

Political Science 150.02  
Introduction to Political Thought  
Spring '17  
12 – 12:50 PM  
Maybank 111

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Hours: Thursdays 11-3

\*Please note: I do not allow the use of computers or handhelds in my classroom. I have ample reasons for this, not least is the use of any device (even if you are sneaking and trying to hold your handheld in your lap) has been shown to affect those around you.

Perhaps the simplest way to understand what political theory (or political thought) is about is to say it addresses what **values** or **norms** should guide us in our collective life. I here emphasize this is about our collective lives life to make you aware that is the key question and not what we as individuals might prefer. In group decisions about many things we seldom get what we individually would choose. That is, we have to agree what the rules and guiding principles are that will apply to all of us, how we will make them, and then figure out how to enforce them.

You should know that 'values' or 'norms' are generally not static concepts. They have mutated throughout history. We can take punishment as one extreme example. At one time in history many thought witches should be burned at the stake (or dunked while tied to a chair on the theory that if they were a witch they would live and if not, they would drown). We now not only would laugh at the belief in witches, but also can note that the chosen method of punishment is both cruel and unusual.

Problems are not static either. Just now, we are wrestling as a nation with what many think (or are perceived as) are overly aggressive policing tactics that seem to be race-based. Human trafficking has changed since the days of blatant slavery and now grows particularly in the sex industry. We now are facing historically unparalleled problems in the form of environmental degradation and global warming that never entered the mind of Thomas Jefferson. While economic inequality has always existed, it is now reaching levels of disparity not seen since 1900 during the Gilded Age.

What should be the role of political science in dealing with such things?

I take the following quote from David Easton as the guiding touchstone in this course:

If we take seriously the conclusions of the sociologists of knowledge, then our scientific output is very much shaped by the ethical perspectives we hold. In that event, by failing to encourage within the discipline creative speculation about political alternatives in the largest sense, we cannot help but imprison ourselves within the limitations of the ongoing value framework. As that framework begins to lose its relevance for the

problems of society, its system-maintenance commitments must blind us to the urgent questions emerging even for the immediate future.

David Easton, 1969  
“The New Revolution in Political Science”  
*American Political Science Review*, p 1058

In simple, everyday terms, what Easton said in 1969 is that if we take things as they are empirically, then we imprison ourselves in the ongoing value framework of *what is* and if we do not compare them to what *could be* to make things better then we are affirming what is whether that is our desire or not. He is also clearly saying that we should engage in “creative speculation” about political alternatives. In broad, and throughout history, this has been the basic task of political theorists.

There are at least three fundamental ways to study political philosophy.

The first, most common way, is to treat it’s content as focusing on the ‘great political thinkers’ throughout history. In this format, a political theory text would have sequential chapters on these great thinkers, usually beginning with Plato and then proceeding with Aristotle to St. Thomas Aquinas, and so on. Among political theorists, there is general agreement about who most of the great thinkers are. We are less clear about who would make up a “second string” or a secondary list. Some, like Plato, you may have heard of. Others like G.W.F. Hegel might be strangers to you. In any event, this approach tends to treat each thinker discreetly and evaluate the corpus of his work although some comparative analysis is done since some things some wrote were in response to their predecessor(s). Usually this list is historically sequential—beginning usually with the Greeks (usually Plato) and usually ending with one or two twentieth century thinkers.

A second approach is to consider a political concept in a thematic fashion and then use it as a thread to examine what various political thinkers had to say about it. Thus, a political theory text following this methodology would have a chapter on ‘freedom,’ a chapter on ‘citizenship’ and so on. There, for example, we could take the concept of ‘justice’ and examine what thinkers had to say about it independently of a lot of other things they wrote about. There are some pretty durable concepts out there. These would include justice of course, but also morality, citizenship, freedom, liberty, community, the state, rule, etc. When taken this way, political theorists usually had a lot to say about certain value/concepts and not much on others. For example, for Plato, who lived and wrote in a slave-holding society had little to say about freedom or liberty but John Stuart Mill wrote an entire book on that topic.

A third approach is to render politics as a problematic area and theorizes about solutions. The problematic areas may be vast and difficult or stiff difficult but very specific. For example, many are growing more and more concerned about radical Islamists (who hardly represent the majority of those who profess to be Muslim in faith), in the United States there is a good deal of concern about police tactics and practices (but not in all areas), and a specific concern in some metropolitan areas about the homeless and affordable housing (as in San Francisco). This “problematic areas” approach may or may not use the writings of very many political thinkers for various reasons. If, for example, we think about such current issues as environmentalism or globalization, these may engage us in thinking about such things as human rights, justice, fairness, the modern nation-state, even animal rights. But we cannot look to very many (if any) thinkers who lived two hundred years ago (except in a very abstract way) to help us address it. Other problems such as the emergence of the globalized, multi-national corporations, increasing

consumerism (as a cultural phenomenon) or global warming are simply absent in history of political thought.

**The sharpest distinction I can make in this course that may help you understand what it is about is by pointing out the difference between “empirical” data and “normative” values.;** that is, to reiterate what Easton said above in a different way. Empirical data or facts are what “is” and the product/knowledge of an established scientific method that can be replicated independent of any particular thinker. Another in California could conduct empirical research done by a scientist in China and presumably the results would be the same. Both do their research following the canons of the ‘scientific method.’

A normative approach would not deny what is empirically the case but might argue that it *ought* not to be so. For example, I can gather data that factually shows how wealth is divided in the United States (the percentage/amount that flows to the top 1 percent, or 10 percent, or bottom 20 percent). That would be empirical data—what *is* the case—subject only to some interpretation. But I can also make an argument that that division is “unfair”, “unjust”, “too extreme,” a threat to the ongoing political stability of the United States (or socio-economic and political system) or undermining our future in other way. So, normative thinking/theorizing points to what ought to be by arguing that what “is” diminishes or even negates certain values (like justice, equality, fairness, etc.).

Certainly we do argue about what the empirical facts are. (For example (a stupid one I know), is global warming occurring and **is it being caused by human activity?**) In these cases it is best to know as much as possible what is factually the case to consider before proceeding to saying what ought to be the case or what we should do. That said, you should know (and we can discuss) that there are many different ways to state ‘the facts.’ In the world of politics (and all other areas for that matter), politicians will make statements they claim are factual but which are distorted or simply lies. Sometimes crucial (or what can be argued are crucial) facts are intentionally omitted from an argument. For example, illegal immigrants DO pay taxes even though a dominant political argument is that they are getting a ‘free ride’ from the government. We may still say they should not be here—but we cannot say that one reason is because they do not pay taxes. One of the problems with getting data or facts stems from the growth of the Internet where people more and more get information that is framed to confirm what they believe to be the facts rather than try to present a balanced picture. We discuss things less and less on a face-to-face basis and deal less and less with those who disagree with us. Our political tribes have become at least partially virtual and isolated from one-another with little or no creative exchanges/dialogues.

Some things are pure value or normative arguments. For example, some people believe in God. Others don’t. A whole lot of pure value arguments are usually religiously tinged. But not all are. Some believe we should be able to own assault rifles. Others don’t. There is a lot of empirical data out there on both sides and, of course, an ambiguous Second Amendment in the Constitution where most everyone these days completely ignores the preamble.

Once a set of facts is agreed upon or there is general agreement about the existence of a problem political theory comes into the picture. The issues or questions it deals with are typically framed in the form of value statements or political preferences. There are many topics that are or have been consistently considered by political theorists throughout history. These include (but this is

not an exhaustive list) addressing such concepts as legitimate political authority, power, justice, freedom, liberty, citizenship, rights (natural or otherwise), the state, and property.

Learning goals: To encourage you to think broadly about this course the department of political science has established learning goals.

These are as follows:

POLI 150: Introduction to Political Thought

- Students will demonstrate knowledge of key thinkers and concepts
- Students will compare thinkers on similar concept
- Students will use concepts to analyze new situations
- Students will explain the nature and value of normative thinking

Even though the text we are using focuses on a consistent topic chosen by the authors – the concept of ‘civil society’ – and explores that sequentially as it is addressed by political philosophers throughout history, my emphasis in the course will be on the third learning goal on the list—that you learn to use political philosophy to analyze new situations. For the most part this is because I believe that many of the major political issues we are facing are in some important ways unprecedented in the history of mankind. These are globalization as an economic and socio-cultural phenomenon, sustainability (which includes but is not exhausted by major environmental issues) and issues associated with technology. For example, with easy air travel, some (probably not a whole lot) pregnant women with Asian citizenship will fly to the United States and give birth here, automatically granting US citizenship to the baby. This phenomenon is called “birth tourism” and is based on a concept called “jus soli,” which means birthright of the soil.

Text: There is one required text for the course. It is:

**Political Thinking, Political Theory, and Civil Society** 3rd Edition (Steven M. DeLue and Timothy Dale. (Referred to as Political Thinking below)..

Reading assignments are below—based on class response I will post additional short reading assignments on Oaks throughout the course.

While this is not a contemporary political topics course at least a portion of it does focus on contemporary political issues (such as how to treat political refugees). These are not particular “new” topics but do have contemporary relevance. Accordingly, you will have input into how we approach and discuss particular issues or topics. I will also rule out some topics—but we can talk about why I choose to do that.

Class schedule:

1. Wed	Jan 11	Introduction: Why is politics necessary?: Political Science & Political Theory: Differences
2. Fri	Jan 13	Introduction: Liberal Political Thought...American beliefs:

		Watch Haidt video on the Moral Foundations of Liberals and Conservatives available on Oaks
3. Mon	Jan 16	<b>No class: MLK Day</b>
4. Wed	Jan 18	Class Discussion: The Approach in the Textbook & Civil Society Read: Review of “Bowling Alone” by Robert Putnam. Link is on Oaks.
Fri	Jan 20	Class vote, discussion on threats to the modern world
6. Mon	Jan 23	Getting information: Watch: Pariser video on Filter Bubbles available on Oaks Read: The Problem With “Self Investigation” In a Post-Truth Era available on Oaks Read: “Inside a Fake News Sausage Factory” available on Oaks
7. Wed	Jan 25	Read: Political Thinking, <b>Introduction</b> and Chapter 1 Be prepared to discuss why Aristotle elected to accept the death penalty rather than flee Athens. Be prepared to discuss the Liberal Approach, Toleration and Mutual Respect and Adam Smith’s Dilemma
8. Fri	Jan 27	Read: Political Thinking, Chapter 2 (Plato) Be prepared to discuss why Plato thought the “noble lie” was necessary, how he viewed the human soul, and his views on democracy Go online and read enough about Plato’s Allegory of the Cave to understand it—find a picture or graphic rendering <b>Note: This reading assignment is on Plato—for him and pretty much every political philosopher we cover in the class you find a brief (usually 5 or 6 minutes) video by searching for the philosopher’s name and adding “Philosophy Now” to the search, e.g., plato philosophy now. This would simply look like “plato philosophy now.” These will not substitute for the readings, but will give you a quick overview and often discuss things that are not in the text. For any philosopher we cover I’ll be happy to answer or discuss the video if you have question as a result of viewing it.</b>
9. Mon	Jan 30	Read: Political Thinking, Chapter 3 (Aristotle). Be prepared to discuss why Aristotle thought politics was a practical activity, why friendship was so important to him, and his views of the human soul

10. Wed	Feb 1	Read about Liberalism and Old Liberalism :(All of Section 1 and Section 2.1: Link on Oaks Read about Communitarianism We will discuss the two views and they will remain critical throughout the course
11. Fri	Feb 3	Read: Political Thinking, Chapter 4 (Augustine, etc)
12. Mon	Feb 6	Read: Introduction and Part 1 of “The Enlightenment” found of Oaks
13. Wed	Feb 8	Read: Part 2 of “The Enlightenment” found on Oaks <b>You can expect that Exam #1 will be administered to cover the material up to this point.</b>
14. Fri	Feb 10	Read: Political Thinking, Chapter 6 (Machiavelli)
15. Mon	Feb 13	Class discussion on the Reformation (Protestant)
16. Wed	Feb 15	Class discussion on Human Nature: Video (Nature v. Nurture—even if we are some of both which part of us is nature and which part of us is nurture?)
17. Fri	Feb 17	Class discussion on Inequality
18. Mon	Feb 20	Read: Political Thinking, Chapter 7 (Hobbes)
19. Wed	Feb 22	More on Hobbes: Assignment TBA
20. Fri	Feb 24	Read: Political Thinking, Chapter 8 (Spinoza)
21. Mon	Feb 27	Read: Political Thinking, Chapter 9 (Locke)
22. Wed	Mar 1	Read on Montesquieu in the .pdf on Oaks Also read about the Spirit of the Laws in .pdf on Oaks
23. Fri	Mar 3	Reserved (a guess on my part that we might not have class this day)
Mon	Mar 6	<b>Spring Break</b>
Wed	Mar 8	<b>Spring Break</b>

Fri	Mar 10	<b>Spring Break</b>
24. Mon	Mar 13	Class discussion on the influence/implications of Locke and Montesquieu on the US Constitution. Implications of a federal system—the horizontal <u>and</u> vertical separation of power
25. Wed	Mar 15	Class discussion on modern religion and politics (with some reference to the Puritans)
26. Fri	Mar 17	Read: Political Thinking, Chapter 10 (Rousseau)
27. Mon	Mar 20	More on Rousseau and summary of Contract Theorists
28. Wed	Mar 22	Class discussion on the emergence of capitalism/industrialization
29. Fri	Mar 24	Read: Political Thinking, Chapter 11 (Kant)
30. Mon	Mar 27	Read: Political Thinking, Chapter 12 (Hegel)
31. Wed	Mar 29	Class discussion: Modern rationality and science
32. Fri	Mar 31	Read: Political Thinking, Chapter 13 (Marx)
33. Mon	Apr 2	Continuation of Marx
34. Wed	Apr 4	Read: Political Thinking, Chapter 14 (John Stuart Mill)
35. Fri	Apr 6	Class Discussion: Thinking About Justice Watch Ariely video found on Oaks
36. Mon	Apr 9	Read: Political Thinking, Chapter 15 (Rawls)
37. Wed	Apr 11	Read Political Thinking, Chapter 16 (Classic Conservatives)
38. Fri	Apr 13	Read Political Thinking, Chapter 17 (Nietzsche & Foucault)

39. Mon	Apr 16	Class Discussion on Post Modernism: Read the .pdf found on Oaks
40. Wed	Apr 18	Feminism: The Classic Feminists Watch the video interview with Simone de Beauvoir found on Oaks Watch the video introduction to Betty Friedan Watch the 2002 Conversation with Betty Friedan Go to: Videos for feminism found at <a href="http://www.feminist.com/resources/artsspeech/videolist.html">http://www.feminist.com/resources/artsspeech/videolist.html</a> and watch as many of the videos as you wish
41. Fri	Apr 20	Feminism continued (obviously)
41. Mon	Apr 23	Class discussion: Assessing Trump's presidency thus far
Wed	Apr 25	Felts: Social Acceleration

I expect for you to attend class. Attendance sheets for you to sign will be handed out at the beginning of each class. For classes you attend (sign the attendance sheet) you will get 1 point on the attendance score, 0 if you are absent. At the end of the semester I will add each student's total score and then calculate a class average. If your average is in the bottom 20 %, you will lose 5 points on your final grade. If it is in the top 20 % you will gain 5 points. The middle 60 % will neither gain nor lose points. **If you are in the bottom 20 % and I judge your attendance to be satisfactory, no one will be penalized.**

I expect for you to stay up with the readings. Should I get the sense that you are not doing so, I will ask you, at the beginning of the class, to write two or three sentences that convince me you have read the chapter. These will be evaluated on the following scale:

- 2 = Absent or non responsive
- 1= You have not convinced me
- 0 = Accepted, but not very convincing (superficial)
- +1 = You convinced me
- +2 = You convinced me and showed that you thought about it as well

These will be returned as soon as I can read through them, usually the next class.

Exams:

Three papers will be due with one of those being the final exam—

All three exams will be take home and must be submitted as a typed essay (~ 5 pages in length, double-spaced, 12 point Times or Times New Roman font) in the appropriate Dropbox on Oaks. They should be submitted in APA format (without a title page or running header).

I will try to give you some brief tutorials on APA format and prepare my own instructions. However, a comprehensive set of guidelines can be found at:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

Papers that have excessive grammatical errors (run-on sentences, incomplete sentences, misspellings **and especially fail to use paragraphs**) will be returned ungraded for you to make corrections and resubmit.

Grades will be calculated at follows:

First paper = 30 %

Second paper = 30 %

Final paper = 40%

I reserve up to 10% of your grade for class participation and attendance. This will be a subtraction or addition to your average exam score.

**Final Grades will be calculated as follows:**

93-100 A

87-89 B+

80-82 B-

73-76 C

67-69 D+

60-62 D-

90-92 A-

83-86 B

77-79 C+

70-72 C-

63-66 D

59 and below F

**Computers and texting:** There will be no open laptops or tablets in class. I consider texting to be the same as talking in class—call me old-fashioned if you will, but it is discourteous to me as well as your classmates. Moreover, there is ample experimental evidence that you cannot do two things at the same time . . . if you are texting, you are only paying partial attention to class. So, no texting is permitted either. Violation of either of these rules will result in punishment at my discretion.

**Center for Disability Services: Students Needing Access Parity (SNA)**

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

**Academic Support Services—The Center for Student Learning**

The CSL, located on the first floor of the library, offers a wide variety of tutoring and other academic resources that support many courses offered at the College. Services include walk-in tutoring, by appointment tutoring, study strategies appointments, Peer Academic Coaching (PAC), and Supplemental Instruction (SI). All services are described and all lab schedules are posted on the CSL website <http://csl.cofc.edu/>, or call 843.953.5635 for information.

**Honor code:** I expect you to adhere to the College's honor code. Violation of this code is serious and can result in your expulsion or the awarding of an administrative "F" for the course. More information can be found at:

<http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/>

I strongly encourage you to visit:

[http://www.plagiarism.org/plag\\_article\\_what\\_is\\_plagiarism.html](http://www.plagiarism.org/plag_article_what_is_plagiarism.html)

This site will familiarize you with issues of plagiarism.

You have a very powerful tool/technology called the Internet to aid you in your research. Actually, the Internet, as it is alone, is pretty useless even though it is filled with information. The actual powerful tool you have is access to a search engine (likely Google and Google Scholar). Without Google, the content of the Internet would be simply a 'blooming, buzzing confusion" (William James).

In some respects I envy you in having access to this Internet content. In others I do not. The positive side is that in a matter of minutes you can access information that would have taken me hours, if not days, when I was an undergraduate and graduate student (when we walked to school uphill both ways). However, there also appears to be a negative aspect as well—at least for some who are taking a more objective look at the Internet. That is, it is shaping your ways of thinking in ways that may not be altogether positive. Moreover, it may be creating in you the illusion of knowledge rather than the real thing. There are numerous sources that you can find for this. Nicolas Carr's *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains* is one such book. As one way of thinking about this, I ask you to consider how much of your time is dictated by your devices. If you stop what you are doing to tend to your messages, if you find it difficult to concentrate when you have an unread message, if you hand-held is just about the last thing you look at night and the first thing in the morning, then you are not using it as a tool. Rather it is better understood as a tool using you.