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


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. There will be three writing assignments. Each assignment will be worth a possible 30 points. I will drop your lowest grade. **There are no make-ups on these in-class writing assignments.** (If you miss one writing assignment, make sure you complete the other two.)

**Grading scale**

Grades will be assigned on the basis of points accumulated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>350-315</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>314-279</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>278-243</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>242-207</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>206-0</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

**Disability Services**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides a reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at 361-825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall, Room @116.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at 361-825-5816.

**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. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit System. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit
must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA Academic Advising Office is located in Driftwood#203. For more information, please call 361-825-3466.

**Grade Appeal Process.**

Students who feel that they have not been held to appropriate academic standards, as outlined in the course syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, cla.tamucc.edu/studentsinfo.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean.

**Course Outline** (Dates may be altered with notice)

*August 26*, Introduction to class and syllabus

*August 31*, Introduction to political philosophy

*September 2, 4, 9, 11*, Plato

*Sept. 7*, Labor Day holiday

*September 14, 16, 18*, Aristotle

*Sept. 21*, In class writing assignment 1

*September 23, 25, 28*, St. Augustine

*Sept. 30*, Early Warning Exam

*October 2, 5, 7*, St. Thomas Aquinas

*October 9, 12,14*, Machiavelli

*October 16*, In class writing assignment 2

*October 19, 21,23*, Hobbes

*October 26*, Mid term Exam

*October 28, 30, Nov. 2*, Locke

*November 4, 6, 9*, Rousseau

*November 11,13, 16*, Mill

*November 18, 20, 23*, Marx
November 25, Writing assignment 3 (out of class)

November 30, Last class day. Hand out review for final.

December 9, Final Exam, 8 a.m.