

POLS V1013. 01 – POLITICAL THEORY

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Fall 2009
POLS V1013. 01
M W 02:40-03:55 pm
202 Altschul Hall

Teaching Assistants

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INTRODUCTION

This introductory political theory course is designed to help us become more critical political thinkers and more reflective political actors by addressing some of the most fundamental questions about politics: e.g. What are the distinguishing features of “political action”? How can we develop the critical skills we need as democratic citizens? What is the impact of socioeconomic inequality on political equality? In what ways can individual liberties work not only as guarantees of freedom but also as obstacles to it? How can we understand the persistence of gender inequalities despite all the historic transformations regarding women’s rights?

The course is divided into five thematic sections, each addressing an enduring political question or issue and centered on a key text in the history of political thought:

1. Meaning of Political Action – Sophocles, *Antigone*
2. Democracy and its Critics – Plato, *Republic*
3. Equality and Inequality – John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*
4. Paradoxes of Freedom – Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*
5. Gender Question – John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women*

Although these are our key texts, we will be working on them with a set of other required readings (i.e. Hannah Arendt, Simone de Beauvoir, Benjamin Constant, Jürgen Habermas, Karl Marx, Joan W. Scott, Alexis de Tocqueville).

Our goal is to read and assess these texts as political interventions – i.e. texts that have grappled with and changed the terms of the debate at the time of their writing *and* can help us understand, rethink and rearticulate the terms of our contemporary debates. In other words, as we develop our own interpretations and critical assessments of these works, we will be aiming at seeking meaningful connections to the most challenging questions and pressing problems of our own time regarding political action, democracy, equality, freedom, and gender.



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course aims to develop students' capacity to think, discuss, and write knowledgeably about some of the most challenging problems or issues addressed by a range of political thinkers. It also aims to help students become more reflective and conversant citizens by inquiring into and contextualizing their own political views and values. We will achieve these objectives by close reading, intensive writing, and active learning.

Close reading:

We will be reading some of the most challenging texts of political theory. The workload of the class is structured to allow you enough time to read them carefully. You should do the reading assignment for each class session on time; and after each class session, please go over the assigned text again especially by focusing on the sections discussed in class.

Intensive writing:

This course is structured around several writing assignments that support the close study of texts, create opportunities for structured classroom discussion, and enhance skills of critical thinking and clear, concise, cogent writing. Compared to exams, these writing assignments equip you better with interpretative and deliberative skills. If you are having trouble with writing, please do not hesitate to contact the staff at the Erica Mann Jong Writing Center (currently in 18 Milbank); you can sign up for an appointment at <http://www.barnard.columbia.edu/writing/writingcenter.html>. Columbia students are welcome to use the Writing Center for papers assigned in this course. For further information on writing resources at Barnard College and helpful strategies for writing assignments, please check <http://www.barnard.columbia.edu/english/writing.html>.

Active learning:

The course attributes a crucial significance to students' active engagement in the success of the learning process. To enable active learning in this large class (approximately 80 students), we will have activities that will provide you with opportunities to clarify, question, and consolidate new knowledge on a regular basis. Participatory learning strategies in this class will range from in-class writing to group discussions before and after writing assignments. You will be given details about the goals and guidelines of each of these activities in advance.



READINGS

The required readings include five books and some additional materials that will be available online.

Books:

📖 Sophocles, *The Three Theban Plays: Antigone, Oedipus the King, Oedipus at Colonus*, trans. Robert Fagles (Penguin, 1984)

📖 Plato, *Republic*, trans. G.M.A. Grube (Hackett, 1992)

📖 John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, ed. C. B. Macpherson (Hackett, 1980)

📖 Jean Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, trans. Donald A. Cress (Hackett, 1988)

📖 John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women*, ed. Susan Moller Okin (Hackett, 1988)

These books can be purchased at **Book Culture** (536 W. 112th St., 212-865-1588). They are also available on reserve at Barnard Library.

I strongly encourage you to buy the books; the editions I ordered are very affordable. There are several other editions of these well-known texts; however, you should read these editions. Since we will be engaging in close textual reading, you should bring the assigned reading to class. It is extremely important for all of us to have the listed editions of these works; this will help us follow references to these texts during lectures and discussions. In addition, you are required to use only these editions for your citations in your writing assignments.

Online readings:

Additional required readings, which are marked as “CW” in the Course Calendar below, will be available for download on Courseworks – please check <https://courseworks.columbia.edu/> for regular updates.



OFFICE HOURS

Tuesday 4-6 pm
407 Lehman Hall
E-mail: agundogdu@barnard.edu
Phone: 212-854-4036

I strongly encourage you to make use of these office hours for purposes of discussing all matters pertaining to the course. If you cannot make my office hours, please do not hesitate to e-mail me to set up an appointment. **NOTE:** In your e-mail, please give me three options for meeting times to make sure that we can schedule our meeting as efficiently as possible.

We have two teaching assistants who look forward to working with you: Sandipto Dasgupta and Zachary White. They will be holding regular office hours. Please see their contact information and office hours at the top of the first page of this syllabus, and I strongly encourage you to make use of their office hours as well. Please e-mail them if you cannot make their office hours to set up an appointment (in your e-mail, list three options when you are available for a meeting).



ACCESSIBILITY

Students with disabilities who will be taking this course and may need disability-related accommodations are encouraged to make an appointment to see me as soon as possible. Disabled students who need accommodations related to assignments and/or classroom must be registered in advance with the Office of Disability Services (ODS) in 105 Hewitt.



COURSE EXPECTATIONS

1. Submit 2 microthemes and 2 persuasive essays on time; you need to submit all of these writing assignments to qualify for a passing grade in this class.
2. Read the syllabus thoroughly; you are responsible for all of its contents. Please do not e-mail any questions that are unequivocally answered by the syllabus.
3. Read assigned texts in time for their presentation in class; lectures will complement, not substitute for, the assigned readings. Come prepared with questions or issues to discuss.
4. Regular class attendance is imperative. Attend class and participate actively, in ways that are constructive and respectful of me as well as your classmates. I also encourage you to attend the optional discussion sessions before writing assignments; they will significantly improve your writing.
5. Submit in-class writing assignments to demonstrate your attendance and participation. If you miss an in-class writing assignment due to a religious holiday or obligation, please let me know in advance and I will make necessary accommodations.
6. Come to class on time and remain for the entire session; if for some reason you have to be late one day or must leave early, please tell me in advance, and then arrive/depart as unobtrusively as possible.
7. Please turn off all electronic and other modes of communication before the class starts. Because of extreme potential for distraction, no laptops are allowed in class. Exceptions can be made only if you have notified me of an individual need to be accommodated due to a disability.
8. To maintain a professional classroom atmosphere, please do not bring food to class; beverages in spill-proof containers are fine.



ASSIGNMENTS

You will have several different types of writing assignments, and I have structured them in ways progressing from simple to more complex forms of critical reasoning. Hence, each writing assignment will be building on the previous one.

Microthemes:

A microtheme is a short writing assignment (approximately 2 to 3 pages, 12-point standard font, double spaced) that develops skills of reading comprehension and interpretive analysis, gives practice in understanding and formulating arguments, and prepares you to write critical essays of your own. There will be two microtheme assignments in this course, and each of these assignments is geared towards a specific purpose.

Your first assignment is a “thesis-support microtheme,” which will provide you with a specific thesis statement and ask you to either defend or criticize it. This assignment aims to develop your analytical skills of defending or criticizing a position clearly and persuasively by providing textual evidence and support.

The second assignment, which can be described as a “thesis-formulation microtheme,” will pose you a question and ask you to articulate and support your own thesis statement. This assignment shares the goals of the first. In addition, it aims to develop your skills of finding and formulating a clear and cogent thesis or argument and prepares you for writing a persuasive essay.

Persuasive Essays:

You will have two persuasive essay assignments that aim at developing your skills of close reading, argumentation and critical thinking. These persuasive essays are 5 or 6 pages long (12-point standard font, double spaced). They build on the skills that you develop by working on your microtheme

assignments; yet, they are also different from microthemes in certain respects. Persuasive essays are similar to the microthemes as you are expected to take a position on an assigned question by articulating a clear and cogent thesis or argument and defending your position with specific references to assigned texts. However, persuasive essays also differ from microthemes since you are expected to engage with more than one author, oftentimes comparing different theoretical works and critically assessing their relative strengths and weaknesses. As you are making a persuasive case for your position in your own words, you will be drawing on and critically engaging with the authors we read.

In-class Writing:

We will regularly have in-class writing assignments for the purposes of clarifying concepts and issues, summarizing main points, and stimulating discussion. You will be given a question relevant to that day's reading and/or lecture and will be provided with index cards to write your answers. These in-class writing exercises are the indicators of your attendance and participation. If you just put down your name on the index card, you will get points for attendance; if you provide a carefully thought answer to the question asked you will also get participation points. Your answer should demonstrate careful reading of assigned texts, attentiveness to lectures and discussion, and preparedness for effective participation in discussion.



GRADING

Grades will be based on Barnard College's grade definitions, which establish the qualities of performance expected at different grade levels. Please see the section on grading system in Academic Policies and Procedures, available online at <http://www.barnard.columbia.edu/catalog/pol/grades.php>

For each assignment you will have a letter grade; however, in calculating your final grade, I add up the points you received from each assignment. Thus the letter grades assigned to your assignments do not cancel out the point-grades assigned. All the assignments, attendance, and participation add up to **1000 points total**, and below you can find a more detailed account of the grading distribution according to each assignment.

1st microtheme: 150 points (15 %)

2nd microtheme: 200 points (20 %)

1st persuasive essay: 250 points (25 %)

2nd persuasive essay: 250 points (25 %)

Attendance and participation: 150 points (15 %)

- There are ten in-class writing assignments. Each in-class writing assignment is worth 15 points (you will get 5 points for putting down your name and 10 points for providing an answer demonstrating that you read the assigned text(s) carefully, captured the main arguments accurately, and are ready to participate in a class discussion).

NOTE: There will be some optional writing sessions that you will have with your TAs. These optional sessions aim at helping you with your writing assignments. You will be notified of the date and time of these optional sessions in advance; please check the Courseworks regularly for updates. These optional sessions will not have a direct effect on your grade. Although you will not be penalized for not attending these sessions, I strongly encourage you to attend them since we will not be discussing issues specifically related to writing in class.

Grading Scale

Below is the grading scale that will be used in determining your final grade (remember all your assignments, attendance, and participation add up to 1000 points).

945-1000	A
895-944	A-
845-894	B+
795-844	B
745-794	B-
695-744	C+
645-694	C
595-644	C-
545-594	D+
495-544	D
445-494	D-
444 and below	F



COURSE POLICIES

Extensions and Absences:

Completion of all assignments is a necessary condition for passing this course. In addition, I urge you to check the due dates on the weekly schedule and submit all assignments on time to avoid late penalties. Please note that all the assignments need to be submitted at the beginning of the class session that they are due. Since these assignments will provide us with the basis for our in-class discussion, they are of little use if you do not submit them on time and attend class the day they are due. Your microthemes will lose 15 points if you missed the class on the assigned day, or did not come to class with the finished paper in hand; they will lose 10 points for every additional day (including weekend) they are late. Your persuasive essays will lose 25 points if you missed the class on the assigned day, or did not come to class with the finished paper in hand; they will lose 20 points for every additional day (including weekend) they are late.

Extensions will be given only in the case of documented illness, family emergency, or other crisis situation (please bring any form of documentation available). Should you run into problems regarding your ability to complete any particular course requirements during the semester, you should contact your TAs or me before the assignment is due. Please note, however, that extensions and incompletes are neither automatic nor presumed to be options in this course.

Incompletes:

I do not grant incompletes except under the most extraordinary of circumstances; please manage your schedule to hand in all assignments on time.

Grade Disputes:

I will be supervising all the grading in this class, and I will be working with your TAs cooperatively to determine a set of standardized grading guidelines. There will be written comments on your assignment as well as an attached grading rubric to give you a clear idea about these standardized guidelines and to clarify the reasons why you were given a particular grade.

However, if you have any problems with the grade that you are assigned and believe that you indeed deserve a better grade, you need to write down why you think so, and send or bring this to the TA that

graded your assignment as soon as possible (no later than 48 hours after you receive your graded assignment). Please do not forget to bring the graded assignment with you and the attached grading rubric as you come to discuss your grade with your TA. If you remain unsatisfied, you are welcome to discuss the matter with me; please do not forget to bring your written request, graded assignment, and the attached grading rubric. You should be aware that a change in grade is very unlikely precisely because I will be supervising the grading of your assignments very closely.

I think the students should have a right to discuss their grade with the instructor, and should not be punished for doing so. Thus your grade will not go down in case you cannot provide your TAs or me with a good reason for why you deserve a better grade.

Academic Honesty:

All students taking this course must adhere to the Barnard College honor code, regardless of their academic affiliation. The honor code considers it “dishonest to ask for, give, or receive help in examinations or quizzes, to use any papers or books not authorized by the instructor in examinations, or to present oral work or written work which is not entirely our own, unless otherwise approved by the instructor.” If in doubt about any of these provisions or you would like to discuss these matters further, please seek help from your TAs and me.



COURSE CALENDAR AND SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

9/9 W Introduction to POLS V1013 (No reading)

I. Meanings of Political Action

9/14 M Sophocles, *Antigone* (read the entire play)

9/16 W Sophocles, *Antigone* (cont.)

Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), pp. 175-207. *CW

9/21 M Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pp. 220-247. *CW

II. Democracy and its Critics

9/23 W Plato, *Republic*, Book I (pp. 1-31)

9/28 M Plato, *Republic*, Book II (pp. 32-59), Book III (pp. 88-93 → 412b-417b*), Book IV (pp. 94-121), [*Stephanus Number in the margin of the text]

9/30 W Plato, *Republic*, Book V (pp. 122-149 → 449a-474c), Book VI (pp. 157-176 → 484b-502e), Book VII (pp. 186-193 → 514a-521c)

10/5 M Plato, *Republic*, Book VIII (pp. 213-240)

Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. J. P. Mayer and tr. George Lawrence (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), pp. 9-20 (“Author’s Introduction”) *CW

10/7 W Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, pp. 667-705 (Vol II, Part IV) *CW

***** FIRST MICROTHEME DUE – OCTOBER 12, 2009 *****

III. Equality and Inequality

10/12 M John Locke, *Second Treatise*, Preface and Chapters 1-5 (pp. 2-30)

10/14 W Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chapters 6-12 (pp. 30-77)

10/19 M Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chapters 13-19 (pp. 77-124)

10/21 W Karl Marx, “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts.” In *Early Writings*, trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton (New York: Penguin, 1975), pp. 322-334 and 345-358 *CW

10/26 M Marx, “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts,” pp. 358-379 *CW

***** SECOND MICROTHEME DUE – OCTOBER 28, 2009 *****

IV. Paradoxes of Freedom

10/28 W Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Social Contract*, Book I (pp. 17-29)

11/2 M No class – Academic holiday

11/4 W Rousseau, *Social Contract*, Book II and III (pp. 29-79)

11/9 M Rousseau, *Social Contract*, Book IV (pp. 79-103)

11/11 W Benjamin Constant, “The Liberty of the Ancients Compared with that of the Moderns.” In *Political Writings*, ed. and tr. Biancamaria Fontana (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 307-328 *CW

11/16 M Jürgen Habermas, “Three Normative Models of Democracy.” In *Democracy and Difference: Contesting Boundaries of the Political*, ed. Seyla Benhabib (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 21-30. *CW

Jürgen Habermas, “Civil Society, Public Opinion, and Communicative Power.” In *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, tr. William Rehg (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press), pp. 359-387.

***** FIRST PERSUASIVE ESSAY DUE – NOVEMBER 18, 2009 *****

V. Gender Question

11/18 W John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women*, Chapter 1 (pp. 1-30)

11/23 M Mill, *The Subjection of Women*, Chapters 2 and 3 (pp. 31-84)

11/25 W – No class – Thanksgiving on 11/26

11/30 M Mill, *The Subjection of Women*, Chapter 4 (pp. 85-109)

12/2 W Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. and ed. H. M. Parshley (New York: Vintage, 1989; reprint of the 1953 ed.), pp. xxv-xlii, 597-628 *CW

12/7 M Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 679-715 *CW

12/9 W Joan Wallach Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1996), Chapters 1 and 6 (pp. 1-18, 161-175) *CW

Joan Wallach Scott, “Sears Case.” In *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), pp. 167-177 *CW

***** SECOND PERSUASIVE ESSAY DUE – DECEMBER 14, 2009 *****

12/14 M Concluding Remarks – last day of class