

POLI 150.01: Introduction to Political Thought

Spring 2018

Maybank 207, TR 9:25-10:40

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Office Hours: M 1-3:00, W 11-1 or by appointment

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This course will introduce you to thinking about the idea of politics and political activity conceptually, analytically and historically. This course focuses on political philosophy: a method of thinking about politics that centers on *normative* questions (e.g. how *should* we live together?). We will explore the meaning of some basic theoretical concepts related to politics and we will trace how those concepts have been understood in other contexts. We will be reading a variety of political philosophers, ancient, modern and contemporary. The semester is divided in three parts. In the first we will consider what it means to study political philosophy, why people live together, and how different political philosophers understand human motivation. In the second part of the semester we will look more closely at the social contract tradition and the question of justice. In the third part we will read criticisms of the social contract tradition and democracy and consider contemporary debates around class and identity. In a somewhat different context we will also read a selection of stories from Octavia Butler's collection of short fiction *Bloodchild*. We will use these stories as settings within which theoretical ideas come to life. At the end of the semester you will have a variety of answers to some of the following questions: What is justice? Is freedom desirable? What are the origins of the State? What makes an ideal ruler? Which form of government is best? What makes a good citizen? How can we change the world?

Course Objectives:

This course focuses on the explication, analysis and comparison of political philosophy texts. We read works from figures ancient, modern and contemporary. Students will acquire skills in **explication**: the explanation of what a text is saying; **analysis**: the interpretation of what a text means, both in its own context and for us; and **comparison**: the ways in which arguments about equality or freedom (for example) relate to one another. In class discussion, papers and exams students will learn to examine, interpret and relate texts and arguments.

Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course students will be able to:

- **demonstrate knowledge** of key thinkers and concepts over time (exams and papers)
- **compare thinkers** on similar concepts (papers and exam essays)
- **use concepts** to analyze new situations (short story responses, papers, exam essays)

- **evaluate interpretations** of concepts (papers and exam essays)
- **explain** the nature and value of normative thinking (papers and exam essays)

Required Books:

Andrew Bailey and others, Eds.	<i>Broadview Anthology of Social and Political Thought (SPT)</i>
Octavia Butler	<i>Bloodchild</i> (Second edition)

Assignments:

Two papers	15 % each
Two midterm exams:	10 % each
Short story responses (5)	15%
Final exam:	15%
Participation (both in class and in online discussion):	15%
Lecture/event response papers (3)	5%

The class participation grade includes attendance, participation in class and contribution to the discussion threads; missing (excused or unexcused) more than 5 classes will result in a one letter grade drop in your final grade.

You are assigned two papers, two midterm exams, five short story responses, three event/lecture responses and one final. I also expect regular participation based on your reading of the course material. **Students will come to class ready to discuss the material assigned for that class.** If you do not understand the argument(s) being made in the day's reading, then you should come to class with questions.

You will notice 3 paper due dates for the two papers in the syllabus (1/30, 3/1, 4/12). This gives you some flexibility in deciding when to write your papers. Papers handed in for the first two due dates can be rewritten (an incentive to write your papers before Spring Break!).

Exams may only be made up if students a) contact me at least an hour before the exam (e-mail is fine); b) schedule a make-up within 3 days of the assigned exam; c) present a documented, written excuse explaining the extraordinary circumstances that led to an inability to take an exam in the scheduled time (not being prepared is not an extraordinary circumstance, breaking your leg is).

More information about exams, papers, participation posts and the short story responses is at the end of the syllabus.

Accommodations: Any students who have special learning needs or concerns are urged to speak with me during the first week of the semester if accommodations are needed. The Center for Disability Services provides a comprehensive list of accessibility resources available at the College on the following website: <http://disabilityservices.cofc.edu/>

Grading scale:

A (93-100)	A- (90-92)	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)	F (0-59)

Schedule of Readings:

- 1/9: Introduction, Leo Strauss, "What is Political Philosophy?" (OAKS)
- 1/11: Octavia Butler, "Amnesty"
Short Story response due on OAKS by class time
- 1/16: Thucydides, Pericles' Funeral Oration, pp 1-4, and excerpt from Book I of Republic, pp. 37-45 both in *Social and Political Thought Essential Readings (SPT)*
- 1/18: Plato, Apology, pp. 11-23, *SPT*
- 1/23: Plato, Crito, pp. 23-29, *SPT*
- 1/25: Martin Luther King, Jr., Letter from a Birmingham Jail, pp. 850-858, *SPT*
- 1/30: Plato, Republic, Book 2, *SPT*, 45-55 (end of left hand column, 376c)
Paper Due Date
- 2/1: Aristotle, Politics, Book I, *SPT*, 128-138
- 2/6: Machiavelli, Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus, Livius, Chs. 1-2, pp. 229-233, *SPT*
- 2/8: Machiavelli, Prince, pp. 198-225, *SPT*
- 2/13: Butler, "Bloodchild"
Short Story response due on OAKS by class time
- 2/15: **Exam 1**
- 2/20: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Ch. 13-14, pp. 258-266, *SPT*
- 2/22: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chs 17-18, 20-21, pp. 276-283, 289-299, *SPT*
- 2/27: Locke, *Second Treatise of Civil Government*, Chs 1-4, pp. 331-338, *SPT*
- 3/1: Locke, *Second Treatise of Civil Government*, Chs 5, pp. 338-345, *SPT*
Paper Due Date
- 3/6: Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin and Foundation of Inequality among Men*, part two, pp. 441-445
- 3/8: Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, Book I, pp. 466-474
- 3/13: Butler, "Speech Sounds"
Short story response due before class on OAKS

3/15: **Exam 2**

Spring Break

3/27: Declaration of Independence and John Rawls, *Theory of Justice*, pp. 545-547 and 862-870, *SPT*

3/29: Rawls, pp. 872-883, 890-895 and 903-905, *SPT* and Iris Marion Young, “Justice and the Politics of Difference,” pp. 977-992, *SPT*

4/3: J.S Mill, *On Liberty*, pp. 627-640, *SPT*

4/5: W.E.B Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, pp. 778-781, *SPT*

4/10: Plato on Justice, pp. 63-74, *SPT*

4/12: Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*, pp. 717-733, *SPT*

Paper Due Date

4/17: Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, pp. 825-836, *SPT*

4/19: Plato, *Republic*, Book 8, pp. 93-107 and Butler, “The Evening and the Morning and the Night”

Short story response due before class on OAKS

Final Exam, Tuesday, April 26, 8am (This classroom)

Short story responses:

You will write responses to each of the five short stories that we read from Octavia Butler’s collection *Bloodchild*. Check the syllabus for those due dates. The responses are due in the OAKS dropbox **before** class on the day the story is being discussed. The OAKS dropbox will not accept your submission after class has started on the day the response is due. There will be no late responses accepted. Responses **MUST** be submitted via the dropbox. **I will accept no submissions in hardcopy.**

Responses can take one of two forms:

- 1) Focus on a passage/quote from the story that you found particularly interesting/insightful/important. Include the passage (no more than 5 sentences is enough for a good passage) and analyze **what the passage is saying** and **why you think the passage matters** either to the story or to the theme that the story is addressing.
- 2) Focus on a theme from our class discussions and other readings and **explain (with examples) how the story connects to that theme.**

Response papers will be at least **one page**, double spaced (and should not be more than two pages, double-spaced). You should give a focused and detailed, but brief, explanation of either the passage you chose or the theme you are addressing. **Do not summarize the story.** I would

suggest reading the story and then taking notes on what captured your imagination. Then look back over the class notes for the preceding classes and see where there might be connections. Be sure that your responses show an **engagement** with the story and a use of details to explain your interest in the story. The highest grade one can earn on a response paper is a 10.

Discussion threads:

To improve your comprehension of the material assigned and class discussion, I will post questions to Discussion threads for each class. Students will earn participation points for their contributions. Each thread will close before the next class meeting (so you cannot contribute to a discussion weeks later, but you can contribute after class if you have further thoughts or questions). I will keep track of who is participating in the discussion threads and who is participating in class discussion. You cannot earn a passing grade for participation without contributing either in class or online.

Exams:

All exams will include both an in class portion and a take home essay. These take home essay topics will be handed out in class in the week prior to the scheduled exam. If you miss the class when that essay topic is handed out **it is your responsibility to get the take home topic from me**. All essays are due in class at the time and the day of the exam. The exams will also include in class short answer and passage explication (we will discuss these closer to the first exam).

Lecture/event responses:

Students are required to attend three lectures/events outside of class and to submit a one page response to EACH event/lecture linking the topic of the event/lecture to a class reading/discussion. The lectures/events will be announced in class, posted on the syllabus or found in the weekly e-mails from the Department (for declared POLI majors). Students will upload responses to the lecture/event dropbox on OAKS.

Papers:

There will be paper topics for each of the proposed paper due dates. Topics are particular to due dates. The papers that you write for this class will involve explication of arguments that you have read for class and analysis of those arguments based on your own view or perspective. This means that you are expected to

- 1) **Explain** the argument of your chosen text
- 2) **Present** an argument about that text based upon your own interpretation
- 3) **Defend** your argument using evidence from the text

You **must** use quotations from the texts in question in order to provide evidence for both your explication and your analysis. You will be graded on the clarity of your analysis (this is more

important than whether I agree with your particular argument). You may choose to rewrite any paper handed in during the first two paper due dates. Papers handed in for the last due date may not be rewritten. All rewrites are due by the final day of class.

Papers and take home exam essays **must** be properly cited. All citations should be made in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Political Science Department's referencing guide (available online at Political Science Department webpage: <http://polisci.cofc.edu/documents/12policitationguide.pdf>).

Any failure to cite materials used for papers in this class is considered plagiarism. **Plagiarism is pretending as if the words and ideas of another are in fact yours. This includes a failure to use quotations, a failure to indicate when you are paraphrasing and the failure to give credit to the author whose ideas you are using. Plagiarism is a violation of the Honor Code and will be treated as such.**

- 1) All papers will be typed, double-spaced and stapled
- 2) Attach the paper worksheet to all papers (2 copies in syllabus)
- 3) All papers will be handed in hard copy, no papers sent via e-mail will be accepted
- 4) All citations will be in accordance with the departmental referencing guide.
<http://polisci.cofc.edu/documents/12policitationguide.pdf>
- 5) Extensions will be approved 24 hours before the paper is due
- 6) Students will retain a copy of the paper, either on your computer or in hard copy
- 7) Plagiarism will be prosecuted by the honor board and **students who plagiarize will fail this class. Further information about the Honor Code and Academic Integrity can be found at:**
<http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/studenthandbook/index.php>

Papers that do not meet these guidelines will not be accepted

Paper Worksheet – to be attached to your paper

Please check off the appropriate boxes and sign below:

My paper is: Yes No

Proofread
Spellchecked
Double-Spaced
Stapled

My paper includes:

A Thesis
An argument to support my thesis
Quotations to support my argument
Proper citation format

My thesis is:

In writing the paper I consulted the following sources for background/inspiration (anything that appears here should also be cited in your bibliography):

Please sign and date: _____

Paper Worksheet – to be attached to your paper

Please check off the appropriate boxes and sign below:

My paper is: Yes No

Proofread
Spellchecked
Double-Spaced
Stapled

My paper includes:

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