When we think about philosophy, we often think in terms of individual questions and dilemmas. What is the nature of “good?” Do human beings have souls? Is there a Supreme Being and, if so, what is its relationship to individual persons? However, philosophical questions also go beyond the individual to the very nature of society itself. These less personal questions often bring into play arguments about authority and politics. For example, questions about human nature lead to arguments about the best possible political regime under which humans will be governed.

**Learning objectives**

There are three major learning objectives: (1) to understand the ideas of the major western political philosophers, examining how they addressed the political issues of their times; (2) to apply their theories as answers to questions raised in modern society; and, (3) improved communication skills (oral and written) to be measured through exams, papers and in-class participation.

**Required text**

Ebenstein, Alan. *Introduction to Political Thinkers*. (2002). Wadsworth Thomson. It is essential that students buy and read this book. I will regularly refer to it in class and most of the questions that I will raise with you will refer back to excerpts from these writings. A major portion of the grade in this class will be based on participation (see following Course Requirements) and careful and regular reading of the text will be the key to doing well in this area.

**Course Requirements**

Grades in this class will be based on a series of exams and the aforementioned class participation. There will be three exams, including the final. The first “early warning exam” will be worth 50 points and will be an approximation of the mid-term and final. The mid-term and final will each be worth 100 points. The exams will include both short essay questions and term identification. If students miss exams for excused reasons, they must see me immediately upon returning to class to schedule a make-up.

Students may earn up to 100 points for class participation. The participation component will consist of two parts. The first part will be based on attendance and vocal participation. If you attend regularly and speak up at least occasionally (and intelligently), you will earn 40 points toward your final grade. Of course, if you are not present in class, you cannot add to the academic dialogue I am hoping to foster. Therefore, any student with more than three unexcused absences (as defined by the university) will automatically forfeit these 40 points.

The second participation component will consist of in-class writing assignments. The purpose of this requirement is to allow me to determine whether or not students are “getting” the course material by
answering questions in terms of the political philosophy presented. For example, I might pose the following question:

Suppose the government makes a rule that you think is morally wrong. Do you, as a citizen, have the right to refuse to obey?

You would be asked to answer that question based on the readings that we have discussed, i.e. what would Plato say and why and whether or not you agree with him.

There are a total of 60 points that can be earned through these writing assignments. Each assignment will be worth a possible 20 points and there will be four days for in class writing. This means that if you miss an assignment you will not be penalized. For those students who write all four assignments, I will drop your lowest grade. There are no make-ups on these in-class writing assignments.

Grading scale

Grades will be assigned on the basis of points accumulated.

- 350-315: A
- 314-279: B
- 278-243: C
- 242-207: D
- 206-0: F

There is no extra credit in this course! Students should take the tests and the participation grades very seriously.

Notice to Students with Disabilities. Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. If you suspect that you may have a disability (physical impairment, learning disability, psychiatric disability, etc.,) please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities Office, located in Driftwood 101, at 825-5816. If you need disability accommodations in this class, please see me as soon as possible.

Academic advising. The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan, which must be signed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. The College’s Academic Advising Center is located in Driftwood 203E and can be reached at 825-3466.

Grade Appeal Process. As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined on the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the process, see University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules web site at http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/universityrules/index.html. For assistance or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.
Course Outline (Dates may be altered with notice)

September 4, Introduction to class

September 6, Introduction to political philosophy

September 9, 11, 13, 16, 18, Plato

September 20, 23, 25, Aristotle

September 27, In-class writing assignment #1

September 30, October 2, 4, St. Augustine

October 7, Early Warning Exam

October 9, 11, 14, St. Thomas Aquinas

October 16, 18, 21, Machiavelli

October 23, In-class writing assignment #2

October 25, 28, 30, Hobbes

November 1, Mid-term exam

November 4, 6, 8, Locke

November 11, 13, 15, Rousseau

November 18, In-class writing assignment #3

November 20, 22, 25, Mill

December 2, In-class writing assignment #4

December 4, 6, 9, Marx

December 20, Final exam >8 a.m.