

Introduction to Political Theory (POLI 2060)

Time: MWF 9:30-10:20am
Room: 220 Stubbs Hall
Instructor: Dr. Sean Illing
Email: sean.d.illing@gmail.com
Office: Stubbs 217
Hours: TBD (appointments preferred)

*Louisiana State University
Department of Political Science*

Name of text used in course: Great Political Thinkers: Plato to the Present (6th Edition), William and Alan Ebenstein, Harcourt College Publishers.

Course Overview

This course is intended as a brief and broad introduction to Western political thought as seen through an examination of some of the most important texts and thinkers of the tradition. Throughout the course we will explore various conceptions of human nature, individual liberty, justice, freedom, and citizenship. We will analyze the origins of human rights and democratic theory as it developed out of Ancient Greece, through Medieval Europe, and into early and late modernity. Through discussion and analysis you will learn to think critically and analytically about difficult but important issues. Above all, you will be encouraged to examine your own views and to develop arguments based on careful study of the material.

Although lectures are a part of this course, our main focus will be on research, writing, and discussion. For most sessions, I will prepare remarks as an introduction to the material for that day. Students will also be selected to help lead class discussions by preparing questions in advance. These questions will provide fodder for critical analysis of the readings. My job will be to guide us through the material and supplement discussions with lectures and presentations.

I cannot stress this enough: attendance is an academic requirement of this course. You must not only attend each class, but you must know all the readings and come prepared to contribute substantively to our discussions.

Description of Major Assignments

1. Each student will submit a (1) paged research proposal with an attached bibliography. The proposal will be graded in accordance with the checklist below. They are due on **Friday, Feb. 27th** at the beginning of class.

2. There will be a mid-term examination (**Friday, March 6th**).
3. Each student will write a 7-9 page research paper consistent with the proposal submitted at the beginning of the semester. The papers will be graded in accordance with the checklist below. The due date is **Friday, April 3rd** at the beginning of class.
4. There will be a final examination (date and time in accordance with university schedule).

**A list of topics for the papers will be supplied during the first week of classes. Students are free to choose their own topic, provided they consult with me first.*

**Blue books are required for both exams.*

Grading System

Each exam is worth 25% of your final grade. The research design is worth 10% of your final grade. Participation and attendance will also constitute 10% of the final grade. The research paper is worth 30% of your overall grade. The grade point system is as follows: 100-90, A. 89-80, B. 79-70, C. 69-60, D. 59-0, F.

Class Decorum

Students are expected to be mindful and considerate of the class space they share with other students and with the instructor. No students will be admitted into the class after the session for the day has begun. Students should not leave class early, and should make alternative arrangements if they are not able to attend for the entire session.

Please refrain from getting up and walking around the room while the class is in session. Please do not sleep during class, nor engage in personal conversations while the class is in session. Please refrain from text messaging or any non-class related activities during class, including internet use. **Laptops are allowed, provided they are used for note-taking ONLY.**

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend every class. A student may miss up to two classes for the semester without an excuse. A student may miss up to four classes with a written excuse. Each additional class missed will be penalized at the rate of three points per additional absence, and will be deducted from the student's final grade.

Intellectual Integrity

Truth and honesty are fundamental to a community of teachers and scholars. The university expects that both faculty and students will follow these principles and, in doing so, protect the validity of the university grades. Instructors will exercise care in the planning and supervision of academic work so that honest effort will be positively encouraged.

Incomplete Grades

Incomplete grades are awarded only under the conditions stated above under Course Requirements and Assignments. For additional university regulations involving incomplete grades, please see page 47 of the University Undergraduate Bulletin.

Reading Assignments (selections from Ebenstein text)

Week of January 14 – 16: Introduction to course (Wed)

Section 1: Ancient Greece

(a) Socrates - *The Apology* (Fri) – PDF available via Moodle*

Monday, January 19th: NO CLASS (MLK Day)

Week of January 21 – 23: Chapter 3, Plato's *Republic* (Wed)

(a) *Republic* cont.

(b) Allegory of the Cave (*Republic*)

Week of January 26 – 30: Chapter 3, *Republic* cont.

(a) Chapter 4, Aristotle's *Politics* (Fri)

Week of February 2 – 6: Chapter 4, Aristotle's *Politics* cont. (Mon-Fri)

Section 2: Early Modernity (16th – 18th Centuries)

Week of February 9 – 13: Chapter 14, Machiavelli's *The Prince* (Mon-Fri)

Week of February 16 – 20: MARDI GRAS (2/16-2/18)

(a) Chapter 14, Machiavelli documentary (Fri)

Week of February 23 – 27: Chapter 15, Hobbes' *Leviathan*

(a) **Research Proposal Due Friday, Feb. 27th** (including tentative bibliography)

Week of March 2 – 6: Midterm Exam Week

(a) Review/Concentrated Study Period (Mon-Wed)

(b) Exam on Friday (3/6)

Week of March 9 – 13: Chapter 21, Rousseau's *The Social Contract* (Mon-Fri)

(a) Excerpt from Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (available via Moodle)

Section 3: Late Modernity (19th and 20th Centuries)

Week of March 16 – 20: Chapter 28, Hegel's *Philosophy of History* (Mon)

(a) Chapter 29, Marx's *The Communist Manifesto* (Wed-Fri)

Week of March 23 – 27: Chapter 30, Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Mon)

(a) Chapter 30, Nietzsche's *The Antichrist* (Wed)

(b) Chapter 30, Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* (Fri)

Week of March 30 – April 3: Chapter 33, Gandhi's *Selected Writings* (Mon-Fri)

(a) **Research Paper Due Friday, April 3rd**

Week of April 6 – 10: SPRING BREAK

Week of April 13 – 17: Albert Camus, Absurdity, Politics, and Revolt (Mon-Fri)

(a) Reading: “Camus and Nietzsche on Politics in an Age of Absurdity” (available via Moodle)

Week of April 20 – 24: Chapter 36, Libertarianism

- (a) Chapter 36, Hayek’s *The Road to Serfdom* (Mon)
- (b) Chapter 36, Friedman’s *Capitalism and Freedom* (Wed)
- (c) Chapter 37, Berlin’s *Two Concepts of Liberty* (Fri)

Week of April 27 – May 1: CONCENTRATED STUDY PERIOD/FINAL EXAM

Steps in Writing Your Research Paper

1. Use the writing competencies listed below as a check list on the areas to be covered.
2. Ask yourself whether each competency has been sufficiently satisfied.
3. If you have questions or are unsure, you may come see me or you may go to the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) Lab, which is located on the first floor of Bobet Hall.
4. Be sure to give yourself time to seek out assistance. Neither I nor the staff of the WAC Lab will be able to help you at the last minute.

Writing Competencies for Research Paper

Written Content

Each item is rated on a scale of 0-10 points.

1. The subject of the paper is clearly defined.
2. The relation of the subject of one of the specified topics is described.
3. The reason for selecting the subject is clearly presented.
4. The problem that is being addressed in the paper is clearly stated.
5. The main point of the paper is clearly stated.

Written Form

Each item is rated on a scale of 0-10 points.

1. Uses appropriate grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
2. Uses appropriate syntax.
3. Uses appropriate notation.
4. Uses appropriate citation.
5. Uses appropriate paragraphing.