

Survey of Political Theory

PSC 200, Fall 2010

Tue/Thurs 10:00–11:15am, WRI-C301

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Office Hours: Tues/Thurs, 11:30am–12:30pm, Room WRI-A222

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About the Course:

This is an introductory, survey course in political theory. It touches on some of the major themes that have been considered by philosophers from ancient Greece to modern times, about the organizing principles and dynamics of society. Some of the questions are inherently practical: for example, the nature of rule and the functions and limits of power. Other questions are more abstract: the underlying principles of government and social organization, such as happiness, equality, or liberty.

As a survey course, this class will do no more than scrape the surface of political theory, focusing on the work of particular individuals, most of whom are recognized as central figures. Our survey will be broad but shallow, with readings limited to that which captures a certain essential element of an extremely rich and dense body of work. We will rely on original texts (or, in some cases, translations), rather than reading the secondary, or interpretive, literature. Although my lectures will offer context and some signposts to help, interpretation is up to you, the reader: There are many interpretations of these texts, just as there are many “right” answers to questions suggested above. The only wrong interpretations are those not based on the text, so close reading is a must. Note that political theory texts can be quite dense and complicated, so allow yourself plenty of time to complete and fully process the reading before class meets. You are encouraged to question and criticize all that we read and discuss, and expected to be respectful of the views of your fellow classmates.

About political theory: Political theory originates in ancient Greece in more than one way: The first person we think of as a political philosopher or theorist was Socrates, who probably lived in Athens in the fifth century BCE. But the term “political theory” itself is also derived from ancient Greece. “Politics” comes from *politeia*, which can be translated as “constitution,” or the means by which order was established in the *polis*, which refers to a city and its people. “Theory” is derived from *theoria*, a word that literally refers to the practice of journeying to another *polis* to learn about their political, religious and cultural practices. The travel we do now is in our minds: We establish critical distance from our regular practices, so we can consider them from a different perspective. Often this means not only challenging ourselves to think things anew, but even to re-examine ideas we hold dear. The questions of political theory are fundamental questions: They have no easy answers and indeed have no fixed answers at all. The fact that Socrates’ ideas about the nature of justice have been discussed and debated for 2500 years doesn’t point to the ineffectiveness of political theory, but to its vitality.

Learning Objectives:

Students are expected to gain a sense of the range and scope of political thought, and to understand the diversity of perspectives on some of the perennial questions of political theory. In doing so, they will gain new skills in reading theoretical works, critical thinking and analysis.

Course Requirements and Grading:

- A. 5%—Participation
- B. 20%—in-class mid-term
- C. 35%—Two short papers, 3–5 pages in length, with the better one counting for 20% and the other one counting for 15%. These papers will be returned with comments.
- D. 30%—One final paper, 8–10 pages in length. Papers will be returned with comments upon request.
- E. 10%—Final exam

Each assignment (B–E) will be graded on a 100-point scale; the final grade will be determined using the weights above to produce a final score between 0 and 100, which will be used to assign the final letter grade for the course. Each paper must be submitted both in hard copy and electronically via Turnitin through WebCampus.

A note on grading: This is not an English course, so you will not be graded on the basis of your writing ability. Rather, you are graded on your understanding of the material and your ability to make arguments that pertain to it. That said, I will deduct points for errors, such as misspellings and sloppy grammar, that result from a lack of attention to the fundamental basics that are required of any college student. Further, my ability to evaluate your work depends on your ability to express yourself clearly. Expressing yourself clearly requires good writing skills. If you are not confident in your writing ability, then you must take it upon yourself to take advantage of the resources available at UNLV to improve your writing, including the Academic Success Center and UNLV Writing Center listed below in the “University Policies and Resources” section.

Grade disputes: If you believe that your grade does not reflect the true quality of your work, you must use the following procedure to request a re-evaluation:

1. All re-evaluation requests must be in the form of an e-mail, *no less than one week and no more than two weeks after the graded work has been returned, or 48 hours after the final exam.*
2. In your request, clearly identify the points for which you believe you should have received credit.
3. I will e-mail a reply to you within seven days of receiving your request.
4. If you still believe that your grade does not reflect the quality of your work, you may request a meeting with me to discuss it further.
5. I will make a final determination of your grade and e-mail you with my decision. At this point my decision will be final.

NOTE: If you request a re-evaluation of your grade, your grade may go up, stay the same, or go down.

Communication:

UNLV policy stipulates that all e-mail communication with me be done through Rebelmail.

University Policies and Resources:

Academic Misconduct: “Academic integrity is a legitimate concern for every member of the campus community; all share in upholding the fundamental values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility and professionalism. By choosing to join the UNLV community, students accept the expectations of the Academic Misconduct Policy and are encouraged when faced with choices to always take the ethical path. Students enrolling in UNLV assume the obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with UNLV’s function as an educational institution.”

An example of academic misconduct is plagiarism: “Using the words or ideas of another, from the Internet or any source, without proper citation of the sources.” See the “Student Academic Misconduct Policy” (approved December 9, 2005) located at: <http://studentlife.unlv.edu/judicial/misconductPolicy.html>.

Copyright: The University requires all members of the University Community to familiarize themselves and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. **You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. The university will neither protect nor defend you nor assume any responsibility for employee or student violations of fair use laws.** Violations of copyright laws could subject you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability, as well as disciplinary action under University policies. To familiarize yourself with copyright and fair use policies, you are encouraged to visit the following website: <http://www.unlv.edu/committees/copyright/>.

Disability Resource Center (DRC): UNLV complies with the provisions set forth in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, offering reasonable accommodations to qualified students with documented disabilities. If you have a documented disability that may require accommodations, you will need to contact the DRC for the coordination of services. The DRC is located in the Student Services Complex (SSC), Room 137, and the contact numbers are: Voice (702) 895-0866, TDD (702) 895-0652, fax (702) 895-0651. For additional information, please visit: <http://studentlife.unlv.edu/disability/>.

Religious Holidays Policy: Any student missing class quizzes, examinations, or any other class or lab work because of observance of religious holidays shall be given an opportunity during that semester to make up missed work. The make-up will apply to the religious holiday absence only. It shall be the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor no later than the last day at late registration of his or her intention to participate in religious holidays which do not fall on state holidays or periods of class recess. This policy shall not apply in the event that administering the test or examination at an alternate time would impose an undue hardship on the instructor or the university which could not be avoided.

Tutoring: The Academic Success Center (ASC) offers free drop-in lab tutoring for courses such as political science, accounting, biology, chemistry, and math. Subjects are added

based on tutoring requests and availability. Tutoring is provided throughout the school year so students can sign up anytime for assistance. All students wishing to receive tutoring must have a UNLV ID to enter the tutoring labs. Tutoring is available Monday through Friday, between the hours of 8 a.m. and 7 p.m. on the second floor of the Lied Library. For more details, visit <http://academicsuccess.unlv.edu/tutoring/>

UNLV Writing Center – One-on-one or small group assistance with writing is available free of charge to UNLV students at the Writing Center, located in CDC-3-301. Although walk-in consultations are sometimes available, students with appointments will receive priority assistance. Appointments may be made in person or by calling 895-3908. The student's Rebel ID Card, a copy of the assignment (if possible), and two copies of any writing to be reviewed are requested for the consultation. More information can be found at: <http://writingcenter.unlv.edu/>

Required Texts:

Most of the readings will be on-line, available through the course website, but in some cases I have ordered the books where we will be reading the entire text. Whether available on-line or in book form, you will need to bring the reading with you to class. One copy of each book is also on reserve at Lied Library.

Required books available in the bookstore:

- Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, translated and edited by Daniel Donno. Bantam Classics
- John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, edited by C.B. Macpherson. Hackett Publishing Co.
- John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, edited by Edward Alexander. Broadview Press

Optional books available in the bookstore (assigned readings from these books will be available on the course website):

Plato, *The Republic*, translated by Francis Cornford. Oxford University Press.

Aristotle, *The Politics*, translated by Ernest Barker; edited by R.F. Stalley. Oxford University Press

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, edited by C.B. Macpherson. Penguin (or Pelican) Classics

Jeremy Bentham, *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, edited by J.H. Burns and H.L.A. Hart. Oxford University Press.

Jeremy Bentham, *Principles of the Civil Code*, from Volume 1 of his *Works*, edited by John Bowring. Available on-line from the Online Library of Liberty (<http://oll.libertyfund.org/>).

Karl Marx, *Selected Writings*, edited by Lawrence H. Simon. Hackett Publishing Co., Inc.

Schedule of Classes and Reading Assignments:

(Note: Any changes to the readings will be posted on-line and announced via e-mail. Reading is expected to be completed prior to the class day given. "Continuation" indicates that no additional reading is assigned for a given class day.)

Week 1: Introductory

Aug 24: Course Introduction

Aug 26: What is politics, and what is political theory? Reading: Finkel, Michael. 2009. "The Hadza" in *National Geographic Magazine* (Dec.)

<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2009/12/hadza/finkel-text>

Weeks 2–3

Plato: the Philosopher King

Aug 31: *The Republic*: Chapters X–XIII

Sept 2: continuation

Sept 7: Chapter XXIII—XXV and XXIX—XXXI.

Sept 9: continuation

Week 4

Aristotle: the Science of Politics

Sept 14: *The Politics*: Book I: Ch. 1–10; Book II: Ch. 1–5

Sept 16: Book III: Ch. 1–4, 9–11, Book VII: Ch. 1–3

Paper #1 assigned, due at start of class Sept 23

Weeks 5–6

Machiavelli: the Nature of Rule

Sept 21: *The Prince*: Dedication–Ch 15

Sept 23: Ch 15–21. *Paper #1 due at start of class.*

Sept 28: Ch 22–end

Sept 30: Selections from *The Discourses*: All

Week 7

Hobbes: Self-interest and absolute rule

Oct 5: *Leviathan*: Ch. X–XI and XIII–XIV

Oct 7: Ch. XV and XVII–XVIII

Week 8

Oct 12: Review

Oct 14: *Mid-term Examination*

Weeks 9–10

Locke: the basis for the formation of government

Oct 19: *Second Treatise on Government*: Ch. I–IV

Oct 21: Ch. V–VI

Oct 26: Ch. VII–XV

Oct 28: Ch. XVI–XIX

Paper #2 assigned, due at start of class Nov 4

Week 11

Bentham: Utility, and Security, Subsistence, Abundance and Equality

Nov 2: *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*: Ch. 1–3, Ch. 5

Nov 4: *Principles of the Civil Code*: Part I, Ch. I–XIII. *Paper #2 due at start of class.*

Weeks 12–13

Marx: Alienation and Exploitation

Nov 9: *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*: Alienated Labor, Private Property and Communism (pp. 58–79).

Nov 11: Veteran’s Day holiday

Nov 16: *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (excerpts); *Communist Manifesto*: Parts I and II (pp. 158–176) and *Capital, vol. I*: Ch. 26 & 32 (pp. 294–300)

Week 14–15

Mill: Liberty

Nov 23: *On Liberty*: Ch. I and II

Nov 25: Thanksgiving Day holiday

Nov 30: Ch. III (pp. 101–121), from Ch. IV (pp. 122–133), and Ch V (pp. 143–166)

Final paper assigned; due at start of Final Exam, exam week

Dec 2: Wrap-up and review

Finals Week

Final paper due at Final Exam