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 (papers, exam essays)
• **Interpret texts** by identifying and explaining arguments in their contexts (papers and exams)
• **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
• 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**
Attendance will be recorded. You cannot participate actively in this class if you are not present. You may miss no more than three class meetings – any additional absences will affect your grade.

Everything in the class – including the content of class discussions – may appear on exams.

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 and be engaged. **20% of your grade** is determined by participation, so I strongly encourage you to always **come prepared with a passage from that week’s readings that you would like to discuss**, in case you are called on in class. I will periodically ask students
to suggest a passage, read it aloud to the class, and explain (briefly) why they believe it to be significant.

I reserve the right to introduce unscheduled (“pop”) reading quizzes if it becomes apparent that the class is not completing assigned readings. Those grades will be calculated as part of your participation grade.

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

**Communication**
The best way to reach me is via email (mcginnisbl@cofc.edu). Class communications will be conducted via your College of Charleston email, so please be certain to check it regularly. I will read and respond to email within 24 hours, Monday-Friday, during regular business hours. Response times will be longer on weekends and during breaks. Please first consult the syllabus to see if your question is answered here.

**Etiquette**
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.”

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

- **Midterm Exam** 200 (20%)
- **Final exam** 400 (40%)
- **Applying the ideas: Story analysis** 200 (20%) You will have the option of revising this assignment for a higher grade.

**Participation** 200 (20%) 100 points will be determined by your reading introduction. Due to scheduling exigencies, you must present on your assigned day and missed presentations cannot be made up.

**Extra Credit**
Extra credit is available. You may attend any Political Science Department event at the College of Charleston (talk, etc.) and write a 300-500 word response to it. Each response is worth 10 points. You may turn in a maximum of five extra credit assignments over the course of the semester. Please turn them in to the Extra Credit Dropbox folder on OAKS. Talks in other departments (sociology, anthropology, history, African American Studies, Latin American and Caribbean Studies, etc.) may also qualify. Please request authorization for talks outside of the Political Science Department.

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 one required text:


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

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

I. What is Justice? What is Injustice?

**Week 1**
01/09 Introduction to Class
Today, you will sign up for a reading to present in class. Please note your day and reading here:

____________________________________________________________________

**Week 2**
01/14 Defining Justice I: Justice as a virtue

01/16 Defining Justice II: Justice as a set of practices, a structure, or a set of relations

*Please bring the reading to class!
http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.5.v.html
Aristotle, *Politics*, Book III: Part I, Parts IV- VIII. Available free of charge:
http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/politics.3.three.html

**Week 3**
01/21 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)

II. Why Care About Justice? The Irrelevance of the Ethical to Politics

01/23 Political Concerns and the Will of the Strongest

**Week 4**
01/28 Politics and Power
Reading: Carl Schmitt, from *The Concept of the Political* (OAKS)
01/30 Realpolitik
    Reading: Machiavelli, from *The Prince*, BASPT 343-362; 362-375

Week 5
III. Keeping Promises, Keeping Order: The Social Contract
02/04  Keeping Order, Keeping Compacts: Thomas Hobbes
    Reading: Hobbes, *Leviathan* BASPT, 419-438; 475-490

02/06 The Social Contract and the good Lockean Citizen
    Locke, from *The Second Treatise*. BASPT, 496-510, 517-542, 548-561

Week 6
IV. Good Citizens, Good Societies: The Social Contract Revisited
02/11  Living together virtuously
    Reading: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* BASPT 611-615, 664-718

02/13 Norms and habits vs. laws and agreements I
    Reading on norms, OAKS

Week 7
02/18  Norms and habits vs. laws and agreements II
    Reading: David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* BASPT 586-602

02/20 Wrap up: The Social Contract; Review for Midterm
*** MIDTERM DISTRIBUTED ***

Week 8
V. Justice as Paying Debts and Giving Each What They are Owed
02/25 Desert
    Reading: David Schmidtz, *Elements of Justice*, 31-70 *(This looks like a lot of reading, but the pages are short)*

02/27 Reciprocity
    Reading: David Schmidtz, *Elements of Justice*, 73-103

Week 9
03/03: The Limits of Obligation
    Reading: George Kateb, “The Liberal Contract: Individualism, War, and the Constitution”
    (OAKS)
VI. Justice as the Good of the Many vs. the Good of the Individual
03/05 Individualism
Henry David Thoreau, from Civil Disobedience, BAPST 974-980;

Week 10
03/10 Association and the Excesses of Individualism
Reading: Alexis de Tocqueville, 966-974
***Review Instructions for Short Story Critical Reflection, Available on OAKS***

03/12 Utilitarianism: Bentham and Mill
Reading: BAPST 876-881, 895-900; 931-941, 916-27
*** SHORT STORY CRITICAL REFLECTION DUE 03/24 ***

Week 11
03/17 Spring break, no class
03/19 Spring break, no class

Week 11
VII. Justice as Equality; Equality and Difference
03/24 The Foundations of Women’s Equality I

03/26 Foundations of Women’s Equality II
Reading: Harriet (Hardy) Taylor Mill, BASPT 955-962

Week 12
03/31 Intersectionality in the 19th Century
Reading: Sojourner Truth, BAPST 963-965; Selections by Anna Julia Cooper (OAKS)

04/02 Oppression today: Structural Oppression
Reading: Iris Marion Young, “Five Faces of Oppression” (OAKS)

Week 13
04/07 Oppression and Racial Equality: Epistemic Equality, Identity, and Tone Policing I
Reading: Selections by Frederick Douglass (OAKS)

04/09 Oppression and Racial Equality: Epistemic Equality, Identity, and Tone Policing II
Reading: Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (OAKS)
Week 14
04/14 Oppression and Racial Equality: The Experience of Oppression and Its Invisibility
   Reading: Selections by W.E.B. DuBois (OAKS)

04/16: Oppression and Racial Equality: The Legacy of Slavery in the U.S.
   Reading: Angela Y. Davis, “From the Prison of Slavery to the Slavery of Prison: Frederick
   Douglass and the Convict Lease System” (OAKS).

Week 15
VII. Concluding Thoughts: The Elusiveness of Justice and the Purpose of Political Theory
04/21 Wrap-Up and Review Session

Suggested further reading on ways of thinking about justice: Selections by John Rawls, (OAKS);
Jacob T. Levy, “There is No Such Thing as Ideal Theory” (OAKS)

Final exam: take home