

POLS 120
University of Illinois, Chicago
Fall 2008
TA's: Mr. Wael Haboub and Mr. Alan Ward

Professor Lida Maxwell
lmaxwel@uic.edu
1108-D BSB
Office Hours: Mondays, 3-5

Introduction to Political Theory

Mondays and Wednesdays, 2-2:50pm
Room: 140 BSB
Sections on Fridays

Course Description:

This course introduces students to political theory by examining five key problems that arise in living together: injustice, instability, tyranny, inequality, and despotism. Through reading and interpreting important texts that span from the time of the ancient Greeks to 20th century America, we will ask how we should define and evaluate these problems. Should we assess them in terms of values that transcend the realm of politics (morality, religion, etc.), or should we view them in terms of more purely political values, like power and freedom? We will also ask how we should best respond to these problems – through making better rules or laws, political action, or both?

Required Texts (available at university bookstore for purchase):

Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince* (University of Chicago Press)
Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (Penguin)
Locke, *The Second Treatise* (Hackett)
Mill, *On Liberty* (Hackett)
Marx, *Communist Manifesto* (Signet)
Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (Yale University Press)

*Readings on electronic reserve are noted as **ER** in the course schedule. Although these readings are accessed online, you must still print out hard copies to read and bring with you to class and discussion section.

To access electronic reserve readings, go to the following URL:
<http://uic.docutec.com/eres/coursepass.aspx?cid=1475>

The password to access the readings is **giraffe**.

Course Mechanics and Requirements:

This course requires you to read texts, interpret them, write about them, and talk about them in class. The point of the class is not just for you to “know” what each text says, but also to think critically about them: what does the author mean?; does his/her argument make sense (and why or why not)?; could the text mean more than one thing and, if so, how do we decide which meaning is right? To this end, **you should be reading the assigned texts actively, not passively**: underline passages that seem important or interesting to you, as well as passages that don’t seem to make sense; jot down questions that arise for you about the texts; and think about whether and how the author seems to be contradicting him/herself or not quite arguing what s/he says s/he is arguing.

The following requirements for this course are designed to test you on your knowledge of the texts, as well as your skill in critically interpreting them:

1) Two Papers, 4-5 pages each, due on October 10th and November 21st (25% each, for a total of 50%)

*Your work must be your own and your essays must be adequately cited; to do otherwise is to plagiarize (see <http://www.uic.edu/depts/pols/Plagiarism1.pdf>). **Plagiarism – the passing off of other people’s words and ideas as your own – will be severely penalized.** You should not consult outside sources for your papers at all. Instead, you should read the texts, reread them, and think.

2) In-class midterm on October 20th (15%)

3) In-class 2nd Term Exam on December 3rd (20%)

4) Participation (15%) – this is based on your attendance and active participation in lecture and discussion section

***Inconsistent attendance or failure to be prepared for class may seriously affect your grade.**

Course Schedule:

Monday 8/25

Introduction to Course

I. Injustice

Wednesday 8/27

Plato, *The Apology* (**ER**)

Friday 8/29

SECTION

Monday 9/1

LABOR DAY – NO CLASS

Wednesday 9/3

Martin Luther King, “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” (**ER**)

Friday 9/5

SECTION

II. Instability and War

Monday 9/8

Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, selections from Book 1 (**ER**)

[Book 1: sections 1-23 (Thucydides’ Preface); sections 65-88 (Sparta Debates about Corinth); sections 140-146 (Periclean War Speech)]

Wednesday 9/10

Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, selections from Books 3 & 5 (**ER**)

[Book 3: sections 37-51 (Mytillean debate), sections 81-85 (civil war); Book 5: sections 84-116 (Melian dialogue)]

Friday 9/12

SECTION

Monday 9/15

Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Preface, Ch. 1-17

Wednesday 9/17

Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Ch. 18-26

Friday 9/19

SECTION

Monday 9/22

Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Dedication and Introduction, Ch.4, 6, 12-15 (**ER**)

Wednesday 9/24

Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Ch. 16-19, 21 (**ER**)

***Paper Topics handed out in class; due Friday, October 10th**

Friday 9/26

SECTION

III. Tyranny (and Empire)

Monday 9/29

Locke, *The Second Treatise*, Ch. 1-11

Wednesday 10/1

Locke, *The Second Treatise*, Ch. 18-19

Friday 10/3

SECTION

Monday 10/6

Mill, *On Liberty*, Ch. 1-2

Wednesday 10/8

Mill, *On Liberty*, Ch. 3-4

Friday 10/10

SECTION

***Papers due at beginning of section**

Monday 10/13

Fanon, "On Violence," from *The Wretched of the Earth* (**ER**)

Wednesday 10/15

Malcolm X, "The Ballot or the Bullet" (**ER**)

Friday 10/17

SECTION

IV. Inequality

Monday 10/20

MIDTERM IN CLASS

Wednesday 10/22

Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, Part II (ER)

Friday 10/24

SECTION

Monday 10/27

Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Book I

Wednesday 10/29

Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, all of Book II, Book III Ch. 1, 9-14, 18

Friday 10/31

SECTION

Monday 11/3

Marx, "On the Jewish Question," Part I (ER)

Wednesday 11/5

Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*, pp. 49-76 (Preface, Parts I & II)

***Paper topics handed out in class, due on Friday, 11/21 at the beginning of section**

Friday 11/7

SECTION

Despotism

Monday 11/10

Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, Books 1-3, 5 (ER)

Wednesday 11/12

Tocqueville, *Democracy in America, Part II*; Ch. 2-3, 6-7 (ER)

Friday 11/14

SECTION

Monday 11/17

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (entire)

Wednesday 11/19

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative* cont.

Friday 11/21

SECTION

***Papers due at beginning of section**

Monday 11/24

Hannah Arendt, "Montesquieu's Revision of the Tradition" (ER)

Hannah Arendt, "Civil Disobedience" (ER)

Wednesday 11/26

Hannah Arendt, "Civil Disobedience" cont.

Friday 11/28

NO SECTION – THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

V. Conclusion: The Return of Empire?

Monday 12/1

Arundhati Roy, “Confronting Empire” (**ER**)

Fred Dallmayr, “Empire or Cosmopolis? Civilization at the Crossroads” (**ER**)

Wednesday 12/3

IN-CLASS 2ND TERM EXAM

Friday 12/5

No Section!