

POLS 120: Introduction to Political Thought

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BSB 1170B

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Course Description:

This course is an introduction to the classical texts and themes of political thought. We will be reading selections from the canonical works of Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Rousseau and Mill. These texts have provoked thought across many centuries on a wide range of topics— the question of justice, the organization of communities, the exercise and regulation of power, the rights of citizens, the meaning of liberty. We will also be reaching outside the Western canon to explore the works of original thinkers whose writings have deeply influenced the politics of our times. We will look at the issue of violence as a political response—the anti-colonial struggles captured by Frantz Fanon and the psychology of violence as laid out by the anarchist Emma Goldman. We will examine the theory of non-violence created and practiced by both Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King. We will also explore significant works of political theory in the American tradition with key selections from the Federalist papers, W.E.B. Dubois and Malcolm X. The course will conclude with a close examination of Hannah Arendt’s powerful analysis of totalitarianism.

Course Assignments and Requirements:

You are required to pay close attention to the reading and be vigorous in your engagement with the texts. You are also required to attend both the lectures and the discussion section of the course and participate actively in both. The assignments for this course are three in-class exams (please note there is no final exam for this course). A list of identifications will be distributed before each exam to aid you in your preparation.

Your grade for this course will be computed as follows:

Exam 1	30%
Exam 2	30%
Exam 3	30%
Class Participation and Attendance	10%

All readings for this course are available in a course-pack which will be offered for purchase during the first week of class. Each course-pack costs \$40 (cash or check only). Please make all necessary arrangements to purchase your course-packs in a timely fashion.

Schedule of Readings:

(All readings are in course pack, except those marked with an asterisk, which will be e-mailed to you in advance of the class meeting)

PART I: CLASSICAL FOUNDATIONS OF POLITICAL THOUGHT

Wednesday, January 17	Introduction
Monday, January 22	Aeschylus, <u>The Oresteia</u> (Agamemnon, pp.34-93)
Wednesday, January 24	Aeschylus, <u>The Oresteia</u> (The Libation Bearers, pp.94-133)
Monday, January 29	Aeschylus, <u>The Oresteia</u> (The Eumenides, pp.134-172)
Wednesday, January 31	Plato, <u>The Apology</u> (pp.147-159) <u>Crito</u> (pp.159-165)
Monday, February 5	Aristotle, <u>Politics</u> (pp.377-384 and pp.394-417)
Wednesday, February 7	Aristotle, <u>Politics</u> (pp.417-442)

Exam 1: In Class, Monday, February 12

PART II: ORIGINS OF THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

Wednesday, February 14	Thomas Hobbes, <u>Leviathan</u> (pp.124-145 and pp.163-172)
Monday, February 19	Thomas Hobbes, <u>Leviathan</u> (pp.172-204)
Wednesday, February 21	Thomas Hobbes, <u>Leviathan</u> (pp.204-216, pp.226-236 and pp.249-263)
Monday, February 26	Jean-Jacques Rousseau, <u>The Social Contract</u> (pp.464-474)
Wednesday, February 28	Jean-Jacques Rousseau, <u>The Social Contract</u> (pp.474-494)
Monday, March 5	Jean-Jacques Rousseau, <u>The Social Contract</u> (pp.514-534)

PART IV: LIBERALISM AND RIGHTS

Wednesday, March 7	John Stuart Mill, <u>On Liberty</u> (pp.605-636)
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Monday, March 12 John Stuart Mill, On Liberty (pp.636-672)

Wednesday, March 14 Karl Marx, The Jewish Question (pp. 764-781)

Exam 2: In Class, Monday, March 19

PART IV: THEORIES OF NON-VIOLENCE AND VIOLENCE

Wednesday, March 21 Mahatma Gandhi, Political Writings (pp.27-57)

(March 26 and March 28, no class, Spring Break)

Monday, April 2 Mahatma Gandhi, Political Writings (pp.58-91)
Martin Luther King, Letter from a Birmingham Jail**

Wednesday April 4 Frantz Fanon, On Violence

Monday, April 9 Emma Goldman, Psychology of Political Violence**

PART V: AMERICAN FOUNDATIONS

Wednesday, April 11 The Federalist Papers (nos. 10 and 51)

Monday, April 16 W.E.B. DuBois, The Conservation of the Races
Our Spiritual Strivings
Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others
The Talented Tenth

Wednesday, April 18 Malcolm X, The Ballot or the Bullet
Harpers' Article on Reparations**

PART VI: CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN POLITICAL THEORY

Monday, April 23 Hannah Arendt, Totalitarianism
(pp. 3-24, required, pp.39-62. recommended)

Wednesday, April 25 Hannah Arendt, Totalitarianism (pp. 135-158 and pp.158-177)

Monday, April 30 Conclusion

Exam 3: In Class, Wednesday, May 2 (There is no final exam for this course)