

Political Science 115: Political Philosophy

Professor: Marcus E. Green
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Quarter: Winter 2011 | Sep 14-Nov 25
Section #: 01
Schedule #: 11296
Class Time: MWF 9:30-10:50 a.m.
Location: Library 124
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 University.

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, students 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 some of the key political thinkers in the Western tradition, their contributions to political theory, and the contexts in which they wrote.
2. To understand the underlying philosophical assumptions of political thought.
3. To assist students in gaining awareness of some of the major concepts of political thought, such as justice, democracy, the social contract, freedom, consent, equality, power, authority, and legitimacy.
4. To analyze critically one’s 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.
6. To acquire new conceptual perspectives to analyze political issues.
7. To assist students in developing their critical readings skills and skills of textual analysis and interpretation.
8. To assist students in the development of their analytical, critical thinking, writing, and communicative skills.

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. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Basic Political Writings*, translated by Donald A. Cress, Introduction by Peter Gay (Hackett), ISBN: 0872200477
6. Karl Marx, *Selected Writings*, edited by Lawrence H. Simon (Hackett), ISBN: 0872202186

Grade Scale

The grading system for this course follows Otterbein University's four-point grade scale found in the College Catalog (<http://catalog.otterbein.acalog.com/content.php?catoid=10&navoid=463#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

Grades for assignments and final grade averages will follow the Grade Scale in first column. This Grade Scale will be used to determine the final Letter Grade.

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 – one participation point for each question successfully answered. I will also give students credit for participation when they provide significant contributions to class discussions that either enhance or provide greater meaning to the discussion. 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)	Mon, Jan 31	4	
Essay 2 (3-4 pages)	Mon, Feb 21	4	
Essay 3 (3-4 pages)	Wed, Mar 16	4	
Participation	n/a	4	
Total Possible Points		16	
Average		4	
- points for absences			
Final Grade			

Average of essay grades & participation
 - 0.1 for each unexcused absence after 3rd absence

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, but you are not graded for it. You are permitted up to 3 unexcused absences without penalty. After your third unexcused absence, I will deduct .1 of a point from your final grade average for each additional absence. For example, 4 absences = -0.1 point; 5 absences = -0.2 point, etc. If you need to miss more than three 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. 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, doctor appointments, changes in work schedules, etc. do not count as either unusual or unanticipated. You are permitted three unexcused absences to deal with such events.

Tardiness

If you are regularly late to class, I reserve the right to reduce your final grade average by .1 point for each instance of tardiness.

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 – *including presentations* – 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). In other words, plagiarism is the intentional or unintentional use of someone else’s words or ideas presented as your own.

Plagiarism occurs when a writer reproduces the words 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. Plagiarism can be intentional or unintentional. According to Andrea A. Lunsford in *The Everyday Writer* (4th ed): “If your paraphrase is too close to the wording or sentence structure of a source (even if you identify the source); if you do not identify the source of a quotation (even if you include the quotation marks); or if you fail to indicate clearly the source of an idea that you obviously did not come up with on your own, you may be accused of plagiarism even if your intent was not to plagiarize” (p. 191).

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: Monday, February 7, 2011
- Last day to drop with “W” on transcript: Monday, February 21, 2011

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

Week	Date	Reading & Topics	Assignment Due Dates
Week 1	Mon Jan 3	Introduction to the course	
	Wed Jan 5	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Book I	
	Fri Jan 7	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Book II	
Week 2	Mon Jan 10	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Book III & IV	
	Wed Jan 12	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Book V & VI (161-165, 176-85)	
	Fri Jan 14	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Book VII (), VIII, IX	
Week 3	Mon Jan 17	Aristotle	
	Wed Jan 19		
	Fri Jan 21		
Week 4	Mon Jan 24	Aristotle	
	Wed Jan 26	Essay 1 Peer Review	Essay 1 Peer Review
	Fri Jan 28	Machiavelli	
Week 5	Mon Jan 31	Machiavelli	Essay 1 Due
	Wed Feb 2		
	Fri Feb 4		
Week 6	Mon Feb 7	Hobbes	
	Wed Feb 9	Locke	
	Fri Feb 11	Locke	
Week 7	Mon Feb 14	Locke	
	Wed Feb 16	Rousseau	
	Fri Feb 18		
Week 8	Mon Feb 21	Rousseau	Essay 2 Due
	Wed Feb 23		
	Fri Feb 25		
Week 9	Mon Feb 28	Marx	
	Wed Mar 2		
	Fri Mar 4		
Week 10	Mon Mar 7	Marx	
	Wed Mar 9		
	Fri Mar 11		
Week 11	Wed Mar 16	Exam Week: Essay 3 Due	Essay 3 Due