

POLS V1013 Political Theory

Prof. Michelle Renée Smith mrsmith@barnard.edu Spring 2012
Office: 422C Lehman Hall Office Hours: M 12:00 – 4:00 pm
Class Period: MW 9:10 – 10:25 am in MIL 405

Teaching Assistants

Andreas Avgousti aa2773@columbia.edu Office hours: TBA
Section times:
A) M 12-1 BAR 407
B) W 1-2 in BAR 406

Kevin Elliot kje2106@columbia.edu Office hours: TBA
Section times:
C) Th 11:00 -12:00 pm in MIL 227
D) Th 12:00 -1:00 pm in MIL 227

COURSE OVERVIEW

Political Theory is chiefly concerned with how best to arrange our collective lives, with particular attention to the necessity for and rights and obligations of ‘rule,’ as well as the limits of that important power. Since the time of Socrates, political philosophers have examined and suggested the most defensible approaches to political knowledge as well as the cultural values, political regimes, institutional forms, laws and economic systems that best facilitate “the good life” for human beings. While some texts legitimate unequal relations between governors and the governed, others treat ruler and ruled as equivalent, thus democratizing rule. Still other texts cast such profound doubt upon the structuring relations of power in their societies that they provide paths to revolutionary political change. In this course, we examine key texts and thinkers of western political thought, with particular attention to: ancient and modern accounts of ‘rule’ toward the end of communal virtue and harmony, the modern foundations of authority and the exercise of power, the relationship between rights and legitimacy and finally, political freedom, both ancient and modern.

BOOKS TO PURCHASE

Books are available for purchase at Book Culture (536 West 112th Street). Though Amazon.com and other on-line retailers sell some of these books at discounted prices, if you can afford it, please support our excellent local bookseller with your business. All other texts available on CourseWorks.

Aristotle, *The Politics and the Constitution of Athens*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
W.E.B. Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1994).
Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, (New York: Hackett, 1994).
John Locke, *The Selected Political Writings of John Locke*, (New York: Norton Publishing, 2005).
Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Essential Writings of Machiavelli*, (New York: Modern Library Press, 2007).
J.S. Mill, *On Liberty*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991).
Plato, *The Republic*, (New York: Penguin, 2007).
Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*, (New York: Everyman, 1993).

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the semester, you ought to:

- be able to discuss and write effectively about some key priorities of ancient and modern Western political thought;
- be able, in writing and discussion, to identify chief differences among thinkers from the ancient, modern and contemporary political thought with particular attention to disagreements over the impetus for political theory and political action, philosophical accounts of the meaning and end of 'human being' and the relationship between 'human being' and theories and practices of politics;
- be able to characterize disputes among ancient and modern political thinkers over the nature and purpose of government;
- be able to differentiate among varied accounts of the political ideals of liberty, equality and democracy and raise and answer critical questions about the coexistence of these values;
- be able to identify what eras, important thinkers and concepts we did NOT cover and how to find out more about them, if interested;

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

- 1) This is an introductory lecture course. Nevertheless, the reading assignments are often dense, theoretical and lengthy. You should come to lecture and (especially) section prepared to engage in lively conversation based on the week's reading.
- 2) You should bring the pertinent texts to lecture and section.
- 3) Read the syllabus thoroughly. You are responsible for all of its contents.
- 4) Read assigned texts in time for their presentation in lecture. Lecture, discussion and section are only successful when participants complete the readings in time. By 'read,' I mean read carefully and slowly with a notebook at hand to record your questions about and responses to these texts.
- 5) Regular class attendance is required. Attend lecture and section and participate actively.
- 6) Come to lecture and class on time and remain for the entire session; if you must be late or leave early, please tell me in advance, and arrive/depart as unobtrusively as possible.
- 7) Passionate debate and disagreement are strongly encouraged. Disrespect of (or ad hominem attacks against) your classmates, teaching assistants, me or the various political commitments and ethnic, racial, gender and sexual orientation groups to which others belong is NOT permitted and will NOT be tolerated.
- 8) You are permitted to bring laptops or digital tablets to lecture IFF, you a) do not use the devices to record any portion of lecture b) do not 'surf the web' during lecture [that means NO FACEBOOK and NO TWITTER] and c) sit in the last two rows of the classroom so as not to disturb analog note takers. Should it become necessary, I will ban laptops from the classroom. (Digital rules for section are up to your TA.)
- 9) Texting and cell phone usage during lecture and section are rude. They are ABSOLUTELY NOT permitted. If you cannot control your urge to text, don't bring your cell phone to class. Anyone in violation of this rule will **not** appreciate the consequences.
- 10) Please do not bring food to lecture. Beverages in spill-proof containers are fine.

ASSIGNMENTS

This course requires and is built around several writing assignments. These assignments allow students to 1) demonstrate their close readings of and understanding of assigned texts and 2) demonstrate their ability to differentiate among and produce descriptive, persuasive and/or analytical essays.

1) **Short Responses:**

Students will write three short response papers. These allow students to practice different aspects of theory writing, including summarizing, paraphrasing and comparing arguments as well as making counterarguments and developing standpoints about the material assigned for the week.

- a) Short Assignment One: (Summarize/paraphrase) This assignment requires that you paraphrase one text's argument about a particular issue/concept. (2 pages)
- b) Short Assignment Two: (Compare and contrast) This assignment requires that you compare/contrast the conclusions, premises and assumptions of two text selections. (2 pages)
- c) Short Assignment Three: (Thesis-support) The assignment provides a specific thesis statement that you must either defend or criticize. This assignment aims to develop your analytical skills of defending or criticizing a position clearly and persuasively by providing textual evidence and support. (4 pages)
- d) Short Assignment Four: (Thesis-formulation) poses a question and requires that you articulate and support your own thesis statement in response to it. 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. (4 pages)

2) **Persuasive/Analytical Essay:**

This essay is to be 8 - 10 pages long (12 point font, double spaced). The assignment is intended to build upon the skills addressed by the short response assignments. But the longer essay is different. It requires that you engage more than one author/text, address the strengths and weaknesses of the texts under review by taking into account the different animating concerns and theoretical/philosophical methods of argument. In addition, you will complete two drafts of this essay.

3) **In-Class Writing:**

You will regularly be given "in-class writing" assignments for the purpose of clarifying concepts and issues 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. 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>

You will receive a letter grade for each assignment. Each grade has a point value. To calculate your final grade, the TAs and I will 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.

There are ten in-class writing assignments. Each in-class writing assignment is worth 10 points (you will get 5 points for putting down your name and 5 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.

- 1) **Response Essay 1 – (100 pts)**
- 2) **Response Essay 2 – (100 pts)**
- 3) **Response Essay 3 – (150 pts)**
- 4) **Response Essay 4 – (150 pts)**
- 5) **In class essays – (100pts)**
- 6) **First draft persuasive essay – (100 pts)**
- 7) **Final draft persuasive essay – (300 pts)**

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

Absences and Extensions:

You must complete all of the assignments to pass this course. Please submit all assignments on time, **at the beginning of the class session that the assignment is due**. The final grade of an assignment will be reduced 15% for each day that it is late. I will give extensions only in the case of a documented illness, family emergency or other crisis situation (documentation necessary). If you find the readings or assignment difficult, please do not hesitate to visit your TA's or my office hours. But please address problems of understanding BEFORE assignments are due.

Incompletes:

I do not grant incompletes except under extraordinary circumstances.

Grade Disputes:

I will work very closely with your TAs to determine a set of standard grading guidelines, which will be attached to each assignment. In addition, I will grade a portion of papers submitted for each of the short response assignments so that each student will have received comments from me.

If you wish to dispute a grade that you received because you believe that you deserve better, write down the reasons for your claim and email this document to your TA, within 48 hours of receiving the disputed grade. To facilitate discussion, be sure to bring the graded assignment with you to your TA's office hours. The TA will determine whether or not to raise your grade. However, grade changes are unlikely because, as much as we can, the TAs and I rely on standardized guidelines. If you disagree with the TAs decision, bring all documents to my office hours and make your case! (To be clear, there are no possible negative consequences for requesting a review of your 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.

Disability Accommodations:

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 possibility. Disabled students who need test or classroom accommodations must be registered in advance with the Office of Disability Services (ODS) in 105 Hewitt.

COURSE CALENDAR

I) Rule and Virtue

1/23 M Plato, *The Republic*, Part One, Book I (pp. 3 – 39) and Book II (pp. 40 - 52).

1/25 W Plato, *The Republic*, Part Two, (pp. 53 – 66) Part IV (pp. 112 - 129) and Part V (130 – 156)

1/30 M Plato, *The Republic*, Part VII (pp. 189 – 239) and Part IX (275 – 334)

(Short Assignment One Due)

2/1 W Aristotle, selections from *Nichomachean Ethics* CW** and *Politics*, Book I, ch. 1 – 13 (pp. 1 – 30)

2/6 M Aristotle, *Politics*, Book II, ch. 1- 12 (pp. 30 – 61) Book III, ch. 1 – 18 (pp. 61 – 91), Book IV, ch. 2 – 14 (pp. 93 – 114) **(Short Assignment Two Due)**

2/8 W Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*, ch. 1 "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," Ch. 2 "Of the Dawn of Freedom," ch. 3 "Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others," pp. 3 – 44

2/13 M Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*, ch. 4 "Of the Meaning of Progress," ch. 6 "Of the Training of Black Men," ch. 8 "Of the Quest of the Golden Fleece," ch. 12, "Of Alexander Crummel," pp. 45 – 53, 93 – 110 and 145 – 152.

2) Authority and the Exercise of Power

2/15 W Machiavelli, *The Prince*, begin pp. 1 - 100

2/20 M Machiavelli *The Prince* cont'd

2/22 W Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, TBD.

2/27 M Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Part I, “Of Man,” Ch. 10 – 15, excerpted in Andrew Bailey, Samantha Brennan et al. *The Broadview Anthology of Social and Political Thought*, (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2008), pp. 413 - 437 **(Short Assignment Three Due)**

2/29 W Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Part I, Ch. 16 and Part II, “Of Commonwealth,” ch. 17 – 21, 26, 29, 30, pp. 441 – 490.

3) Rights and Legitimacy

3/5 M John Locke, *First Treatise of Government*, selections from Book I, Ch. 1, 4, 5, 6, 9, 11 excerpted in John Locke and Paul E. Sigmund, *The Selected Political Writings of John Locke* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co, 2005), pp. 3 – 16 and *Second Treatise of Government*, Ch. 1 – 6, excerpted in John Locke and Paul E. Sigmund, *The Selected Political Writings of John Locke* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co, 2005), pp. 17 – 50

3/7 W John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, Ch. 7 – 15, pp. 51 – 94 and Ch. 16 – 19, pp. 95 – 125. **(Short Assignment IV Due) (Final Persuasive Essay Prompts Distributed)**

MARCH 12 - MARCH 14—SPRING RECESS

3/19 M Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, ch. 1 – 5, pp. 1 – 153.

3/21 W Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, ch. 1 – 5 cont’d.

3/26 M Martin Delany, from *Condition, Elevation, Emigration and Destiny of Colored People of the United States, Politically Considered*, CW**

3/28 W Martin Delany, from *Political Destiny of the Colored Race on the American Continent*, CW**

4) Varieties of Freedom

4/2 M Benjamin Constant, “Liberty of Ancients and Moderns” CW** and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Social Contract*, Book I (pp. 17-29) and Book II

4/4 W Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Social Contract*, Book III and IV (pp. 79-103)

4/9 M JS Mill, *On Liberty and Other Writings*, begin pp. 1 – 117 **(First Draft of Persuasive Essay Due)**

4/11 W JS Mill, *On Liberty and Other Writings*, cont’d.

4/16 M Simone de Beauvoir *The Second Sex*, CW**

4/18 W Simone de Beauvoir *The Second Sex*, CW**

4/23 M Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, ch. 1 – 5 and ch. 7 pp. 7 – 140 and 210 - 222

4/25 W Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, cont’d.

4/30 M Conclusions **(Final Draft of Persuasive Essay Due)**