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:

Plato
- Republic
Andrew Bailey and others, Eds.
- Broadview Anthology of Social and Political Thought (SPT)
Octavia Butler  
*Bloodchild* (Second edition)

**Assignments:**
- Two papers 15% each
- Two midterm exams: 10% each
- Short story responses (5) 15%
- Final exam: 15%
- Participation (including journals and reflections) 15%
- Lecture/event response papers (3) 5%

The class participation grade includes attendance, participation in class, participation reflection and journal entries; missing *(excused or unexcused)* more than 4 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. One useful way to use your class journal is to note questions that you have about the day’s reading.

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, journals 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/](http://disabilityservices.cofc.edu/)

**Food and Housing Resources**

Many CoC 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](http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/about/salt.php)). Also, you can go to [http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/student-food-housing-insecurity/index.php](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.

**Weather:** In the event of class being cancelled on account of the weather, I expect you to use OAKS and to have your books available. Every effort will be made to have discussions online during a weather event.

**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:

1/8: Introduction, Leo Strauss, “What is Political Philosophy?” (OAKS)

1/13: Plato, *Republic*, Book I, ll. 327a-354c

1/15: Plato, Crito, pp. 23-29, *SPT* and Octavia Butler, “Amnesty” short story response due on OAKS by 2pm

1/20: **Martin Luther King Jr. day, no class**

1/22: Plato, Crito, pp. 23-29, *SPT*

1/27: Martin Luther King, Jr., Letter from a Birmingham Jail, pp. 850-858, *SPT*

1/29: Plato, *Republic* Bk II, ll.357a-376d

**Paper due date**


**Paper due date**

2/19: Butler “Speech Sounds” short story response due on OAKS by 2pm

2/24: **Exam**

2/26: *Republic* Bks II-III, ll. 376d-417b


3/16: **Spring break**

3/18: **Spring break**

3/23: Republic Bk IV, ll. 419a-445e
3/25: Republic, Bk V, ll. 449a-473c5
3/30: Exam
4/1: Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*, pp. 717-733, SPT
4/8: Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, pp. 825-836, SPT and Butler “Bloodchild” short story response due on OAKS by 2pm
4/13: Republic Bks V-VII, ll. 473d-541b
4/15: Republic Bks VIII-IX, ll. 543a-592b5

**Paper due date**

4/20: Republic, Bk X, ll. 595a-621c5 and Butler, “Book of Martha” short story response due on OAKS by 2pm
4/22: Review

**Final Exam:** April 29, 8am

**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.

**Journals/participation reflection:**

Each student must have a note taking system that can also be used for class journal prompts. These journals will be used to track your questions, connections you are making between texts, practice analysis and textual explication. You will use the journals to write your participation reflections, which are due
twice during the semester. I will not read your journal prompts, but you will have a hard time writing the required reflections without them.

**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 are two papers (5-7 pps) required for the class. There are four possible paper due dates. One paper must be handed in prior to spring break (in the first two due dates). Papers handed in for any of the first three due dates can be rewritten. There will be paper topics for each of the proposed paper due dates (1/29, 2/17, 3/11, 4/15). 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 three 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](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](http://polisci.cofc.edu/documents/12policitationguide.pdf)
5) Extensions may 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://deanofstudents.cofc.edu/honor-system/studenthandbook/](http://deanofstudents.cofc.edu/honor-system/studenthandbook/)

**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: 

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 a 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:

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 a bibliography):

Please sign and date: __________________________________________________________