

Political Science 2060
Lockett Hall 239
Introduction to Political Theory
Spring 2019

Professor: Simeon Burns
Office: 307 Stubbs Hall
Class Time: MWF 12:30-1:20
Office Hours: MW 1:30-2:30 or by appointment: sburns10@lsu.edu

1. Assignment Schedule

Introduction: Syllabus Review

Section 1: The Fall of a Titan: Philosophy vs. Convention
Readings: *Five Dialogues*. (Euthyphro, Apology, Crito)

Section 2: Community or Polis: The Fundamental Social Orders
Reading: *The Republic*. (Books 1-5, 8)

Section 3: Theorizing Autonomy: Giving Meaning to International Struggle
Reading: *The Prince* (whole)

Midterm: Friday, March 1st

Assignment Proposals: Begins Friday, March 15th and ends Friday, April 12th

Section 4: Sanctioning Power: Moralizing Convention
Readings: *Leviathan*, *Second Treatise of Government* (selected chapters)

Section 5: The Call of the Wild: Historical Reflections and Criticisms of the System
Readings: *Basic Political Writings*, *The Genealogy of Morals* (selected chapters)

Conclusion: Community or Polis?
Reading: *The Fatal Conceit* (chapter one, pp. 11-28)

Term Assignments: Due Wednesday, April 24th **in class**.

Final: Thursday, May 2nd, 7:30-9:30 a.m., **in class**.

2. Required Texts

These are the mediums through which we will attempt to obtain the course's purpose. Since this is a political theory/philosophy course, these book's physical editions are **required**. No electronic copies please. If financial hardship does not realistically allow the student to purchase all these texts, please come and see me.

Plato. *Republic*. Trans. Allen Bloom. Second Edition. Basic Books. 1991.

Five Dialogues. Trans. G.M.A. Grube. First Ed. Hackett Publishing Company. 1981.

Niccolo Machiavelli. *The Prince*. Trans. Harvey Mansfield. Second Ed. University of Chicago Press. 1998.

Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan*. Editor. Edwin Curly. Hackett Publishing. 1994.

John Locke. *Second Treatise of Government* (Hackett Classics) 1980.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *The Basic Political Writings*. Trans. Donald A Cress. Hackett Publishing. 2012.

Fredrich Nietzsche. *The Genealogy of Morals*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. Vintage Press. 1989.

3. Course Description and Purpose

This is a course that hopes to facilitate an understanding of the self and society using the following means: 1. interacting with several systems of political thought; 2. encouraging a degree of personalized expression; 3. nurturing social bonds. We will study several systems of political philosophy. The thinkers we will cover range from Plato, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and Nietzsche. However, this course intends to allow the student to explore and express their reactions and analysis of the assigned texts in a reasonably broad manner. The specific themes this course will focus on are: the nature of justice, the nature of the state, the nature of community, the meaning of history, and what, if any, the fundamental modes of social organization are.

“LSU graduates will demonstrate an understanding of the informing factors of global interdependence, including economic forces, political dynamics, and cultural and linguistic differences.”

4. Etiquette/Behavior

To achieve our purpose there must be a few ground rules that I will expect to be observed in all cases unless express permission is giving by the instructor.

- **Any and all electronic devices of any kind, shape, or form are absolutely prohibited.** This is essentially non-negotiable. No phone usage. No computers for “note-taking”. No recording devices, etc.
- Continual coming and going from the classroom is not permitted unless there is some type of emergency
- Zero tolerance cheating policy. Cite all quotes and paraphrases in your Term Project.
- Although this is a lunch time class, no food or drink besides those in bottled form are permitted.
- Participating by listening quietly but actively and making substantive contributions verbally.

5. Grades/Assignments

EXAMS: Consists of a midterm that is 20% and a final that is 25% of one's total class grade. These will consist of two essay questions. Everyone will respond to the selection of two default questions that are given. However, students will have the opportunity to substitute the second question with an experimental essay that is a *philosophical* exploration of a provided essay prompt. Since this answer is more subjective and will likely not fall strictly within the confines of analyzing a previously read argument, the grading may be more stringent. The student should not treat it as a free pass during the exam, for a strong acquaintance with the material will still be required. The major qualities it will be evaluated on are: creativity, theoretical rigor, emotive range, and psychological depth, among other things. This should be seen as an experimental synthesis of the major theme, idea, or section, of the question. The "*optional*" essay will be indicated on the prompt page at the time of the test. No one is required to select this option.

TERM PROJECT: Consists of 30% of one's total class grade. This is where I expect a unique and creative expression of the student's interaction with the themes of the class to manifest. By default, there is the traditional analytical essay option of an 8-11 page, double spaced, one-inch margins, **Times New Roman** Font sized 12, on a theme or argument that is explicitly discussed in one or more of the thinker's texts that everyone is assigned. There must be an **original** argument that the student, with the permission of the instructor, formulates and executes within the paper. On top of the primary text(s), multiple scholarly sources (academic books and academic articles, not website sources) will be utilized for this project.

ALTERNATIVE: Other forms of expression for this project that are acceptable (or will be considered) are the following: meter poetry, products of craftsmanship, an *original* musical composition (not recitation of an existing piece), short stories/dialogues (15-18 pages single spaced), artwork (painting, sculpting, drawing), and other forms upon consideration and approval. Without any exception and upon explicit permission of the instructor, **all** these alternative projects must be completely *original* products created this semester, upon reading and contemplation of an **assigned** text(s). Any alternative project will have a two to three-page double-spaced interpretive summary handed in along with the project. The work will be evaluated according to both its aesthetic quality and the level of synthesis of the course's themes and ideas it exhibits. I reserve the right to access other qualified LSU personnel as resources to grade the quality if I feel unsure of my assessment.

TERM PROJECT NOTE: Consulting with me in order to choose or clarify your project is not required, so no grade will be assessed for failure to do so, but it is strongly encouraged due to the weight of the project on one's grade. I have given everyone about a month to do this, but you can meet with me before this time period if you so choose.

CLASS PARTICIPATION: This will be 15% of the grade. This obviously entails regular attendance and includes:

- (1) Mental participation by staying focused on the class discussion and dialogue.
- (2) **Verbal participation** by asking substantive questions and responding to others.
- (3) Bringing your text to class and using it.
- (4) Following the Rules/Etiquette section of the syllabus.

READING SUMMARIES: There will be five reading summaries worth 2.0% each. I will assign two at the end of a given class, and they will be turned in at the beginning of the following class. The other three I leave up to you to complete, according to the following criteria; all three cannot be completed either before or after the Midterm. This means that only one or two can be submitted before our midterm, or one or two after the midterm before the last day of class. If no summaries are submitted before/after the midterm, then the student forfeits those points. These summaries will at most be **one page**, single spaced, and include the student's own description of the argument for that day's assigned reading.

MISC: If desired, there is a chance for extra points for both in-class and extra-curricular **class** activities. These activities for extra points must include at least the potential for the *entire* class to participate in, even if full participation is not logistically possible or desired. All extra-curricular activities proposals must be explicitly cleared by the instructor and well-documented/attested. The instructor has full discretion to determine the specific allocation of extra credit according to the proposed activities and people's degree of participation in them. Proposals for these must be submitted in person to the instructor by student(s) after a class or during office hours, not electronically.

FOOD DAYS: There will be at least two meal days throughout the semester. These will likely fall on a Friday and will be potluck style. This means the food should be homemade. There will be no points awarded for contributing food. Also, no one will be docked any points if they do not contribute food.

COURSE BREAKDOWN: Tests 45%; Term Project 30%; Participation 15%; Summaries 10%.

GRADING SCALE:

A+: 97-100

A: 93-96

A-:90-92

B+: 87-89

B: 83-86

B-: 80-82

C+: 77-79

C: 73-76

C-: 70-72

D+: 67-69

D: 63-66

D-: 60-62

F: 59 and below

6. MISC/RESOURCES

DISABILITIES: 225-578-5919, disability@lsu.edu

LSU CARES: 225-578-4307, dossaa@lsu.edu

WRITING CENTER: 225-578-7795, cxc@lsu.edu