Western Political Thought

In this course, we will be exploring the most important issues in politics and morality. Political philosophy not only addresses the question of justice and the best form of government, but also human nature and the best way of life. These latter questions must first be answered before the former can be addressed. Also, an understanding of justice is necessary for not only good citizenship, but in living a decent life as a human being. In this course, we will examine the most thoughtful treatments of these questions throughout the history of political philosophy. Though there will be a great breadth covered in this course, we will find that these works contain the philosophical arguments that find their way into our political discourse today. Our goal will be not only to learn about these philosophies, but to use them to learn about justice for ourselves.

Learning Outcomes

-Identify and explain the ideas of the major western political philosophers, examining how they addressed the political issues of their times and the important political questions we still ask today

-To explain and examine their philosophies as answers to questions raised by the world in which we live

-Improved communication skills (oral and written) to be measured through exams, papers, and in-class discussions

Major Course Requirements

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<td>Discussion Groups</td>
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<td>Mid-term Exam</td>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
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<td>1 Page Paper #1</td>
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<td>1 Page Paper #2</td>
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<td>1 Page Paper #3</td>
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This course consists of a careful reading of a few texts in political philosophy. The number of pages to be read is kept small, so that you will be able to read – and reread – each text thoroughly. Though class will have lecture, discussion is a necessary element. Discussion will
help to clarify important matters for both you and your classmates. It is crucial both that you attend classes and that you read the assigned texts carefully before each class.

Our goal will be not just to learn about these theories, but to use them to learn about ourselves. For this reason, there will be a premium on written work that should help students develop skills of interpretation, critical thinking, and communication.

Notes:

This course attempts to acquaint you with the history of political philosophy. To that end, we will examine several views of various moral and political problems: the tension between self-fulfillment and dedication to others (family, friends, community); the tension between family, friends, and the political community; is wisdom or science good for human beings?; tradition vs. innovation; morality and expediency; is philosophy good, bad, or indifferent?; and, above all, what is the meaning of justice?

As part and parcel of this project, we will learn how to read a Great Book with care, and how to make, analyze, and criticize an argument.

Though the three paper assignments are only 1 page (and no longer than one-page, double-space, 12-point font, Times New Roman, 1-inch margins, and one-sided document), the intent is for students to gain practice composing interpretations of political philosophy. Interpreting political philosophy is a different type of writing, which most students are unfamiliar with. It is neither a research paper (here is what I found) nor an opinion piece (this is what I feel). Instead of assigning multiple large papers, we will use these small papers to practice, improve, and develop our skills of communicating our interpretations clearly and concisely. This is not an easy task. It should be one of the most difficult activities you ever engage yourself.

Assignment extensions and make-up exams cannot be granted except in the most extenuating circumstances (proper documentation required). Requests for such extensions must be made in writing at least 48 hours before the due date.

There is no extra credit for this class.

Late papers/exams will NOT be accepted.

Students are required to submit written assignments for this class to Turnitin, a web-based plagiarism detection service. Before submitting your paper to Turnitin, please remove your title page and other personal information. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that the paper is properly uploaded to Turnitin.

Because of the benefits to everyone involved, your class participation can be used to improve your grade Participation grades are based on your contribution to classroom discussion.

After the first week of class, you will be assigned to a discussion group which you will contribute to both online and during class.
I expect that everyone will maintain a classroom conducive to learning. Therefore, your behavior in the classroom should not interfere with other students' opportunity to learn, or the instructor’s ability to conduct class. Students who are disruptive will be asked to leave class.

Cheating:

Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive a "0" for that particular assignment or exam. Additionally, the incident will be reported to the university administration which may impose further sanction.

To log into Blackboard for the course go to the following: iol.tamucc.edu
After logging into your Island Online account click on our class (POLS 3361.001) on the right-hand side of the screen.

**Required Readings**


**Suggested Reading:** *Holy Bible*: King James Version.

Note: All of the philosophers we will be reading this semester (except Plato obviously) were not only writing to Christian audiences, but had a profound grasp of Scripture and the theological and political debates concerning it. Thus, to properly understand these philosophers, students must have some familiarity with key pieces of Scripture including:

Creation (Genesis 1-2), The Fall (Genesis 3), Noah and the Flood (Genesis), Moses (Exodus), Ten Commandments (Exodus 20), Golden Calf (Exodus 32), David and Goliath (1 Samuel 17), David and Saul (1 Samuel), Christ’s Birth (Matthew, Luke), Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), Christ’s calling of the Ten Disciples (Matthew 10), Christ’s death and resurrection (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John), St. Paul and ecclesiastical governance (Romans 13)

Some additional readings, to be determined over the course of the semester may be assigned and posted on Blackboard. You will be notified when posted.

**Format**

The class will be structured around instructor led lectures and class participation. The book will reinforce my lectures and students should read the corresponding chapters. Students should participate in class as they are comfortable and able.
Class Schedule:

Section I: Origins of Modern Political Philosophy

Week 1: Introduction to Political Philosophy

Week 2: Machiavelli, *The Prince*
9/5-9/7: Ch. 6-8
***9/3: Labor Day: No Class***

Week 3: Machiavelli, *The Prince*
9/10-9/14: Ch. 9-15

Week 4: Machiavelli, *The Prince*
9/17-9/21: Ch. 16-19, 25-26

Section II: Modern Political Philosophy

Week 5: Locke, Two Treatises
9/24-9/28: *First Treatise*
***1 Page Paper #1 Due by 9/28 at 11:59pm***

Week 6: Locke, Two Treatises
10/1-10/5: *Second Treatise*

Week 7: American Political Thought
10/8-10/10: Madison, Jefferson, Franklin (Blackboard)
***10/12: Midterm Exam (Online/ Take-home)***

Section III: Crisis of Liberalism

Week 8: Rousseau
10/15-10/19: *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality, Discourse on the Arts and Sciences, Social Contract*
Week 9: Nietzsche
10/22-10/26: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

**Section IV: Ancient Political Philosophy**

Week 10: Plato, *Republic*
10/29-11/2: Book I
***1 Page Paper #2 Due by 11/2 at 11:59pm

Week 11: Plato, *Republic*
11/5-11/9: Books II-III

Week 12: Plato, *Republic*
11/12-11/19: Books IV-V
***11/21-11/23: Thanksgiving: No Class

Week 13: Plato, *Republic*
11/26-12/3: Books VI-IX

Week 14: Medieval Political Philosophy
12/5: St. Thomas Aquinas/ St. Augustine (Blackboard)
***1 Page Paper #3 Due by 12/5 at 11:59pm

**Final Exam**
12/7 at 11:00am-1:30pm (Online/ take-home)

***The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the course schedule or material due to instructional needs throughout the semester.

**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 361-825-2455.

**Grade Appeals Process:** As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, *Student Grade Appeals*, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in 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 steps in the process, see University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, Student Grade Appeals. These documents are accessible online at: http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C0.03_student_grade_appeals.pdf. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s office in the college in which the course is taught. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal in CLA, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html.

**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 for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an 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.

**Dropping a Class**
I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. **Please consult with your academic advisor, the Financial Aid Office, and me, before you decide to drop this course.**

Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. (November 9) is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.