

Political Science 115: Political Philosophy

Professor: Marcus E. Green
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Quarter: Autumn 2009 | Sep 14-Nov 25
Section #: 01
Schedule #: 40039
Class Time: MWF 12:30-1:50
Location: Roush Hall 214
Website: access through Blackboard

Course Description

Political Science 115 is an introduction to the study of political philosophy. It is a required course for all political science majors and minors at Otterbein College.

The purpose of this course is to provide students with a critical introduction to some of the major thinkers in the Western tradition of political philosophy, from Plato to the present, the principal concepts, and theories. Following the Otterbein Course Catalog, this course also aims to introduce students to the modern debates regarding liberalism and conservatism, capitalism and communism, and the theoretical foundations of feminism and critical theory.

Instead of approaching the subject of political theory as an examination of the universal and timeless issues of politics, this course approaches political theory as an integral aspect of political practice. Although today we often view “theory” as distinct from “practice,” many of the thinkers covered in this course viewed political theory as a form of practical knowledge, integrally related to political practice. Far from being disinterested philosophers, many thinkers covered in this course were people of action engaged in political activity. To understand the practical point of the works we study, it is necessary to place the thinkers in their intellectual and political contexts. Thus, we will analyze the major themes of political theory, such as who should rule, justice, citizenship, the good life, virtue, sovereignty, etc., in relation to the social and political history in which the theorists wrote their texts. In other words, it is not only important to read the texts, it is also important to read them with an understanding of the intellectual, political and social contexts in which the texts were written.

The course not only seeks to give students a better understanding of the history of political thought, it also seeks to provide students with the conceptual tools needed to analyze the political problems of our own times. If the course succeeds in its primary goals, you will begin to understand the political nature of political philosophy and its relation to the understanding of all political phenomena.

Course Objectives and Learning Goals

1. To develop a general knowledge of key political thinkers and their contributions to political theory.
2. To understand the underlying assumptions of political thought.
3. To acquire new conceptual perspectives to analyze political issues.
4. To analyze critically your own political assumptions in relation to political theory.
5. To understand that the project of political theory is an ongoing practice and that political theory is alive today.

Required Texts

1. Plato, *Republic*, translated by G.M.A. Grube, Revised by C.D.C. Reeve, (Hackett), ISBN: 0-87220-136-8
2. Aristotle, *Politics*, translated and introduction by C. D. C. Reeve (Hackett), ISBN: 0872203883
3. Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Portable Machiavelli*, edited by Peter Bondanella, (Penguin Books), ISBN: 0140150927
4. John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, edited by C. B. MacPherson (Hackett), ISBN: 0915144867
5. Karl Marx, *Selected Writings*, edited by Lawrence H. Simon (Hackett), ISBN: 0872202186
6. Stephen Eric Bronner (Editor), *Twentieth Century Political Theory: A Reader*, 2nd edition, (Routledge) ISBN: 0415948991

Grade Scale

The grading system for this course follows Otterbein College's four-point grade scale found in the College Catalog (<http://catalog.otterbein.edu/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=213#Grading>). Grades for assignments and final grade averages will follow the Grade Scale in first column in the table below. This Grade Scale will be used to determine the final Letter Grade.

Grade Scale	Letter Grade	Grade Points	Description
3.85 – 4.00	A	4.0	Exceptional
3.7 – 3.84	A-	3.7	Excellent
3.3 – 3.69	B+	3.3	Above Average
3.0 – 3.29	B	3.0	Above Average
2.7 – 2.99	B-	2.7	Above Average
2.3 – 2.69	C+	2.3	Average
2.0 – 2.29	C	2.0	Average
1.7 – 1.99	C-	1.7	Below Average
1.3 – 1.69	D+	1.3	Below Average
1.0 – 1.29	D	1.0	Below Average
0.0 – 0.99	F	0.0	Failure

Assignments & Grading Criteria

Essays

Students are expected to write three essays for this course, each worth 25% of the final grade. There are no exams. Each essay is intended to address particular readings, issues, and concepts covered in a particular period. The essay assignments are designed for you to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of the material and issues under review and to provide a critical analysis of them. "Critical analysis" does *not* mean a dismissal of particular ideas or concepts. Rather, it entails a critical investigation of a set of ideas or issues in order to reveal the limits, flaws, and/or problems related to them. I will provide a list of recommended questions and detailed instructions for each essay assignment at least two weeks prior to the due date.

Participation Grade

Students are graded on class participation. In addition to the formal essay requirements, successful achievement of course objectives requires active class participation, which is an important and valuable aspect of the learning experience. Therefore, 25% of the final course grade is determined by class participation. This means that I expect you to contribute and participate in class discussions. You will only receive an acceptable grade for class participation if you attend class and participate in discussion. You should come to class prepared to discuss particular issues, topics, and readings.

To facilitate discussion, I will distribute discussion questions based upon the readings. Students are expected to answer particular questions in class. Your participation grade will be determined by the quality and quantity of your participation performance.

Participation Grade Breakdown

Participation Points	Grade
12	4.0
11	3.8
10	3.7
9	3.3
8	3.0
7	2.7
6	2.3
5	2.0
4	1.7
3	1.3
2	1.0
1	0.7
0	0.0

Participation grades will be determined by the quality and quantity of student performance. For each discussion question a student successfully answers, the student will receive one point. At the end of the semester, students' participation grades will be calculated based upon their total raw participation points following the scale to the left. For instance, a student with 11 participation points, will receive a grade of 3.8 for participation.

Assignments & the Determination of Final Grade

Assignments	Date	Points	Grades
Essay 1 (3-4 pages)	Wed, Oct. 7	4	
Essay 2 (3-4 pages)	Wed, Oct. 28	4	
Essay 3 (3-4 pages)	TBA	4	
Participation	n/a	4	
Total Possible Points		16	
Average		4	

Final Grade = average of essay grades & participation

Calculation of Final Grade

The calculation of the final grade for the course is determined by the average of the three essay assignment grades and the class participation grade. The final grade recorded for the course follows the grade scale above. The final grade average must meet the minimum threshold of the grade scale for each corresponding grade. For example, to receive an A- in the course, a student's final grade average must be 3.7 or above. In the case of a marginal final grade within .05 of a point, I will round up. For instance, if a student's final grade average is 3.66, I will record the final grade as an A-, but a final grade average of 3.60 will be recorded as a B+.

Course Policies

Course Format

Class meetings will be divided between lectures and directed class discussions. The lectures are designed to provide students with a framework of meaning through which they are better able to understand and discuss the texts. Class discussions will be based upon readings from the required texts. The discussions shall provide students with a forum in which they can discuss and debate the key concepts of the texts under review with their classmates and the instructor.

Lectures and Readings

Students are responsible for knowing the material covered in the assigned readings and the material covered in lectures. Lectures will address information found in the readings as well as information not found in the readings. I do not distribute my lecture notes to students. Therefore, students are encouraged to attend class and to take notes.

Attendance

Attendance is required. You are permitted up to 3 absences without penalty. Each absence after your third will result in a penalty of .25 points to your final grade. A student missing 6 classes automatically fails the course. Your 3 absences include all university excused absences; if you will be required to miss more than 3 classes for university approved reasons, please see me to make arrangements. Sickness short of hospitalization or incapacitation does not constitute grounds for an excused absence in excess of the 3 permitted. I may make exceptions for truly unusual and unanticipated events, but such arrangements must be discussed with me. Colds, flus, hangovers, broken bones, dental work, doctors appointments, changes in work schedules, etc. do not count as either unusual or unanticipated; you are permitted an occasional absence to deal with such events.

Tardiness

Tardiness will be factored into your participation grade. If you are regularly late to class, I reserve the right to reduce your participation grade by .25 for each instance.

Classroom Environment

This course is designed to challenge your written and verbal communicative skills, which are, in my view, not only necessary to the learning process but vital to the development of democratic culture and citizenship. Just like writing, the public exchange of ideas requires skill. It requires a level of confidence to speak in front of others and a level of maturity and respect to listen to others. It can be said that this course is Socratic in the sense that our discussions are similar to workshops in which we workout different thoughts and ideas in coordination with one another. Because of this, I will work to make the classroom environment respectful and comfortable for all, and I expect you to do the same.

Blackboard

I will distribute course materials, including notes and outlines, on Blackboard. Therefore, it is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with Blackboard and to login periodically for course updates.

Submitting Essays

I require students to submit a hard copy of each paper and to submit an electronic copy through Blackboard. Make a copy of each paper before you turn it in. It is the responsibility of students to keep duplicate copies of their papers.

Late Essays (and “free days”)

I grant each student a five day extension for the whole term on the first two assigned essays. This means that you can turn a paper in five days late and still receive full credit. You can use the five days at different times and for different essays. For example, if you turn-in the first essay three days late, you will receive full credit, but you will then only have two extension days left for the rest of the term. After your five days are up, I will deduct .5 points (out of 4) each day the paper is late. If you plan to use any “free days,” you do not need to tell me; just submit a hard copy and an electronic copy of the paper when you are finished. Please note that I only count weekdays as “free days,” meaning weekend days are not counted. This is due to the fact that I do not accept emailed papers. I will consider papers “turned in” when I receive the hardcopy, not the electronic copy. The third essay cannot be turned in late.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty

Otterbein policies regarding academic integrity will be strictly enforced. All submitted work must be your own, and it is the responsibility of all students to understand the methods of proper citation and to apply those methods in all written assignments. I will investigate indications of copied or plagiarized work, and I reserve the right to administer an oral exam and to question the student, if I suspect a student has submitted work that may be plagiarized.

According to the Otterbein Campus Life Handbook, “any use of the words or ideas of someone else as though they were the student's own words, constitutes plagiarism. This definition applies to the use of both printed and unprinted sources, including the work of other students or faculty.” (See: http://www.otterbein.edu/CLH/code_of_conduct_policies.asp#sec_4).

Plagiarism occurs when a writer reproduces the words or ideas of another author without acknowledgment or when a writer paraphrases the ideas or arguments of another author in such away as to lead the reader to believe that the ideas or arguments originated with the writer. According to Charles Lipson’s definition of plagiarism in *Doing Honest Work in College* (Chicago, 2004): “It is plagiarism to quote an author’s exact words or to paraphrase them closely without *both* quotation marks and proper citation” (40). “When you paraphrase an author’s sentence, don’t veer too close to her words. That’s plagiarism, *even if it’s unintentional and even if you cite the author*” (43).

I will report violations of academic dishonesty to the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs. According to Otterbein policy, students who violate standards of academic integrity are subject to disciplinary sanctions, which include the “failure on the given assignment or a failing grade for the course.”

Disability Accommodation

If you need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, you should contact me to arrange an appointment as soon as possible. At the appointment we can discuss the course format, anticipate your needs and explore potential accommodations. I rely on the Disability Services Coordinator for assistance in verifying the need for accommodations and developing

strategies. If you have not previously contacted the Disability Services Coordinator (x1618 or LMonaghan@otterbein.edu), I encourage you to do so.

Email

Outside of my office hours, I can be reached via email, and I will usually respond within 24 hours.

Note: In the subject, include the course number (POLS 115), and in the body of the message, please include your first and last name.

Electronic Devices

Recording Lectures: In accordance with federal regulations, students may not make audio recordings of class lectures without the prior written consent of the instructor. Students who have registered and documented disabilities may make audio recordings with the consent of the instructor.

Cell Phones & iPods: Please turn off cell phone ringers during class, no texting, and no iPod listening in class.

Drop Dates & Withdrawal Policy

Students who wish to drop the course may do so using the regular procedures. It is not the responsibility of the professor to drop students from the course.

- Last day to drop classes with no grade recorded on transcript: October 19, 2009
- Last day to drop with “W” on transcript: November 2, 2009

Class Schedule and Readings. This is a tentative schedule and may change with notice.

Week	Date	Topic/Reading	Assignment Due Dates
Week 1	Mon Sep 14	Introduction to the course	
	Wed Sep 16	The nature of political philosophy	
	Fri Sep 18	Plato	
Week 2	Mon Sep 21	Plato	
	Wed Sep 23		
	Fri Sep 25		
Week 3	Mon Sep 28	Aristotle	
	Wed Sep 30		
	Fri Oct 2		
Week 4	Mon Oct 5	Machiavelli	
	Wed Oct 7		Essay 1 Due Wed, Oct. 7
	Fri Oct 9		
Week 5	Mon Oct 12	Columbus Day: No Class	No Class
	Wed Oct 14	Machiavelli	
	Fri Oct 16	Locke	
Week 6	Mon Oct 19	Locke	
	Wed Oct 21	Locke	
	Fri Oct 23	Marx	
Week 7	Mon Oct 26	Marx	
	Wed Oct 28		Essay 2 Due Wed, Oct. 28
	Fri Oct 30		
Week 8	Mon Nov 2	Contemporary Theory	
	Wed Nov 4		
	Fri Nov 6	No Class November 6	No Class
Week 9	Mon Nov 9	Contemporary Theory	
	Wed Nov 11		
	Fri Nov 13		
Week 10	Mon Nov 16	Contemporary Theory	
	Wed Nov 18		
	Fri Nov 20		
Week 11	Mon Nov 23	Exam Week	Essay 3 Due Date to TBA
	Tue Nov 24		
	Wed Nov 25		