Instructor: Dr. Briana L. McGinnis

Email: mcginnisbl@cofc.edu

Please use email to communicate. If you wish to speak in real time, you may arrange a Skype meeting or Zoom office hours.

Skype ID: Briana.laine.mcginnis

Office Hours: Monday 2-4 pm, Tuesdays 2-4 pm, additional hours available by appointment.

Office Hours conducted via Zoom (Link to recurring meetings on Welcome Page on OAKS)

Prerequisites: None

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This is an exclusively online, synchronous course. Participants will need regular access to a computer with Internet connectivity. Students must be familiar with OAKS.

**Objectives:** This course offers you an opportunity to familiarize yourself with important texts and foundational concepts in 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 “community,” and specifically political community. Questions to consider include:

- How should we define the relationship between citizen and community?
- What do we owe our fellow citizens? What do we owe to people who are not members of our own community?
- How much concern should we have for our neighbors?
- How much control should our communities exercise over us?
- What are rights and liberties, and on what basis should we claim or recognize them?
• What makes a good political community? What makes a bad one?
• 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?

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 (quizzes and papers)
• Compare thinkers on similar concepts (papers and exam essays)
• Use concepts to analyze new situations (papers, exam essays)
• Interpret texts by identifying and explaining arguments in their contexts (papers and quizzes)
• Evaluate interpretations of concepts (papers and exam essays)
• Explain the nature and value of normative thinking (papers and exam essays)

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)

Requirements and evaluation

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

Midterm take-home exam 200 (20%)
Reading quizzes (OAKS) 200 (20%)
Final take-home exam 200 (20%)
Story analysis paper 200 (20%)
Participation 200 (20%)

This includes short reflections, OAKS discussion board posts, engagement in small discussion groups, and engagement with the full class during Zoom meetings.

Writing must be turned in to the OAKS Dropbox by the beginning of the class period on the day they are due. Reflections must be posted to the discussion board by the deadlines specified in the assignment instructions.

This class will include a great deal of discussion and the progress of the class is dependent on active, informed student participation. Every student is expected to make high-quality contributions to class discussions on a regular basis. Quality class participation encompasses regular presence and attention, as well as contributing informed, relevant analyses and observations. You must be present to participate, so I strongly encourage you to participate in every Zoom meeting. Further, you must be current on the assigned readings to make high-quality contributions.

REQUIRED TEXT

This course uses one required text:


All other readings will be posted in PDF form on OAKS or available free of charge online.

OAKS

Remaining engaged on OAKS is essential. Below is a list of important class elements that will be administered via OAKS:

- Announcements will appear on the opening course page
- The majority of the readings for this class will be posted on OAKS
- Grades will be posted to the gradebook
- Writing assignments will be turned in to the OAKS Dropbox
- Reading quizzes must be completed via OAKS
- The class discussion board is located on OAKS
If you are uncomfortable using OAKS, I strongly urge you to take advantage of one of many available tutorials.

**Syllabus**
This syllabus is a guide and it contains vital information about the class. Please read it carefully. This syllabus is subject to change. Please see the final section of the syllabus for additional policies and resources.

**Etiquette for Zoom meetings**
Please be respectful. We will discuss contentious issues in this class and there will be times when you may be upset, but you are expected to listen and respond thoughtfully to your colleagues – even when you vehemently disagree with them on matters of great importance to you.

Please address every person in this class as they specify – that means by the name, pronoun, etc. that they indicate (both verbally and in written communication). The convention at the College of Charleston is to address faculty as “Dr.” You should address me as Dr. McGinnis or Professor McGinnis.

Try to learn the names of your classmates. If you cannot recall someone’s name, you should refer to them as “my esteemed colleague.”

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

I. Community: discipline, solidarity and care, passive injustice

**Week 1**

08/25 Introduction to Class
   No reading.

08/27 Living together justly

**Week 2**

09/01 Living together: conflict and friendship

09/03 Living together: Complicity and passive injustice
Reading: Judith Shklar, “Giving Injustice Its Due” from The Faces of Injustice, 15-50 available on OAKS. Recommended: Introduction (1-15)

Week 3:

II. Justification

09/08 What is just? Giving people what they deserve
   Reading: Reading: David Schmidtz, Elements of Justice, 31-70 (This looks like a lot of reading, but the pages are short)

09/10 What is just? Reciprocity
   Reading: David Schmidtz, Elements of Justice, 73-103

Week 4

III. Power

09/15 Political concerns and the will of the strongest
   Reading: Thucydides, “Melian Dialogue.” BASPT 7-11

09/17 Realpolitik: Friends and enemies
   Reading: Carl Schmitt, from The Concept of the Political (OAKS) and The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy (OAKS)

Week 5

09/22 Power, truth, and the public good
   Reading: Machiavelli, from The Prince, BASPT 343-362

09/24 Power, violence, and the public good
   Reading: Machiavelli, from The Prince, BASPT 362-375

Week 6

09/29 Exercise: The people
   No assigned reading.

IV. Citizenship and equality: Who belongs? Who is credible?
10/01 Citizenship and gender: historical foundations I

Reading: Olympe de Gouges, from Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen, BAPST 781-785; selections from Angelina Grimke, Letters on the Equality of Sexes and the Condition of Women,

Week 7

10/06 Foundations of gender equality II

Reading: Harriet (Hardy) Taylor Mill, BASPT 955-962

10/08 Intersectionality and its forerunners

Reading: Sojourner Truth, BAPST 963-965; Selections by Anna Julia Cooper (OAKS)

Week 8

10/13: Oppression today: Structural Oppression

Reading: Iris Marion Young, “Five Faces of Oppression” (OAKS)

10/15 Structural Oppression continued

Reading: Iris Marion Young, “Five Faces of Oppression” (OAKS)

Week 9

10/20 Oppression and Racial Equality: Epistemic Equality, Identity, and Tone Policing II

Reading: Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (OAKS)

10/22 Oppression and Racial Equality: The Experience of Oppression and Its Invisibility

Reading: Selections by W.E.B. DuBois (OAKS)

Week 10

10/27 Oppression and Racial Equality: Slavery and mass criminalization

Reading: Angela Y. Davis, “From the Prison of Slavery to the Slavery of Prison: Frederick Douglass and the Convict Lease System” (OAKS).

10/29 Exercise: Criminalization and surveillance

Week 11

V. Individualism vs. the common good
11/03 Election Day – no class. Vote!

11/05 The social contract I: Keeping order
   Reading: Excerpts from Thomas Hobbes and John Locke

   Week 11
11/10 The social contract II: Making virtuous citizens
   Reading: Selections from Rousseau’s *The Social Contract* BASPT 611-615, 664-718
11/12 Critiquing the social contract
   Reading: Selections from Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract*

   Week 12
11/17 Utilitarianism: Bentham
   Reading: BAPST
11/19 Utilitarianism: Mill
   Reading: BASPT

   Week 13
11/24 Self-interest rightly understood
   Reading: Excerpts from Alexis de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America*
11/26 Thanksgiving Break, no class.

   Week 14
12/01: Individualism and resistance
   Reading: Henry David Thoreau, from *Civil Disobedience*, BAPST 974-980

12/03 Concluding thoughts

Take home final exam due December 8th.
POLICIES

Time Commitment (Attendance Policy): We will move quickly in this class, and the reading load is substantial. You should expect to invest approximately 3-4 hours per week of active work in the course. I recommend you log into OAKS at least 2-3 days per week to stay current. Additionally, you should check your CofC email regularly.

I am aware of and sympathetic to the many challenges that college student experience, especially now in the time of COVID-19. If you are experiencing personal or health-related challenges, please communicate with me (sooner is better than later!). There are numerous resources that I can recommend to you and, to the best of my ability, I will work with you to help you complete the course successfully.

Depending on circumstances, sometimes withdrawing from the class is the best option. October 28this the withdrawal deadline with the grade of “W”. Regardless of your circumstances, please reach out to me or somebody else for support before and/or after deciding to withdraw from the class.

Engagement & Participation
We will cover a lot of ground in this course, and the semester will pass quickly. As such, it is important to consider how you will meet the participation and engagement requirements of this class. Different people prefer to participate in different ways, and it is each student’s responsibility to ensure that they are fully engaged with the class.

Zoom meetings: We will meet as scheduled twice weekly. The meeting periods for this class will be heavily focused upon discussion, so it is important that you complete the reading-guide Voicethreads and the Voicethread lectures prior to class meetings. Participation in both full-class discussions and breakout groups constitute essential components of this class.

Engaging on OAKS: Your active OAKS presence is strongly encouraged, even if you regularly participate in Zoom discussion meetings. Your thoughtful and civil engagement will be essential to enhance your own and your peers’ learning throughout the semester. We should show curiosity and respect for each other and our individual differences, valuing diverse perspectives during online discussions. Engagement requires us all to practice the values of fairness, justice, equity, responsiveness, and empathy.

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

Please note that it is not permissible to turn in work for this class that was produced for another class without prior approval.
Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that, when identified, are investigated. Each incident will be examined to determine the degree of culpability.

Resources and 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 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: http://academicaffairs.cofc.edu/documents/procedures-and-practices/statement-of-accommodation.pdf

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. You can contact Center at SNAP@cofc.edu or (843) 953-1431.

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.

Center for Student Learning: I encourage you to utilize the Center for Student Learning’s (CSL) academic support services for assistance in study strategies, speaking & writing skills, and course content. They offer tutoring, Supplemental Instruction, study skills appointments, and workshops. Students of all abilities have become more successful using these programs throughout their academic career and the services are available to you at no additional cost. The CSL is located on the first floor of Addlestone Library and they can assist you with writing term papers, essays, letters, memos or book reviews from developing ideas and organizing materials to editing final drafts (in addition to other services). This fall, the Writing Lab is offering Online Writing Assistance Monday-Thursday 10am-9pm; Friday 10am-12pm; and Sunday 4-9pm.

Students can visit the CSL website to sign up for help by following the website’s directions and go into a drop-in session with Writing Lab Consultants. For more information regarding these services please visit the CSL website at http://csl.cofc.edu.

Food & Housing Resources: Many students report experiencing food and housing insecurity. If you are facing challenges in securing food (such as not being able to afford groceries or get sufficient food to eat every day) and housing (such as lacking a safe and stable place to live), please contact the Dean of Students for support: (http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/about/salt.php).

Also, you can go to http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/student-food-housing-insecurity/index.php to learn about food and housing assistance that is available to you. In addition, there are several resources on and off campus to help. You can visit the Cougar Pantry in the Stern Center (2nd floor), a student-run food pantry that provides dry-goods and hygiene products at no charge to
any student in need. **Please do not hesitate to speak with me if you are experiencing issues that affect your ability to fully participate in POLI 399.**

**Inclusion:** College of Charleston offers many resources for LGBTQ+ students, faculty and staff along with their allies. I will gladly honor your request to address you by the name and pronouns of your choice. Please advise me of any request early in the semester via your college-issued email account or during office hours so that I may make the appropriate notation on my class list.

**Mental & Physical Wellbeing:** At the college, we take every students’ mental and physical wellbeing seriously. If you find yourself experiencing physical illnesses, please reach out to student health services (843.953.5520). And if you find yourself experiencing any mental health challenges (for example, anxiety, depression, stressful life events, sleep deprivation, and/or loneliness/homesickness) please consider contacting either the Counseling Center (professional counselors at http://counseling.cofc.edu or 843.953.5640 3rd floor, Robert Scott Small Building) or the Students 4 Support (certified volunteers through texting "4support" to 839863, visit http://counseling.cofc.edu/cct/index.php, or meet with them in person 3rd Floor Stern Center). These services are there for you to help you cope with difficulties you may be experiencing and to maintain optimal physical and mental health.

**Inclement Weather, Pandemic or Substantial Disruption Policy**

For your reference, the College’s disruption policy is below. This class is being offered fully online for the sake of safety and continuity. As such, it will proceed as scheduled unless the instructor notifies you otherwise.

If in-person classes are suspended, faculty will announce to their students a detailed plan for a change in modality to ensure the continuity of learning. All students must have access to a computer equipped with a web camera, microphone, and Internet access. Resources are available to provide students with these essential tools. Additional Student Support Services: http://capp.cofc.edu/Support%20Services/index.php

Additional Policies: http://policy.cofc.edu/policy.php

**Military members**

Veterans and active duty military personnel with special circumstances (e.g., upcoming deployments, drill requirements, disabilities) are welcome and encouraged to communicate these, in advance if possible,

**Technology**

It is required that you have a computer with Internet access, microphone, and speakers. You must have a reliable Internet connection. Having to rely on the public library or Starbucks, for example, will likely make it challenging to have a consistent presence inside OAKS. If you are concerned, please contact me within the first week so we can determine if this course will be
manageable for you. I have also included resources below if you have concerns about course access or financial burdens. If you have technical problems, please contact Student Computing Support or Helpdesk using these methods:

- Student Computing Support at 843-953-5457 or via email studentcomputingsupport@cofc.edu
- IT Helpdesk at 843-953-3375 or helpdesk@cofc.edu.

It’s important to resolve technical problems swiftly, so do not delay getting support. Computer failure or unavailability does not constitute an excuse for not completing assignment.

**Recording of Classes (via ZOOM)**

Class sessions will be recorded via both voice and video recording. By attending and remaining in this class, the student consents to being recorded. Recorded class sessions are for instructional use only and may not be shared with anyone who is not enrolled in the class.

**Community Standards**

While this class is online, you are sharing the experience of working through important political problems with other people — not just usernames on a discussion board. Please bear this in mind when engaging with each other and be thoughtful in your contributions and generous in your interpretations.

**Netiquette**

Please bear in mind that online communication precludes many of the non-verbal cues that normally facilitate face-to-face communication. This being the case, it is important to err on the side of generous interpretation and civility. What was written as a simple statement can easily come across as aggressive or argumentative.

Vignette: “Texting Confusion” from Key & Peele (Content warning: some spicy language): https://vimeo.com/121923151

**General Guidelines:**

- Treat your instructor and classmates with respect in email, discussion posts, and any other communication.
- Please be civil: address people by the names and pronouns they specify.
- Use clear and concise language.
- Remember that all college-level communication should have correct spelling and grammar (this includes discussion board posts).
- Avoid slang terms (they may be misunderstood or confuse others) and texting abbreviations such as “r” instead of “are” or “u” for “you.”
- Use standard fonts such as Arial, Calibri or Times New Roman and use a size 10 or 12 pt. font.
- CAPS LOCK MAKES IT SOUND LIKE YOU ARE YELLING. PLEASE DO NOT YELL AT US.
- Avoid the use of emoticons and emojis; they are not appropriate for academic writing.
• Be cautious when using humor or irony. Tone is difficult to convey in an email or discussion post and your message might be taken amiss or come across in an offensive or passive-aggressive fashion.

Thank you for reading this syllabus. Below, please find a photo of my cat looking majestic, offered in appreciation of your effort.