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### **\*\*INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL THEORY\*\***

**POLS 120, Fall 2021 (3 credits, on-campus)**

**BSB 140, MW 1:00-1:50, CRN #37191 (see Friday section information above)**

**Gen Ed: Understanding the Individual and Society, Understanding the Past**

#### COURSE DESCRIPTION

Political theory investigates how we should and how we do live together. It is an inquiry into some of the fundamental problems and priorities of collective life: liberty, authority, equality, justice, security, and governance. There is fairly broad agreement that these are necessary or even good things, but much less agreement about what they are. What are liberty, authority, equality, etc. and how do they relate to one another? And which of them is or are the most important? POLS 120 is designed to introduce students to the practice of thinking systematically about these and related phenomena. We will do so by reading, speaking, and writing about freedom and order, and especially about political freedom and political order. We'll see that freedom and order can each have internal tensions and be understood as mutually supportive or in conflict, and that both freedom and order can be praised or condemned. The syllabus is divided into three sections. If you get disoriented, think about how a particular reading relates to its section and to these broader questions.

#### COURSE READINGS

**All readings are contained in a required course packet, available for purchase in the UIC Bookstore.** If you don't already have this printed collection please purchase it immediately. You should always **read and reread with pen or pencil in hand** as able. Recent educational research suggests that this is more effective than electronic work. **POLS 120 will be an electronics-free zone; please turn off all ringers and alerts and put away your devices, and be prepared to take any notes by hand that you may always type up later.**

Because of the continuing public health emergency we will make lecture recordings available for remote access and review through Blackboard. But doing as much work for this class as possible in-person and offline—and thus without needless distractions—is recommended for fuller engagement and better learning.

## COURSE FORMAT AND REQUIREMENTS

This is a reading, lecture, writing, and discussion course. These four elements will set us on our way toward thinking—and by that I mean thinking critically—about freedom and order. Participation in class discussions is an essential element of this course. Assigned materials **must be read by their date on the schedule below** and **consistent lecture listening and discussion attendance is mandatory** (religious holidays will be accommodated with notice on an individual basis). Pop quizzes on the reading might be given in discussion sections, with a zero grade assigned for unexcused absences. Poor attendance and attending class unprepared will seriously affect your participation and quiz grades and overall performance. Again, **while in lecture or discussion ringers and alerts must be turned off and devices put away**. As in any class, students may be asked to leave for inappropriate behavior.

Under pandemic conditions\* we recognize that there are even more contingencies than usual affecting our students' lives, and that difficult conflicts will arise. **Please communicate and let your TA know when you will be unable to attend class and why**. Excused absences are normally limited to documented illness, bereavement, and religious holidays, but this semester we will make further accommodations. We will provide lecture-session audio recordings, when available, for remote access and review, but as always poor commitment and attending class unprepared will seriously affect your overall performance.

**\*Face Masks: Masks covering both the mouth and nose must be worn at all times by all students, faculty, and staff while on campus and inside any building regardless of vaccination status. If you do not wear a mask, you will be asked to leave the classroom and will not be allowed back in class unless or until you wear a mask. If you have forgotten your mask, you may pick one up from the Department of Political Science undergraduate office at BSB 1102. Students who do not comply with the mask-wearing policy will be reported to the Dean of Students. Eating and drinking are not allowed in classrooms.**

The main written work for this course consists of **two 5-7 page essays** in which you will be asked to do close comparative work on course texts in service of a thesis, or argument. This work will benefit not only from close reading and from attentiveness to lectures, but from regular discussion-period work. In addition I will run mandatory small-group Zoom paper conferences on the first assignment to help you discuss and refine your ideas. Paper topics will be distributed and late papers will be penalized (see dates below).

**Your work must be your own. If you feel the need to consult outside sources, then you don't understand the nature of the essay assignments, and you should talk to one of us immediately. Your work must be adequately cited; to do otherwise is to plagiarize (for tips on how to avoid plagiarism and other links discussing what it is and why it matters see <https://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu/how-avoid-plagiarism>). Plagiarism—the passing off of others' words or ideas as your own—will be severely penalized (sanctions include automatic course failure and possible subjection to the Student Disciplinary Policy: see the link under <http://dos.uic.edu/conductforstudents.shtml>). You do not need to do any outside research at all in order to complete the assignments for this class. If you automatically graze internet sites as part of your study process then note where you go and cite them, but I guarantee you that your time is better spent stopping, working on your own, and engaging with classmates and instructors. You need to reread the reading provided, break it down, think, organize, write, and rewrite. We will help with this, but do your own work!**

## SUMMARY OF COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING PERCENTAGES:

- Attendance/Participation 10% and quizzes 5%, for a total of 15%
  - Two 5-7 page papers, 20% and 25% respectively, for a total of 45%  
(See "Schedule of Assignments" below for due dates)
  - Midterm exam 20% (Monday, October 11 during class period, BSB 140)
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> term exam 20% (Monday, December 6, 1:00-3:00 p.m. or TBA, BSB 140)
- Midterm grades are unofficial progress reports reflecting under 50% of total performance.

### COURSE OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

M-8/23: Course introduction

#### I. What is (political) freedom?

W-8/25: Dostoevsky, "The Grand Inquisitor" from *The Brothers Karamazov*

F-8/27: Discussion section

M-8/30: Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* excerpts

W-9/1: Paine, *Common Sense* excerpt and US Declaration of Independence

**\*\*Paper topic one assigned: due Friday 10/1 in class**

F-9/3: Discussion section

M-9/6: LABOR DAY (no class)

W-9/8: Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* excerpts

F-9/10: Discussion section

M-9/13: Mill, *On Liberty*, pp. 223-259

W-9/15: Mill, *On Liberty*, pp. 260-265

F-9/17: Discussion section

M-9/20: Mill, *On Liberty*, pp. 276-284; U.S. Bill of Rights; *Minersville School District v. Gobotis* opinion (United States Supreme Court)

W-9/22: *Board of Education v. Barnette* opinion and dissent excerpts (United States Supreme Court)

F-9/24: Discussion section

M-9/27: Adams letters; Sojourner Truth, speech known as "Ain't I a Woman?"

W-9/29: Malcolm X, "The Ballot or the Bullet"

F-10/1: Discussion section

**\*\*papers due at the beginning of class!!**

## **II. What is (political) order?**

M-10/4: Arendt, *On Violence* (excerpt)

W-10/6: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 13

F-10/8: Discussion section

M-10/11: MIDTERM EXAM (short answer and essay format)

W-10/13: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chs. 14 and 17

**\*\*Paper topic two assigned: due Friday 11/12 in class**

F-10/15: Discussion section

M-10/18: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 18; Preamble to the US Constitution

W-10/20: Madison, Federalist 10 and 51

F-10/22: Discussion section

M-10/25: Plato, *Apology*

W-10/27: Plato, *Crito*

F-10/29: Discussion section

M-11/1: King, "Letter from Birmingham Jail"

W-11/3: Allen, *Talking to Strangers* excerpts

F-11/5: Discussion section

## **III. Freedom, order, and the social question**

M-11/8: Hayek, "Equality, Value, and Merit"

W-11/10: Anderson, *Private Government* excerpt

F-11/12: Discussion section

**\*\*papers due at the beginning of class!!**

M-11/15: Marx, "Wage Labour and Capital" (abridged)

W-11/17: Anzaldua, *Borderlands/La Frontera* excerpts

F-11/19: Discussion section

M-11/22: Rubin, "The Traffic in Women" excerpt

W-11/24: Rubin, "The Traffic in Women" excerpt, cont'd

F-11/26: Thanksgiving holiday (no class)

M-11/29: Kimmerman, *Braiding Sweetgrass* excerpts

W-12/1: Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, ch. 7

F-12/3: Discussion section

## **2<sup>ND</sup> TERM EXAMINATION MONDAY, DEC. 6, 1-3 PM OR TBA, BSB 140**

### **Closing thoughts on education, etiquette, and accessibility for these times**

The space of the classroom is an ancient, cross-cultural learning technology. It was not made obsolete by the printing press, and it won't be made obsolete by the internet. The reasons for this are complex, but we might need reflect on some of them as we come back into this space from remote learning. You should be attentive to your classmates, and they should be attentive to you, and all of us attentive to what is between us—the texts and vocabularies and ideas that we are considering in common. When discussing, be respectful of others, which is of course perfectly consistent with strong and passionate disagreement. Discussion sections will not be recorded but lecture sessions will be; for students to feel they can freely engage and ask questions it is essential that you **do not copy or share any recordings of class of any kind with anyone else**. However innocent seeming, this is potentially quite disrespectful of and harmful to others and will expose the offender to sanctions ranging from automatic course failure to legal liability. Everyone in the classroom space must have the expectation that they can express confusion, make mistakes, sometimes too sharply correct the mistakes of others, etc., without fear that their imperfect and passing moments of working together toward understanding will be captured and made permanent. This is especially important in a course like this one, where we investigate a broad range of political-theoretical perspectives and materials, all of which are provocative and some of which are offensive, even grievously so (see Dostoevsky's Ivan on the Church of Rome and Thucydides' Pericles on Athenian women in the first two weeks alone). Passionate responses to such provocation and offense are perfectly appropriate and are part of how we develop our independent critical and discerning judgment, which the classroom, both in lecture and discussion, allows us to do together.

Our practice each week will be to record lecture sessions for review, so be prepared for that. Paper conferences and some appointments will be done through Zoom (to download and

run see <https://acc.uic.edu/services/communication-collaboration/conferencing/zoom/>). If you already have a personal Zoom account please switch your account email to the UIC domain and take advantage of the UIC license for all of your university videoconferencing. For virtual meetings we like you to have your camera on, but if for any reason you really don't want to have it on that's fine. Please set your Zoom account to your preferred full name of address; if you think your instructor won't be able to link it to your registration name please let them know. Again, lecture sessions will be captured, but discussion sections (Fridays) will not be.

When emailing your instructor or section leader be sure to use your UIC account, and be sure to identify yourself and the course. We welcome communication from you and are happy to answer your questions and address your concerns, but we need to know who you are and what you're writing about. It is also generally better practice when writing instructors or TAs to err on the side of formality, though we tend to tolerate a broad range of styles. In this course, if your message concerns attendance only please address it to your TA and not to the instructor.

If you feel you are being subjected to any kind of discrimination or harassment from instructors or peers the university has a new bias reporting tool; see this page from the Office of the Dean of Students, <https://dos.uic.edu/diversity-education/>. We are of course meeting in person, but that could change as conditions change. Some helpful general tips for navigating online education can be found here: <https://acc.uic.edu/news-stories/make-the-most-of-online-learning-netiquette-best-practices/>. Please take any time online with us as seriously as you would take time in a classroom or office. We want your full attention. We know that everyone lives under different circumstances, and that many of those circumstances are difficult indeed. If you have any accessibility issues whatsoever with this class let us know as soon as possible. Some issues will call for registration with the Disability Resource Center, and swift registration is recommended as a prerequisite for formal accommodations: see <http://drc.uic.edu> or contact the DRC at 312 413-2183 (voice) or 312 413-7781 (FAX) for information and resources. But the onus is on your instructors and your university to provide an accessible education, including last year and this year, if needed, to supply you with a laptop or broadband access. Should you lack either of these, which are required for several courses this term, [contact ACCC](#) (the Academic Computing and Communications Center) and they should provide.

Finally, enjoy! The kinds of questions we are engaging in this course are ones that most people most of the time don't have much leisure to explore. Our hope is that you will come out of the course with new ways of thinking about the political and social forms under which we live. Even if only confirmed in your existing judgments, our hope is that you will better understand the history of those judgments, their strengths and weaknesses, and some alternative ways of arguing them. And, more important than any of the course content, if you put the work in and really struggle with the questions posed by these materials you will develop your reading, writing, speaking, and thinking skills, which will serve you well in all of your endeavors.