Political Science 150: Introduction to Political Thought

Fall 2018
Maybank Hall 316
MWF, 9:00-9:50 am

Instructor: Dr. Briana L. McGinnis
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Office Hours: Monday 2-4 pm, Wednesday 2-3 pm, additional hours available by appointment.
Office Location: 26 Coming Street, Room 101

Prerequisites: None

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Objectives: This course offers you an opportunity to familiarize yourself with important texts and foundational concepts in the history of political thought. In addition to becoming conversant with “the canon,” loosely (but thoughtfully) interpreted, you will be expected to engage these concepts critically, with an eye to both what they meant in their own historical contexts and to what insights they can continue to offer us today.

The guiding concept in this class is the idea of “justice,” and specifically political justice. Questions to consider include:
- Does political justice differ from moral goodness? If so, how?
- Why do we engage in politics? Why should we participate politically?
- What are rights, and on what basis should we claim or recognize them?
- What makes a good regime?
- What should constitute “the political,” and what relationship should that have to everyday life?
- What is a good citizen? Does being a good citizen conflict with being a good person?
- What is the proper relationship between the individual and society?

This course will introduce you to political theory, or the normative branch of the study of politics. “Normative” refers to questions rooted in matters of “ought.” Political theory evaluates political practices, institutions, and principles. In this class, we will explore the ideas underlying politics, both historically and in the present.

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 writing assignments, papers, exam essays)
• **Evaluate interpretations** of concepts (papers and exam essays)
• **Explain** the nature and value of normative thinking (papers and exam essays)

**POLICIES**

**Academic integrity**
Note that written assignments in this course will be screened by plagiarism-detecting software. Please review the College of Charleston’s academic honor code, available here: [http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/studenthandbook/index.php](http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/studenthandbook/index.php)

Please note that it is not permissible to turn in work for this class that was produced for another class without prior approval.

**Technology usage**
• Devices must be set to “silent” during class
• During exams, phones must be **powered off**.
• The usage of computers and tablets is permitted with instructor permission. Computers and tablets may be used on days with readings posted on OAKS, but this policy will change if they prove to be distracting.
• I encourage you to take notes by hand for this course – we will be interacting closely with the readings and you should be making notations on the text as you read and discuss.

**Attendance**
There is no formal attendance requirement; however, there is a participation element of your grade. You cannot participate actively in this class if you are not present. As a guideline, you should miss no more than three class meetings.

Designated meetings will be used for class discussion of that week’s readings and themes. Everything in the class – including the content of class discussions – may appear on exams, so be certain to be in class for those discussions and be engaged. On Discussion days, **come prepared with a passage from that week’s readings that you would like to discuss**. I will choose students at random to read their passage aloud to the class and explain briefly why they believe it to be significant.

**Syllabus**
This syllabus is a guide and it contains vital information about the class. Please read it carefully. This syllabus is subject to change.
GRADING AND EVALUATION

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)

Assignments
There are 1000 points to be earned in this course. The distribution of the points is listed below.

Midterm I 150 (15%)
Midterm II 150 (15%)
Final exam 200 (20%)
* A note on the final exam: The final exam will be an open-book essay exam centered on Antigone. We will discuss Antigone in class, but be certain to have familiarized yourself well with the text prior to the final.

Short writing assignment I 50 (5%)
Short writing assignment II 100 (10%)
Short writing assignment III 100 (10%)

Applying the ideas: Story analysis 200 (20%)

Participation 50 (5%)
*Your participation grade will depend, in large part, on your being prepared with a passage when called upon in discussion meetings. Preparing a passage for each discussion class is required.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Religious Holidays
Every effort will be made to avoid conflicts between assignments and religious holidays. If, however, you encounter such a conflict, please notify your me as soon as possible (and certainly within the first two weeks of class to allow time for accommodations to be made).
Please review the College of Charleston’s statement here:  

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

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

This course uses two required texts:

All other readings will be posted in PDF form on OAKS.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**I. What is Justice? What is Injustice?**  
**Week 1**  
08/22 Introduction to Class

08/24 Defining Justice I  

**Week 2**  
08/27 Defining Justice II  
Reading: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 5. BASPT 150-161

08/29 Giving Injustice Its Due  
Reading: Judith Shklar, “Giving Injustice Its Due” from *The Faces of Injustice*, 15-50 available on OAKS. Recommended: Introduction (1-15)

08/31 Discussion of Plato, Aristotle, Shklar and ways of thinking about justice  
**Prepare to discuss a passage from the reading.**

Discussion of short writing assignment I, instructions distributed

**Week 3**  
**II. Why Care About Justice? The Irrelevance of the Ethical to Politics**
09/03 Political Concerns and the Will of the Strongest

*** SHORT WRITING ASSIGNMENT I DUE. TURN IN TO OAKS BY THE BEGINNING OF CLASS ***

09/05 Morality and Power I
Reading: Nietzsche, excerpts from *Beyond Good and Evil*. BASPT 1057-1074

09/07 Morality and Power II
Reading: Nietzsche, excerpts from *On the Genealogy of Morals*. BASPT 1075-1096

Week 4
09/10 Realpolitik
Reading: Machiavelli, from *The Prince*, BASPT 343-362

09/12 Realpolitik II
Reading: Machiavelli, from *The Prince*, BASPT 362-375

*** SHORT WRITING ASSIGNMENT I OPTIONAL RE-WRITE DUE. TURN IN TO OAKS BY THE BEGINNING OF CLASS ***

09/14 Discussion of Morality, power, and realpolitik
Prepare to discuss a passage from the reading

Week 5
III. Justice as the Rule of Law
09/17 Keeping Order I
Reading: Hobbes, *Leviathan* BASPT, 419-438

09/19 Keeping Order II
Reading: Locke, from *The Second Treatise*. BASPT, 530-542; 548-55

09/21 Discussion of Hobbes and Locke, preview of the Social Contract
Prepare to discuss a passage from the reading

Week 6
IV. Justice as Keeping Promises
09/24 Making Compacts
Reading: Hobbes, *Leviathan* BASPT, 475-490
09/26 The Social Contract I: Locke
Reading: Locke, from *Second Treatise*. BASPT, 496-510, 517-530; 551-561

09/28 **MIDTERM I (Will cover everything through 09/21)**

Week 7
10/01 The Social Contract II: Rousseau
Reading: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* BASPT 611-615, 664-718

10/03 Justice as a Social Construct: Human nature, norms, and habits
Reading: David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* BASPT 586-602

**SHORT WRITING ASSIGNMENT II OPTIONAL RE-WRITE DUE. TURN IN TO OAKS BY THE BEGINNING OF CLASS***

10/05 Discussion: Contracts and Constructs
Prepare to discuss a passage from the reading

*10/06 (Saturday) Storm Day Makeup*

Week 8
**V. Justice as Paying Debts**
10/08 Reciprocity
Reading: David Schmidtz, *Elements of Justice*, 75-103 (OAKS)

10/10 Mutualism and Free Association

10/12 The Limits of Obligation
Reading: George Kateb, “The Liberal Contract: Individualism, War, and the Constitution” (OAKS)

Week 9
10/15 Discussion: Obligation, reciprocity, and the idea of debt
Prepare to discuss a passage from the reading

**SHORT WRITING ASSIGNMENT III DUE. TURN IN TO OAKS BY THE BEGINNING OF CLASS***

VI. Justice as the Good of the Many vs. the Good of the Individual
10/17 Utilitarianism I: Bentham and Mill
   Reading: BAPST 876-881, 895-900, 931-941, 916-27

10/19 No class (Association for Political Theory Meeting)

Week 10
10/22 Individualism and Association I
   Reading, Alexis de Tocqueville, 966-974, Additional readings on OAKS

10/24 Individualism and Association II
   Reading: Henry David Thoreau, from Civil Disobedience, BAPST 974-980

10/26 Discussion: Individualism and Association
   Prepare to discuss a passage from the reading

Week 11
VII. Justice as Equality
10/29 The Foundations of Women’s Equality I
   Reading: Olympe de Gouges, from Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen, BAPST 781-785; Mary Wollstonecraft, from A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, BAPST 786-827

   *** SHORT WRITING ASSIGNMENT III OPTIONAL RE-WRITE DUE. TURN IN TO OAKS BY THE BEGINNING OF CLASS ***

10/31 Foundations of Women’s Equality II
   Reading: Harriet (Hardy) Taylor Mill, BASPT 955-962, Sojourner Truth, BAPST 963-965

   Instructions for Story Analysis Paper distributed.

11/02 *** MIDTERM II (Covers all material from 09/24-10/26***

Week 12
11/05 (Fall Break, no class)

11/07 Equality and Gender
   Reading: Iris Marion Young, selections from Justice and the Politics of Difference, (OAKS)

11/09 Discussion: Equality and Gender
   Prepare to discuss a passage from the reading

Week 13
11/12 The Foundations of Racial Equality I
Reading: Selections by Frederick Douglass (OAKS)

11/14 The Foundations of Racial Equality II
Reading: Selections by W.E.B. DuBois (OAKS), Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (OAKS)

11/16 Equality and Race
Reading: Selections by Angela Y. Davis (OAKS)

Week 14
11/19 Discussion: Equality and Race

   Prepare to discuss a passage from the reading

   Reminder: The final exam will focus on Antigone. You should plan on reading it over Thanksgiving Break.

*** STORY ANALYSIS PAPER DUE. TURN IN TO OAKS BY THE BEGINNING OF CLASS ***

11/21 (Thanksgiving Break) READ ANTIGONE IN PREPARATION FOR THE FINAL EXAM

11/23 (Thanksgiving Break)

Week 15
VII. Concluding Thoughts: The Elusiveness of Justice
11/26 Ways of thinking about Justice: Distributive Justice
Reading: Selections by John Rawls, (OAKS)

   11/28 Ways of Thinking about Justice II: Political Theory Realism and the Fact of Non-compliance
   Reading: Jacob T. Levy, “There is No Such Thing as Ideal Theory” (OAKS)

11/30 Concluding discussion

   Prepare to discuss a passage from the reading

Week 16
12/03 Discussion of Antigone

   Bring Antigone text

12/07 *** FINAL EXAM: 8:00AM-11:00AM ***

   Bring Antigone text for use during the exam.