

POLITICAL THEORY
PSCI 3301 • UTDallas • Spring 2020
TR: 8:30-9:45a • GR 2.530

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Office Hours: TR: 10-11a, W 11-12p

Course Rationale:

What is the best way for each of us to live? How do we best arrange society? The notion that there may be only one correct answer to these and similar questions is alien and perhaps unnerving to us. As the products of Liberalism, we tend to think that one should live and let live – that however one might decide such questions, it is one’s own business and no one else’s. We, in the West, may decide to live as we wish and we do so nearly free from coercion.

Nevertheless, it seems that satisfaction with the easy-come-easy-go lifestyle of individual autonomy familiar to us has waned. Doubt has crept in, even if we don’t quite recognize it. Although external challenges to Liberalism are most easily recognized (e.g. terrorist attacks, election of fundamentalist governments), there also appears to be an almost ineffable gloom that surrounds even the most ardent proponents of Liberalism. Perhaps we feel that we are “missing” something but can’t quite put our finger on what change we desire or why. We change careers frequently – more than ever before. The youthful life-stage in which one “finds oneself” has extended into middle age or longer. We find nothing steady, nothing we’re willing to stand by. Our near-constant agitation suggests that the once held certainty that individual freedom is both necessary and sufficient for happiness has been called into question. This happiness has, after all, been a long time coming and yet still does not appear to be within hailing distance. Have we backed the wrong horse?

This class will take up the questions of classical political philosophy: what is the best life for a human being? Is political life compatible with that best life and, if so, which regime is best? What is justice? Virtue? Are these to be pursued for their own sake or for their benefits? We will investigate the responses of classical thinkers to these questions, and try to understand them *on their own terms*. We will then turn to an investigation of the texts that laid the foundation for modern Liberalism to assess *our* contemporary political situation.

We will not take issue with particular, partisan political issues, though they may arise in discussion as an example of a more general trend or concept. This course aims to provide a foundational understanding of political life that should be useful to us regardless of partisan affiliation or ideological disposition.

Required Texts: All students should purchase the following texts. These editions have been selected for their superior readability and quality of translation. It is imperative that you purchase these editions as other editions vary significantly.

- Aristophanes and Plato, *Four Texts on Socrates*. Trans. Grace and Tom West. ISBN: 0801485746
 - <http://amzn.to/2EiO0Ca>
- Plato, *Republic*. Trans. Allan Bloom (Basic Books) ISBN: 0465094082
 - <http://amzn.to/2D2xZAZ>
- Machiavelli, *The Prince*. Trans. Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr. ISBN: 0226500446
 - <http://amzn.to/2CEMsSU>
- Rousseau, *First and Second Discourses*. Trans. Roger Masters. (St. Martin’s Press). ISBN: 0312694407
 - <http://amzn.to/2CAFOgf>

Recommended: Various recommended resources and other readings will be uploaded to Blackboard. Students do not need to read supplemental readings, but if you choose to, please begin with those recommended by the professor.

The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the information on the syllabus. Any changes will be announced in class, and a revised syllabus posted online. Students are responsible for noting any modifications that are announced.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING

Percent of final grade	Assignment	Due date
5%	Attendance and Participation	Each class day
13%	Reading Questions (elearning)	At the end of each topic
20%	Short Paper	27 February
30%	Midterm Exam	Mar. 13 th
35%	Final paper	May 5 th
103%	Course Total	

Grading: The standard university grading scale will apply: A+ = 97%+, A = 94-97%, A- = 90-94%, B+ = 87-90%, B = 84-87%, B- = 80-84%, C+ = 77-80%, C = 74-77%, C- = 70-74%, D+ = 67-70%, D = 64-67%, D- = 60-64%, F = <60%

Grades will be neither rounded nor changed unless I make an error. The grade you earn is the grade that is reported to the University.

Extra Credit: There will be no extra credit for this class. Please do not ask.

Attendance: Please bring 3x5 notecards with you to class each day. Write the following on the notecard and place it on the front table near the instructor. That notecard should contain the following information, written legibly: (1) student name, (2) assigned number, and (3) date. These cards will serve to demonstrate that you were in class, on time, each day.

Regular attendance is highly correlated with success. I want students to be successful. Each student is permitted to miss 3 course meetings throughout the semester. These “free” absences are intended to cover car trouble, appointments, illness, job interviews, etc. Every absence *beyond* these 3 will result in the deduction of 1% from the attendance/participation portion of the course grade. You should reserve absences in case an unexpected issue arises.

I also ask that you **do not** turn in cards for another student. If I discover this is happening, all involved will be reported to the University for academic misconduct.

Reading quizzes: Reading quizzes will be posted online and must be taken *before* complete discussion of the material covered by the quiz (see eLearning for due dates). Quizzes will close at class time. Students will have 3 attempts to complete a quiz once it is opened. You will be given the highest score of your attempts. I highly recommend that you read *before* opening the quiz if you wish to be successful. Quizzes may be completed early, but availability will be staggered to match course progress.

Exams: The midterm exam will be given in class. Blue books will be provided. It will contain a mixture of both short and longer questions.

Paper Assignments: Students will be given a handout with prompts approximately two weeks prior to the due date of each paper. Page limits are to be followed; learning how to write clearly and with concision is a must. Papers should **NOT** be a “book report.” Your first task is to answer the question. You should demonstrate your understanding of the question and present your evidence from the text in a clear, argumentative paper. Papers should be given original titles that are descriptive of their content. We will talk about this more when we hand out paper topics.

Papers must be turned in to the relevant assignment drop-box on our eLearning page prior to the start of class on the due date. *Please also* submit the paper to turnitin.com (see below for log in details). Blackboard allows for turnitin assignments, but the LMS integration often has problems that we don't need to bring upon ourselves. As long as the paper is submitted to eLearning prior to the due date, it will be considered on time. No grade will be considered official, however, until your paper is submitted to turnitin.com.

Late papers will be docked 10% for every calendar day that they are late.

Turnitin Info:

Course ID: 23504806

Enrollment Key: Justice

**You will need to create an account at turnitin.com if you don't already have one and add our course. You can then upload your papers in a variety of formats.

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION:

Email Etiquette: Email is the preferred means of contact. When emailing, you need to follow a few rules:

1. Include the course and section number (PSCI 3301.001) in the subject line of the email. I have multiple courses and including this information will help ensure a prompt and accurate response.
2. Do not use text/instant message language. Emails that lack punctuation, or are spelled such that I cannot be sure what question you are asking will not receive responses.
3. Clearly identify yourself. If your email address is "n'sync_no1fan_1991@aol.com," "OMG_robert_pattinson@hotmail.net," "ToughDude42069@tx.rr.com," or something similar, I won't know who you are unless you sign your name. Using your UTDallas email is highly encouraged.
4. Check the syllabus first. If your question is directly answered in the syllabus, you may not receive a response.
5. Any student to make a meme of the television show *The Good Place* and email it to me with the subject line of the email as "Trolley Problem," will receive an extra percentage point in the participation component of the course grade. Must be completed prior to the midterm exam. Please keep this to yourself; let each discover it (or not) on their own.
6. If you've not received a response to your email, please follow up. I intend to reply to all emails within 24 hours or so, but may have overlooked yours.

Communication: I will not discuss grades via email or telephone. This is to protect *your* privacy, in accordance with FERPA. Grading questions must be addressed during my office hours. If my office hours are in direct conflict with your course schedule, please contact me to set up an appointment.

Classroom Conduct: There will be little tolerance for disruptive behavior. Students are to be attentive and awake in class. Texting, online chatting, surfing the internet, carrying on conversation with those around you, etc. will not be tolerated as these things are a distraction to other students. Students not displaying appropriate conduct will be asked to leave class. Coffee and other beverages are fine -- indeed encouraged if, like me, you "need" coffee in the morning -- but please do not eat in class.

Class will begin and end on time. I will not hold you late. Do not, therefore, begin shuffling papers and loading your bags prior to the end of class. This is rude and distracting to other students.

Academic Integrity (cheating): No form of cheating will be tolerated. Cheating includes, but is not limited to: (1) depending on sources that are unauthorized and/or without proper citation, (2) unauthorized assistance on exams/workbook assignments, (3) possession of faculty or staff's academic material. Plagiarism

includes, but is not limited to: (1) a direct quotation or paraphrase of uncited material, whether intentional or owing to neglect; (2) use of work done by another individual, even if done expressly for you. Cheating and/or plagiarism will be treated severely. Cheating or plagiarism may result in failure of the course and the filing of a report with the University, who may impose further penalties.

Religious Observances: I will be happy to recognize and excuse religious holidays and observances that conflict with class assignments and/or meetings. It is, however, the student's responsibility to bring these to my attention ahead of time. Notification after the fact will not suffice for excuse.

Comet Creed: *This creed was voted on by the UT Dallas student body in 2014. It is a standard that Comets choose to live by and encourage others to do the same:*

"As a Comet, I pledge honesty, integrity, and service in all that I do."

ADA Statement: The course follows policies and procedures articulated by UT Dallas with respect to ADA compliance. ([Policy UTDBP3100](#))

Qualifying students seeking reasonable accommodation for a disability should see the Office of Student Accessibility, which will determine eligibility and implementation plans for reasonable accommodation. Student seeking accommodation should see the OSA and bring the action plan to the course instructor as early as possible in the course. Should you choose not to use the accommodation, you may. Nevertheless, to use the accommodation approved by OSA, the instructor must have the documentation ahead of time.

Sexual Discrimination Policy: The course will abide by Title IX & UT Dallas' sexual harassment and sexual misconduct policy (UTDBP3102). Please find the policy details here: <https://policy.utdallas.edu/utdbp3102>

Incidents in or out of class may be reported here: <http://www.utdallas.edu/oiec/complaints/>

University Policies: Please see the following website for the university's syllabus policies: <https://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies>

TENTATIVE READING SCHEDULE:

{Reading section notations are approximate}

Tu. Jan. 14 — Introduction: “What is Political Philosophy?”

Aristophanes' *Clouds*

The Ancients Against Socrates

R. Jan. 16 — *Clouds*, lines 1-790.

Tu. Jan. 21 — *Clouds*, lines 790-1511.

R. Jan. 23 — *Clouds*, wrap up & discussion

Plato's *Apology*

A Civic Defense of Philosophy?

R. Jan 23 — *Apology*, 17a-24a

Tu. Jan. 28 — *Apology*, 24ab-35d

R. Jan. 30 — *Apology*, 35d-42a

Tu. Feb 4 — *Apology*, wrap up & discussion

Plato's *Republic*

Classical Political Philosophy and the Question(s) of Justice and the City:

R. Feb 6 — *Republic*, Book I

Tu. Feb. 11 — *Republic*, Books II-IV (selections TBA)

R. Feb. 13 — *Republic*, Book V-VIII (selections TBA)

Tu. Feb. 18 — *Republic*, wrap up

Aristotle's *Politics*

Classical “Political Science” & The Investigation into the Nature and Origin of the Best Regime

R. Feb 20 — TBA (see eLearning for PDF)

Tu. Feb. 25 — TBA (see eLearning for PDF)

Machiavelli's *Prince*

Armed Prophecy: Modern Attack on the Ancients

R. Feb 27 — *Prince*, Dedicatory Letter – ch.7

[SHORT PAPER DUE]

Tu. Mar. 3 — *Prince*, ch. 8-16

R. Mar. 5 — *Prince*, ch. 17- Letter to Vettori (appendix)

Tu. Mar. 10 — *Prince*, wrap up & discussion

R. Mar. 12 — **MIDTERM EXAM (in class)**

MARCH 16–20: SPRING BREAK

The Origin of Modernity and Advent of Liberalism: Or, Building a Better Nature: Liberalism, Law, and Individual Rights

Tu. Mar. 24 — TBA (see eLearning for PDFs)

R. Mar. 26 — TBA (see eLearning for PDFs)

Tu. Mar. 31 — TBA (see eLearning for PDFs)

R. Apr. 2 — TBA (see eLearning for PDFs), wrap up & discussion

Rousseau's Discourses

Return to Nature? Impossible, but...: Rousseau's Critique of the Enlightenment

Tu. Apr. 7 — Rousseau's *First Discourse*

R. Apr. 9 — Rousseau's *First Discourse*

Tu. Apr. 14 — Rousseau *Second Discourse*, pages 76-141 [*read Rousseau's notes*]

R. Apr. 16 — Rousseau *Second Discourse*, pages 141-181 [*read Rousseau's notes*]

Tu. Apr. 21 — Rousseau wrap up & Discussion

Nietzsche+

Return to Art: Nietzsche's Critique of the Enlightenment

R. Apr. 23 — TBA (see eLearning for PDF)

Tu. Apr. 28 — TBA (see eLearning for PDF)

R. Apr. 30 — Course Wrap Up

Tu. May 5 — **[FINAL PAPER DUE]**