
*American Political Science Review*, p 1058

In simple, everyday terms, what Eastman said is that if we take things as they are empirically, then we imprison ourselves in the ongoing value framework of *what is* and if we do not compare them to what *could be* to make things better. I argue we should think about political alternatives as a practice of life.

There are at least three fundamental ways to study political philosophy.

The first, most common way, is to treat it's content as focusing on the 'great political thinkers' throughout history. In this format, a political theory text would have sequential chapters on these great thinkers, usually beginning with Plato and then proceeding with Aristotle to St. Thomas Aquinas, and so on. Among political theorists, there is general agreement about who most of the great thinkers are. We are less clear about who would make up a "second string" or a secondary list. Some, like Plato, you may have heard of. Others like G.W.F. Hegel might be strangers to you. In any event, this approach tends to treat each thinker discreetly and evaluate the corpus of his work although some comparative analysis is done since some things some wrote were in response to their predecessor(s). Usually this list is historically sequential—beginning usually with the Greeks (usually Plato) and usually ending with one or two twentieth century thinkers.

A second approach is to consider a political concept in a thematic fashion and then use it as a thread to examine what various political thinkers had to say about it. Thus, a political theory text following this methodology would have a chapter on 'freedom,' a chapter on 'citizenship' and so on. There, for example, we could take the concept of 'justice' and examine what thinkers had to say about it independently of a lot of other things they wrote about. There are some pretty durable concepts out there. These would include justice of course, but also morality, citizenship, freedom, liberty, community, the state, rule, etc. When taken this way, political theorists usually had a lot to say about certain value/concepts and not much on others. For example, for Plato, who lived and wrote in a slave-holding society had little to say about freedom or liberty but John Stuart Mill wrote an entire book on that topic.

A third approach is to render politics as a problematic area and theorizes about solutions. The problematic areas may be vast and difficult or stiff difficult but very specific. For example, many are growing more and more concerned about radical Islamists (who hardly represent the majority of those who profess to be Muslim in faith), in the United States there is a good deal of concern about police tactics and practices (but not in all areas), and a specific concern in some metropolitan areas about the homeless and affordable housing (as in San Francisco). This "problematic areas" approach may or may not use the writings of very many political thinkers for various reasons. If, for example, we think about such current issues as environmentalism or globalization, these may engage us in thinking about such things as human rights, justice, fairness, the modern nation-state, even animal rights. But we cannot look to historical thinkers (except in a very abstract way) to help us address it. Other aspects such as the emergence of the multi-national corporation, increasing consumerism (as a cultural phenomenon) or global warming are simply absent in history of political thought.

**The sharpest distinction I can make in this course that may help you understand what it is about is by pointing out the difference between "empirical" data and "normative" values.;** that is, to reiterate what Easton said above in a different way. Empirical data or facts are what "is" and the product/knowledge of an established scientific method that can be replicated independent of any particular thinker. Another in California could conduct empirical research

done by a scientist in China and presumably the results would be the same. Both do their research following the canons of the ‘scientific method.’

A normative approach would not deny what is empirically the case but might argue that it *ought* not to be so. For example, I can gather data that factually shows how wealth is divided in the United States (the percentage/amount that flows to the top 1 percent, or 10 percent, or bottom 20 percent). That would be empirical data—what *is* the case—subject only to some interpretation. But I can also make an argument that that division is “unfair”, “unjust”, “too extreme,” a threat to the ongoing political stability of the United States (or socio-economic and political system) or undermining our future in other way. So, normative thinking/theorizing points to what ought to be by arguing that what “is” diminishes or even negates certain values (like justice, equality, fairness, etc.).

Certainly we do argue about what the empirical facts are. (For example (a stupid one I know), is global warming occurring and **is it humanly caused?**) In these cases it is best to know as much as possible what is factually the case to consider before proceeding to saying what ought to be the case or what we should do. That said, you should know (and we can discuss) that there are many different ways to state ‘the facts.’ In the world of politics (and all other areas for that matter), politicians will make statements they claim are factual but which are distorted or simply lies. Sometimes crucial (or what can be argued are crucial) facts are intentionally omitted from an argument. For example, illegal immigrants DO pay taxes even though a dominant political argument is that they are getting a ‘free ride’ from the government. We may still say they should not be here—but we cannot say that one reason is because they do not pay taxes. One of the problems with getting data or facts stems from the growth of the Internet where people more and more get information that is framed to confirm what they believe to be the facts rather than try to present a balanced picture. We discuss things less and less on a face-to-face basis and deal less and less with those who disagree with us. Our political tribes have become at least partially virtual and isolated from one-another.

Some things are pure value or normative arguments. For example, some people believe in God. Others don’t. A whole lot of pure value arguments are usually religiously tinged. But not all. Some believe we should be able to own assault rifles. Others don’t. There is a lot of empirical data out there on both sides and, of course, an ambiguous Second Amendment to the Constitution where most everyone these days completely ignores the preamble.

Once a set of facts is agreed upon political theory comes into the picture. The issues or questions it deals with are typically framed in the form of value statements or political preferences. There are many topics that are or have been consistently considered by political theorists throughout history. These include (but this is not an exhaustive list) addressing such concepts as legitimate political authority, power, justice, freedom, liberty, citizenship, rights (natural or otherwise), the state, and property.

Leaning goals: To encourage you to think broadly about this course the department of political science has established learning goals.

These are as follows:

POLI 150: Introduction to Political Thought

- Students will demonstrate knowledge of key thinkers and concepts
- Students will compare thinkers on similar concept

- Students will use concepts to analyze new situations
- Students will explain the nature and value of normative thinking

Even though the text we are using focuses on a consistent topic in political theory – the concept of ‘civil society’ – and explores that sequentially as it is addressed by political philosophers throughout history, my emphasis in the course will be on the third learning goal on the list—that you learn to use political philosophy to analyze new situations. For the most part this is because I believe that many of the major political issues we are facing are in some important ways unprecedented in the history of mankind. These are globalization as an economic and socio-cultural phenomenon, sustainability (which includes but is not exhausted by major environmental issues) and issues associated with technology. For example, with easy air travel, some (probably not a whole lot) pregnant women with Asian citizenship will fly to the United States and give birth here, automatically granting US citizenship to the baby. This phenomenon is called “birth tourism” and is based on a concept called “jus soli,” which means birthright of the soil.

The above said, some issues we face are threaded throughout history and not new. In *The Merchant of Venice*, Shakespeare’s Shylock is a Jew—an ethnic group that has been discriminated against for a millennia. Some in the United States still hold them in disdain.

Text: There is one required text for the course. It is:

**Political Thinking, Political Theory, and Civil Society** 3rd Edition (Steven M. DeLue and Timothy Dale. (Referred to as Political Thinking below)..

Reading assignments are below—based on class response I will post additional short reading assignments on Oaks throughout the course.

While this is not a contemporary political topics course at least a portion of it does focus on contemporary political issues (such as how to treat political refugees). These are not particular “new” topics but do have contemporary relevance. Accordingly, you will have input into how we approach and discuss particular issues or topics. I will also rule out some topics—but we can talk about why I choose to do that.

Class schedule:

1. Wed	24-Aug	Introduction to class. Political theory versus political science. Class time to list out problems/issues you would like to see addressed.
2. Fri	26-Aug	Continue introduction to class: What is politics? What is political theory? What is political science? Bumping up against the experts.

3. Mon	29-Aug	Getting political information as citizen. We'll watch Eli Pariser's Ted Talk: Filter Bubbles on video.  Assign: Read NY Times article at <a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/08/us/politics/think-tanks-research-and-corporate-lobbying.html?hp&amp;action=click&amp;pgtype=Homepage&amp;clickSource=story-heading&amp;module=first-column-region&amp;region=top-news&amp;WT.nav=top-news&amp;_r=0">http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/08/us/politics/think-tanks-research-and-corporate-lobbying.html?hp&amp;action=click&amp;pgtype=Homepage&amp;clickSource=story-heading&amp;module=first-column-region&amp;region=top-news&amp;WT.nav=top-news&amp;_r=0</a>
4. Wed	31-Aug	Writing a research paper. APA style. Political Thinking—Introduction. Political Thinking as a way of doing political theory. (Asking questions: What is justice?)
Fri	2-Sep	Let's get it at least partially out of the way and talk about the upcoming presidential election.
5. Mon	5-Sep	Political Thinking—Chapter 1 ... Civil Society
6. Wed	7-Sep	First in-class discussion:....Robert Putnam's <i>Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community</i> .
7. Fri	9-Sep	Second in-class discussion: ..... Putnam's <i>Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis</i> . AND Charles Murray, <i>Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960-2010</i> .
8. Mon	12-Sep	Political Thinking—Chapter 2. Plato and civic virtue. Why did Aristotle drink the Hemlock?
9. Wed	14-Sep	Political Thinking—Chapter 3. Why did Plato think we needed a lie that most people could believe in?
10. Fri	16-Sep	Political Thinking—Chapter 4.
11. Mon	19-Sep	Outside reading: Available on Oaks....The Basic Principles of Puritan Political Thought.

12. Wed	21-Sep	The Enlightenment and its implications for political theory.
13. Fri	23-Sep	Fourth in-class discussion. Science as the new religion.
14. Mon	26-Sep	Political Thinking—Chapter 6. (Note we are skipping Chapter 5)...Niccolo. Was he really all that evil?
15. Wed	28-Sep	Political Thinking—Chapter 7. A war of all against all...and a life that is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short. Thomas Hobbes—Do we really want to live our lives that way?
16. Fri	30-Sep	Fifth in-class discussion. The insidious nature of individualism and the state of nature.
17. Mon	3-Oct	Political Thinking—Chapter 8. The slow killing of God. Benedict Spinoza.
18. Wed	5-Oct	Political Thinking—Chapter 9. The political primacy of property. John Locke.
19. Fri	7-Oct	Political Thinking—Chapter 10. Rousseau and the search for community
20. Mon	10-Oct	Political Thinking—Chapter 11. Kant and the full-flower of reason.
21. Wed	12-Oct	Political Thinking—Chapter 12. Hegel and the End of History
22. Fri	14-Oct	Sixth in-class discussion—Income inequality
23. Mon	17-Oct	Political Thinking—Chapter 13. Radicals and revolutionaries. Marx.
24. Wed	19-Oct	Political Thinking—Chapter 13. Radicals and revolutionaries. The neglected anarchists.
Fri	21-Oct	Seventh in-class discussion. Marx read differently. The rise of modern organization theory and Scientific Management. Frederick Winslow Taylor.

Mon	24-Oct	Eighth in-class discussion. Max Weber and Woodrow Wilson and the rise of the Administrative State.
Wed	26-Oct	Political Thinking—Chapter 14. John Stuart Mill and the pleasure pain principle
25. Fri	28-Oct	Political thinking—Chapter 15. John Rawls
26. Mon	31-Oct	Political Thinking—Chapter 16. Conservatives
27. Wed	2-Nov	Political Thinking—Chapter 16. Yet more on conservatives—the argument between Thomas Paine and Edmund Burke. Jonathan Haidt on the moral roots of liberals and conservatives
28. Fri	4-Nov	Political Thinking—Chapter 17. Power as ideology. Understanding Neitzsche and Foucault.
29. Mon	7-Nov	Fall Break
30. Wed	9-Nov	Post-election discussion
31. Fri	11-Nov	Political Thinking—Chapter 17. Power and powerlessness. Habermas and discourse theory
32. Mon	14-Nov	Political Thinking—Chapter 18. The rise of feminism.
33. Wed	16-Nov	Political Thinking—Chapter 19. Multi-culturalism. Is it possible?
34. Fri	18-Nov	Group 1 presentation
35. Mon	21-Nov	Group 2 presentation
36. Wed	23-Nov	Thanksgiving Break
37. Fri	25-Nov	Thanksgiving Break
38. Mon	28-	Group 3 presentation

	Nov	
39. Wed	30- Nov	Group 4 presentation
40. Fri	2- Dec	Group 5 presentation
41. Mon	5- Dec	Group 6 presentation
Wed	9 - Dec	Final exam scheduled 12-3 PM

I expect for you to do and stay up with the readings. On some random days I will give a short 1-2 question quiz. If a significant number do not answer correctly, then I will use quizzes on a more regular basis. These will account for 5 percent of your grade with 2 points taken from the first two tests and one point from the final.

Two papers will be due—these will be no more than five typed pages, 1” margins, double-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font.

- Paper due dates will be set as we proceed with the course. The first two will be based on the readings up to that point in the course.
- Depending upon how you do (as a class) there will either be a final exam administered during the designated period or a take-home assignment.

In addition to the papers, you will be responsible for working with two or three fellow students and presenting a class on an appropriate topic of my choosing (with your agreement). These will be made after the beginning of the semester and enrollment has firmed. Each group will be required to provide me with a formal proposal for presentation—including how it is appropriate for the course. As well, at least three members of each group will be required to meet with me twice during the semester to allow my advice/input into your topic.

I expect for you to stay up with the reading assignments. Should I suspect that many of you are not on a regular basis I will administer brief quizzes at the beginning of the class that ask basic questions about the reading assignments.

### **Guidance for group presentations:**

The topic you choose for your group presentation can be any that is relevant to this course—for example an in-depth discussion of a specific person or persons or a relevant topic (contemporary or historical).

**You must get my approval for your topic.**

**The group must meet with me no later than Nov 3 to go over your presentation.**

**The grade you get will be based on coherence and continuity—in other words, you should not expect to come together and present in an uncoordinated or discontinuous fashion. You should rehearse your presentation at least once before your class date. How**

**you present is your choice—whether you choose to rotate among members or have each member go in sequence.**

**Your grade will largely be based on my judgment of the effort the group has put into it.**

I suspect that most of you will want to use PowerPoint or Prezi. That is okay, but consider reading at any of multiple websites that argue PowerPoint makes you stupid. If you do use and misuse it, you will be penalized. There are multiple websites on how to use it effectively. Here's just one:

[https://lbj.utexas.edu/21cp/syllabus/powerpoint\\_tips2.htm](https://lbj.utexas.edu/21cp/syllabus/powerpoint_tips2.htm)

Especially important is to know that you should use blank slides—we should not be staring at material on the screen for your entire presentation.

**Do not just “read” your slides. They should supplement your presentation and not be your presentation. Do not just “read” your presentation from note cards. You certainly can use them, but should be familiar enough with what you will say that you can look at your audience and explain things to them.**

**Restrict your use of any videos. Understand that this is your time and not Stephen Colbert's. Overuse of videos will be penalized.**

**If any group has problems with one member (not attending meetings, not staying in touch, etc.) then let me know. You do have the power to vote any group member out and they will lose their presentation points...effectively one letter grade.**

Grades will be calculated based on the following:

Paper #1 .....	25 %
Paper #2 .....	25 %
Paper #3 .....	40 %
Group Project....	10%

I reserve up to 5 percent of your grade to reflect class attendance and participation. A written sign-up sheet will be circulated at the beginning of each class to record attendance

You will have the opportunity to earn a marginal amount of extra credit in this course—up to three extra points.

**Final Grades will be calculated 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-	59 and below F

**Computers and texting:** There will be no open laptops or tablets in class. I consider texting to be the same as talking in class—call me old-fashioned if you will, but it is discourteous to me as well as your classmates. Moreover, there is ample experimental evidence that you cannot do two

things at the same time . . . if you are texting, you are only paying partial attention to class. So, no texting is permitted either. Violation of either of these rules will result in punishment at my discretion.

### **Center for Disability Services: Students Needing Access Parity (SNA)**

The College will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Students should apply for services at the Center for Disability Services/SNAP located on the first floor of the Lightsey Center, Suite 104. Students approved for accommodations are responsible for notifying me as soon as possible and for contacting me one week before accommodation is needed.

### **Academic Support Services—The Center for Student Learning**

The CSL, located on the first floor of the library, offers a wide variety of tutoring and other academic resources that support many courses offered at the College. Services include walk-in tutoring, by appointment tutoring, study strategies appointments, Peer Academic Coaching (PAC), and Supplemental Instruction (SI). All services are described and all lab schedules are posted on the CSL website <http://csl.cofc.edu/>, or call 843.953.5635 for information.

**Honor code:** I expect you to adhere to the College’s honor code. Violation of this code is serious and can result in your expulsion or the awarding of an administrative “F” for the course. More information can be found at:

<http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/>

I strongly encourage you to visit:

[http://www.plagiarism.org/plag\\_article\\_what\\_is\\_plagiarism.html](http://www.plagiarism.org/plag_article_what_is_plagiarism.html)

This site will familiarize you with issues of plagiarism.

You have a very powerful tool/technology called the Internet to aid you in your research. Actually, the Internet, as it is alone, is pretty useless even though it is filled with information. The actual powerful tool you have is access to a search engine (likely Google and Google Scholar). Without Google, the content of the Internet would be simply a ‘blooming, buzzing confusion’ (William James).

In some respects I envy you in having access to this Internet content. In others I do not. The positive side is that in a matter of minutes you can access information that would have taken me hours, if not days, when I was an undergraduate and graduate student (when we walked to school uphill both ways). However, there also appears to be a negative aspect as well—at least for some who are taking a more objective look at the Internet. That is, it is shaping your ways of thinking in ways that may not be altogether positive. Moreover, it may be creating in you the illusion of knowledge rather than the real thing. There are numerous sources that you can find for this. Nicolas Carr’s *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains* is one such book. As one way of thinking about this, I ask you to consider how much of your time is dictated by your devices. If you stop what you are doing to tend to your messages, if you find it difficult to concentrate when you have an unread message, if you hand-held is just about the last thing you

look at night and the first thing in the morning, then you are not using it as a tool. Rather it is better understood as a tool using you.

One final comment about the Internet directed at your use of social media. Time spent communicating via social media—some of you do it when the person you are chatting with is across the table—is not the same as talking to them. It is easier to text than it is to talk and for that reason you should take my challenge to talk more and text less. If you want to read an explanation, read Sherry Turkle's *Reclaiming Conversation*. The ability to communicate face-to-face will be an essential skill in most work careers and certainly one in living a fulfilling life.