

## Political Science 150: Introduction to Political Thought

College of Charleston  
Fall 2022

Section 01 MWF, 12:00-12:50 Maybank Hall 316

Section 02 MWF, 2:00-2:50 Maybank Hall 115

Instructor: Dr. Briana L. McGinnis

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Office Hours: Fridays from 3pm-5pm, additional hours available by appointment

Office Location: JC Long, 9 Liberty Street, Room 225

Prerequisites: None

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course will introduce you to political theory, or the normative branch of the study of politics. “Normative” refers to matters rooted in judgments about what ought to be – by contrast, empirical political science examines how things *are*. While political theory engages with empirical scholarship, its primary focus will always be prescriptive, rather than descriptive. Political theory evaluates political practices, institutions, ideologies, and principles. In this class, we will explore the *ideas* underlying politics, both historically and in the present.

**Objectives:** This course offers you an opportunity to familiarize yourself with important texts and foundational concepts in political theory. In addition to becoming conversant with “the canon,” loosely (but thoughtfully) interpreted, you will be expected to engage political 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.

Questions to consider include:

- Why do we engage in politics? Why should you participate politically?
- What does it mean to treat people equally?
- 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 just relationship between the individual and society?

### **Learning Outcomes:**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- **Demonstrate knowledge** of key thinkers and concepts over time (quizzes, 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)

### **REQUIREMENTS:**

**Participation and engagement:** 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. Please refer to the grading policy below for details on permitted absences.

You cannot participate actively in this class if you are not present. I strongly discourage missing class – we move quickly and while it is easy to fall behind, it is difficult to catch up again. You should aim to miss no more than three class meetings (two to be eligible for an A) – If you incur any additional absences, please make arrangements with me to ensure you will be prepared to meet the class requirements.

If you are ill, your absence will be excused so long as you contact the instructor prior to the missed class. You have the option of using a recorded lecture or video recording of class instead.

Designated meetings will be used for discussion of that day's readings and themes, so you should complete each day's assigned reading **before** class. Everything in the class – including the content of class discussions – may appear on assessments. A significant portion 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.

**Class meetings:** We will meet as scheduled three times weekly. The class is scheduled to meet as an in-person course but will move entirely to Zoom if required by the state, the College, or changing circumstances.

The meeting periods for this class will be heavily focused on discussion, so it is important that you complete the readings prior to class meetings. Participation in both full-class discussions and breakout groups constitute essential components of this class.

- If the instructor becomes ill or experiences an exposure, class will be taught via Zoom during her period of isolation/awaiting test results.
- **Please do not come to class if you are ill.** Regardless of whether it is COVID-19, a cold, flu, etc., you have an obligation not to expose unwilling others to the risk of illness. If you are not well, please make arrangements to participate via Zoom.

- Coughing is disruptive under the current circumstances. Please do not come to class if you are coughing. Regardless of College-wide mask policies, students who are coughing or sneezing will be asked to wear a face covering.

## **GRADING AND EVALUATION**

This course will use a contract grading model, detailed at the end of this syllabus.

**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 receive credit for a maximum of two extra credit assignments over the course of the semester. Two satisfactory extra credit assignments will raise any non-failing grade by one half letter grade (for example, a B- would be raised to a B). 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. Please see the “Extra Credit” posting on OAKS for further information and for online alternatives.

## **REQUIRED TEXTS**

This course uses one required text:

- The Broadview Anthology of Social and Political Thought, Vol. I (BASPT). ISBN: 1551117428

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

08/24 Introduction to class.

08/26 Reading historic texts

Reading: Skim Plato’s *Republic*, Book I. Please bring your text to class; we will work through it as a class.

#### Week 2

08/29 Defining Justice I: *Republic* Book I

Reading: Plato, *Republic*, Book I. BASPT, 37-53

Reading Quiz due 09/05

**Grading contracts distributed**

**Reading presentation (optional for A/A-) roster circulated**

08/31 Defining Justice II: Justice as a set of practices, a structure, or a set of relations

Reading: Aristotle, *Politics*

**Book I**, section I and II (On political community) **BASPT 177-179**; Sections 6 & 7  
**BASPT 181-183** (On inequality)

**Book III** Sections 1-6 **BASPT 204-208**; Section 13 (on equality) **BASPT 213-215**; Book 7,  
Section 13 **BASPT 241-242**

*Nicomachean Ethics*: **Book V** BASPT 150-160 (skim 153-155, and resume reading the last two paragraphs of p.155 (1133b 30))

Reading Quiz due 09/05

09/02 Injustice

Reading: Judith Shklar, "Giving Injustice Its Due" from *The Faces of Injustice*, Required: 41-50 available on OAKS. Recommended: Pages 15-42, Introduction (1-15)

Reading Quiz due 09/05

### Week 3

09/05 Discussion day: "The People," passive injustice

No additional reading. Bring the Shklar and Aristotle readings to class.

**All Unit I reading quizzes due on 09/19 11:59pm**

09/07 Political Concerns and the Will of the Strongest

Reading: Thucydides, "Melian Dialogue." BASPT 7-11

Reading Quiz due 09/19

09/09 Politics and Power

Reading: Carl Schmitt, from *The Concept of the Political* (OAKS)

Reading Quiz due 09/19

### Week 4

09/12 Realpolitik: Power and virtue

Reading: Machiavelli, from *The Prince*, BASPT 343-362

Reading Quiz due 09/19

09/14 Realpolitik II: Political Violence

Reading: Machiavelli, from *The Prince*, BASPT 362-375

\*\*\*Dr. McGinnis at American Political Science Association Conference, recorded lecture on OAKS (Machiavelli I)\*\*\*

Reading Quiz due 09/19 – Please note that there are two Machiavelli quizzes!

09/16 Machiavelli Interpretation Activity (OAKS) Cesare Borgia and Ramirro d'Orco  
\*\*\*Dr. McGinnis at American Political Science Association Conference, recorded lecture on OAKS  
(Machiavelli II)\*\*\*

### **Interpretive Paper I Distributed**

#### Week 5

09/19 Discussion Day: Power, legitimacy, and justification

**All Unit II reading quizzes due 09/19 11:59pm**

### **III. Keeping Promises, Keeping Order: The Social Contract**

09/21 Keeping Order, Keeping Compacts: Thomas Hobbes

Reading: Hobbes, *Leviathan* BASPT:

413-414;

419-421;

423-428 (Chapter 13)

429 (start at section 18)-434 (stop at section 11);

442-443 (section 13)

Hobbes reading quiz due 10/07

09/23 Keeping Order, Keeping Compacts: Thomas Hobbes II

Reading: Hobbes, *Leviathan* BASPT:

443 (Chapter 18)-448

458-464 (**Recommended, not required**)

475 (section 2); 476-478 (sections 6, 7, 9, 12)

Locke, from *The Second Treatise*. BASPT: 496-510

Hobbes reading quiz due 10/07

#### Week 6

09/26 The Social Contract and the good Lockean Citizen

Locke, from *The Second Treatise*. BASPT:

517-521

522 (sections 95-99)

527 (section 117)-538 (stop at ch. 14)

Locke reading quiz due 10/07

09/28 Locke Concluded

538-541 (ch. 14)

542-543 (stop with sec. 180)

549-50 (sec. 203-205)

Optional, recommended 551-561

Locke reading quiz due 10/07

09/30 Making good citizens I

Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Selections from *The Social Contract* and the *Second Discourse* (TBD)

No reading quiz

Week 7

10/03 Making good citizens II

Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Selections from *The Social Contract* and the *Second Discourse* (TBD)

No reading quiz

10/05 Norms and habits vs. laws and agreements

Reading: David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* BASPT 586-602

Hume reading quiz due 10/07

10/07 Discussion Day: Norms, laws, and the General Will

No additional reading.

**All Unit III reading quizzes due 10/07 11:59pm**

**Interpretive Paper II distributed**

**IV. Justice as Paying Debts and Giving Each What They are Owed**

Week 8

10/10 Desert and reciprocity

Reading: Reading: David Schmidtz, *Elements of Justice*, 31-46; 49-53; 66-70; 82-103 (This looks like a lot of reading, but the pages are short)

Two Schmidtz reading quizzes, due 10/14

10/12 The Limits of Obligation

Reading: George Kateb, "The Liberal Contract: Individualism, War, and the Constitution" (OAKS)

No reading quiz; prepare for discussion 10/14

10/14 Discussion Day: Desert, Reciprocity, and their Limits

**All Unit IV reading quizzes due 10/14 11:59pm**

**V. Justice as the Good of the Many vs. the Good of the Individual**

Week 9

10/17 Individualism and association

Reading: Alexis de Tocqueville, BAPST 966-974

Reading quiz due 10/24

10/19 Individualism

Reading: Henry David Thoreau, from *Civil Disobedience*, BAPST 974-980

Reading quiz due 10/24

10/21 Utilitarianism: Bentham and Mill  
Reading: BAPST 876-881, 895-900  
**Short Story Reflection distributed**

No reading quiz

#### Week 10

10/24 (Diwali) Utilitarianism II: The Trolley Problem  
Reading: 916-27; 931-941

No reading quiz

**\*\*\*Review Instructions for Short Story Critical Reflection, Available on OAKS\*\*\***  
**All Unit V reading quizzes due 10/24 11:59pm**

10/26 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

De Gouges and Grimké quiz due 12/05

10/28 Discussion: Rhetoric, "separate spheres," and testimonial injustice

**Preview: Sarah Moore Grimké**

#### Week 11

10/31 **In-class activity and discussion: Interpreting the text**  
Reading: Sarah Grimké, *Letters on the Equality of Sexes and the Condition of Women*, Letters 1-4 (OAKS)

De Gouges and Grimké quiz due 12/05

11/02 Foundations of Women's Equality II  
Reading: Harriet (Hardy) Taylor Mill, *Enfranchisement of Women* BASPT 955-962

Reading quiz due 12/05

11/04 Intersectionality in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century  
Reading: Sojourner Truth, BAPST 963-965

No reading quiz; in-class interpretation

#### Week 12

11/07 Fall break, no class

\*Note that the Anna Julia Cooper reading is longer than usual, consider reading in advance.

11/09 Intersectionality in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century II: A Voice from the South  
Reading: Selections by Anna Julia Cooper (OAKS) **Note: this is a long reading, please make time for it.**

Reading quiz due 12/05

11/11 (Veteran's Day) Oppression today: Structural Oppression  
Reading: Iris Marion Young, "Five Faces of Oppression" (OAKS)

No reading quiz

### Week 13

11/14 Identity and Oppression Discussion  
No additional reading.

11/16 Oppression and Racial Equality: Epistemic Equality, Identity, and Tone Policing I  
Reading: "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" by Frederick Douglass (OAKS)

Reading quiz due 12/05

11/18 Interpreting the Text: Douglass  
No additional reading

### Week 14

11/21 Oppression and Racial Equality: Epistemic Equality, Identity, and Tone Policing II  
Reading: Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail" (OAKS)

Reading quiz due 12/05

11/23 Thanksgiving break, no class

11/25 Thanksgiving break, no class

### Week 15

11/28 Oppression and Racial Equality: The Experience of Oppression and Its Invisibility  
Reading: Selections by W.E.B. DuBois (OAKS)

No reading quiz

11/30 Continued: 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).

No reading quiz

12/02 Discussion: Epistemic Justice, Racial Oppression, and Tone Policing



No additional reading, but bring texts to class.

## Week 16

12/05 Wrap-Up and Review

**All Unit VI Quizzes due 12/05 11:59pm**

## **POLICIES**

**Health and Safety:** For COVID-19 related updates, please see: <https://cofc.edu/back-on-the-bricks/>. The College of Charleston continues to strongly encourage all students to get vaccinated to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Students who are experiencing any respiratory symptoms are urged to use a face covering to limit exposing others to illness.

**Communication:** The best way to reach me is via email ([mcginnisbl@cofc.edu](mailto: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 48 hours, Monday-Friday, during regular business hours (9am-6pm). Response times will be longer on weekends, just prior to exams, 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.”

**Time Commitment:** 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 College of Charleston 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, 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. Please consult the Registrar’s website for withdrawal deadlines. Regardless of your circumstances, please reach out to me or somebody else for support before and/or after deciding to withdraw from the class.

**Academic Integrity Statement:** Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that, when suspected, are investigated. Each incident will be examined to determine the degree of deception involved.

Incidents where the instructor determines the student's actions are related more to misunderstanding and confusion will be handled by the instructor. The instructor designs an intervention or assigns a grade reduction to help prevent the student from repeating the error. The response is recorded on a form and signed both by the instructor and the student. It is forwarded to the Office of the Dean of Students and placed in the student's file.

Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported directly by the instructor and/or others having knowledge of the incident to the Dean of Students. A student found responsible by the Honor Board for academic dishonesty will receive a XXF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. This status indicator will appear on the student's transcript for two years after which the student may petition for the XX to be expunged. The F is permanent.

Students can find the complete Honor Code and all related processes in the Student Handbook at: [http://deanofstudents.cofc.edu/honor-system/studenthandbook/.](http://deanofstudents.cofc.edu/honor-system/studenthandbook/)”

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

Note that written assignments in this course will be screened by plagiarism-detecting software.

**Technology usage:**

- Devices must be set to “silent” during class.
- Computers and tablets may be used, 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.

**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:

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

**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](mailto:SNAP@cofc.edu) or 843.953.1431.

Students approved for accommodations are responsible 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).

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.**

**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 student's 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](mailto:studentcomputingsupport@cofc.edu)
- IT Helpdesk at 843.953.3375 or [helpdesk@cofc.edu](mailto: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.

**OAKS:** OAKS, including Gradebook, will be used for this course throughout the semester to provide the syllabus and class materials and grades for each assignment, which will be regularly posted.

**Inclement Weather, Pandemic or Substantial Interruption of Instruction:** 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.

**Face-to-face courses when students are quarantined/isolated due to Covid-19:** If one or more students are absent for an extended period of time due to COVID-19 (quarantine or isolation),

instructors may, at their discretion, conduct the class exclusively online via OAKS for the duration of student quarantine/isolation, record class lessons to share with students, or choose an alternate accommodation that provides the impacted student(s) with the opportunity to continue in the course. The specific accommodation will vary depending on the number of students affected, the expected duration of their absence, and the needs of the class.

**Recording of Classes (via ZOOM):** Class sessions may 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 parts of this class are online, you are sharing the experience of working through important political problems with other *people* – not just usernames on a discussion board or representatives of a political position. 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. 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 Ariel, 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 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.

**Inclusion:** The College of Charleston offers many resources for LGBTQ+ students, faculty and staff along with their allies.

[Preferred Name and Pronoun Information](#)

[On Campus Gender Inclusive facilities](#)

[Campus Resources](#)

[College of Charleston Reporting Portals](#)

[GSEC Reports](#)

[Documenting LGBTQ Life in the Lowcountry](#) (CofC Addlestone Library Special Collections Project)

[College of Charleston Quality Enhancement Plan \(QEP\)](#)

[Articles about CofC and LGBTQ+ Issues](#)

## **Contract Grading Policy, POLI 150**

What is contract grading?

Because this is an introductory-level class, you are not expected to enter the classroom with experience or expertise in the subject matter. Instead, you will build that foundation by participating actively and intentionally in the course.

Contract grading shifts the emphasis away from evaluating students on the basis of the comparative quality of their expertise and toward evaluation on the basis of how much labor and commitment to mastery the work displays. Your assignments are not solely intended to measure what you have already mastered; they are also designed to assist in fully understanding the ideas discussed in this class. For that reason, the focus in POLI 150 will be on developing your skills more than on evaluating them.

To that end, every assignment (with the exception of the final exam and reading presentation) are repeatable. That means that if one of your assignments does not meet the “satisfactory” standard, you will receive comments on how to improve your work and have the opportunity to revise it and resubmit for a passing grade. For the reading quizzes on OAKS, there will be no limit to the number of attempts allowed during the time the quiz is available.

This means that grades will be assigned at the end of the course by assessing which assignments you have completed to a satisfactory level. You will also receive a mid-term advisory grade so you know how your progress in the class is coming along. You will be asked at the start of the class to review the grading contract and choose a tentative path. At midterm, you may meet with the instructor to discuss your progress or any revisions you would like to make to your contract.

### **General policies for all assignments**

- All assignments are open-note, open book
- All late work must be turned in to the Late Work Dropbox on OAKS. Do not submit late work to the main Dropbox for that assignment or it will not be evaluated. If it is not submitted to the Late Work Dropbox either by midterm or by the last week of class, it will be considered incomplete.

- There are 8 possible assignments. Which ones you complete (in conjunction with your engagement and timely submission of work) will determine your grade (detailed below).
1. Final exam (end of class)
  2. Short story interpretation paper (last half of term)
  3. Short interpretive paper 1 (beginning of term)
  4. Short interpretive paper 1 optional rewrite
  5. Short interpretive paper 2 (midterm)
  6. Short interpretive paper optional rewrite
  7. Reading quizzes (required for all)
  8. Reading expert presentation (option for A, rolling deadlines)

### **Policies for written assignments**

1. You will receive feedback on written work, but not a numerical grade.
2. Each assignment will be assessed as either “satisfactory” or “needs improvement.” Requirements for each assignment are outlined in their directions. Please note that “satisfactory” requirements for papers will be comparable to the standards for earning a “B” under a traditional grading scheme.
3. Failed assignments can be re-done until they are satisfactory (until the final week of class – all previous work must be turned in 7 days before the final meeting).

### **Policies for reading quizzes**

All reading quizzes are on OAKS. Quizzes are noted on the syllabus.

1. Reading quizzes must be completed during the specified time window.
2. 85% is a passing grade on quizzes. You may re-take the quizzes until you reach 85% or until the window of availability closes.
3. You can submit **one** assignment late, no questions asked. This *can* be a quiz or a paper, but it *cannot* be the final exam or reading expert presentation.

### **Pleas**

Life is unpredictable and often chaotic. In recognition of that, I offer **one** plea that you can make to the instructor to change your progress in the course. For instance, you might plea to get a late or missed assignment removed from your record so that you may still meet your contract, etc. Anyone can make a plea to me **once** during the semester. However, there must be relevant extenuating circumstances warranting a plea; you may not plead a case just because you want something removed from your record. To submit a plea, compose a memo outlining the following:

1. Reasons: Why should this be changed? Why are the circumstances relevant to the assignment being late?
2. Expected outcome: What do you mean to accomplish with this plea?
3. Plan: What is your detailed plan for completing this work? Please include a step-by-step breakdown including proposed deadlines.

## Standards for each letter grade

A

Final exam  
Short story interpretation  
Short paper 1 + re-write  
Short paper 2 + re-write  
Reading expert presentation  
Quizzes

No more than one late assignment.  
No more than two absences.

A-

Final exam  
Short story interpretation  
Short paper 1 + rewrite  
Short paper 2 + rewrite  
Quizzes

No more than one late assignment.  
No more than two absences.

B+

Final exam  
Short story paper  
Short paper 1 + rewrite  
Quizzes

No more than one late assignment.  
No more than three absences.

B

Final exam  
Short paper 1 + rewrite  
Short paper 2 + rewrite  
Quizzes

No more than one late assignment.  
No more than three absences.

B-



Final exam  
Short paper 1  
Short paper 2  
Quizzes

No more than two late assignments.  
No more than three absences.

C+

Short story paper  
Short paper 1  
Short paper 2  
Quizzes

No more than two late assignments.  
No more than four absences.

C

Short story paper  
Short paper 1  
Quizzes

No more than two late assignments.  
No more than four absences.

C-

Short paper 1  
Short paper 2  
Quizzes

No more than two late assignments.  
No more than four absences.

D+

Short paper 1 or 2  
Quizzes

No more than two late assignments.  
No more than five absences.

D

Quizzes

No more than two late assignments.  
No more than five absences.

F

Failure to complete quizzes or more than two late assignments, or more than five absences.

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



Image: Brown tabby Maine coon cat (Magoo) playing with many toys, tongue extended from mouth, looking undignified