

POLS 205: Introduction to Political Thought, Fall 2013

Department of Political Science, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale

Instructor Information

Srobana Bhattacharya
Email: srobana@siu.edu
Office: Faner Hall 3161

Office Hours: Tuesday: 3:00-4:00 pm
Thursday 3:00-4:00 pm, and by appointment
Class Location: Lawson 101
Course Time: Tuesday and Thursday
12:35 pm - 1:50 pm

Course Overview and Objectives

Political Theory is the study of concepts and principles that people use to describe, explain and evaluate political events and institutions. It is a reflective discourse that allows us to delve ‘underneath’ the surface of political practice to ask questions and understand the meaning of politics. Political theory is both a critical and creative activity. This course is a broad, historical overview of Western Political Thought. The course readings revolve around several fundamental questions: What is justice? What is the relationship between morality, power and politics? What is democracy? What is liberty, freedom and equality? What is the balance between order, authority and freedom? Indeed, these questions are difficult, but the hope is that you will be engaged in thinking seriously and critically about these issues. The immediate goal of this class is to encourage you to think critically about the ideas that have shaped and continues to have profound impact on contemporary political systems. The larger goal of this course is to provide you the intellectual tools to become more informed and engaged citizens, and perhaps, more thoughtful and considerate human beings.

Course Format

The readings largely will be drawn from the assigned textbooks, although I will sometimes assign short readings from journals and other books. This course will require extensive reading, writing and discussion—all designed to encourage you to think analytically, critically and systematically about the ideas at hand. I hope that our sessions will be engaging, informative, and participatory. We will engage in a variety of activities including lectures, personal writing exercises, partner and group work, class discussions, video clips, problem-solving activities, and other critical thinking exercises. I value and will solicit your input on class activities both at the beginning of the semester as well as around midterm. I will make every reasonable effort to incorporate these ideas in the classroom.

Requirements

1. Required Textbooks

A. Michael L. Morgan. ed. 2005. *Classics of Moral and Political Theory, 4th ed.* Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing. ISBN-13: 978-0872207769

B. bell hooks. 2000. *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics.* Cambridge, MA: South End Press. ISBN-13: 978-0896086289

The books are available at the campus book store and online. Alternatively, you can get the books from the SIU Library/(I-Share). In order to allow for shipping time, I have posted all of the first couple of week’s readings on DesiretoLearn website. After the first week, I expect you to have the books and bring them with you to class. In case you have problems let me know earlier.

2. Attendance and Participation

Attendance and participation are worth 15% of your grade. I expect all students to attend class regularly. Participation is an extremely important component of this course. Since our class time is valuable, students are also expected to come to class on time and prepared to begin promptly. Furthermore, please finish the assigned readings *by the date* they appear in the syllabus. Read critically and be prepared to comment on the readings in class. I encourage you to ask questions and make relevant comments *at any time* during class. I will excuse 4 absences during the semester. Use it wisely. If you wish to be excused for subsequent absences based on medical conditions or other emergencies please submit proper documents or talk to me earlier. Each unexcused absence will result in a letter grade deduction from your participation grade.

3. Discussion and Thought Papers

At the beginning of the course, I will divide the class up into 5 or 6 groups. You will stay with this group for the entire semester. Every third week, we will have a group discussion. Depending on the day's reading, I will assign readings to the groups. For instance, 5 groups may be responsible for one set of readings. While the other 5 groups will be assigned a second set of readings. The assignment will consist of

- Composing a written overview of the assigned reading (Thought Paper). This will be 500 words in length and to be submitted individually.
- Identifying a set of 3 discussion questions by each group, collaboratively.
- A short presentation about the topic by two members of each group, (I will assign them) to be delivered in class (around 5-7 minutes). I will also assign a presentation theme for each set of presenters.

The thought papers are due on the day of the discussion. Over the semester, we will have five discussions. Each discussion and thought paper is worth 8% for a total of 40% of your grade. In addition, presentation on the discussion day is worth 6% of the your total grade. Grades will only be awarded when you attend the discussion and submit your paper on the same day. If you do one of the two, you will get half the credit.

4. Exams

Students will take three exams over the course of the semester. The final exam is not comprehensive. Each exam is worth 13% for a total of 39%.

Grade Summary

- Participation: 15%
- Discussion and Thought Paper: 40% (8% each)
- Presentation: 6%
- Exams: 39% (13% each)

Assessment Scale

A	100-90	B	89-80	C	79-70	D	69-60	F	59 or below
---	--------	---	-------	---	-------	---	-------	---	-------------

Course Policies

1. Late Papers

Papers handed in after the deadline will be deducted 1 letter grade (10%), and then an additional letter grade (10%) for each day (24 hours) it is late. If there is a problem completing an assignment on time, please contact me well in advance of the due date.

2. Student Conduct and Classroom Courtesy

Classroom courtesy is an essential component of creating an effective learning environment. All students have the right to learn without unnecessary distractions. These distractions include: cell phones, talking during lectures (unless recognized by the instructor), reading newspapers, falling asleep, etc. If you need a cell phone for emergency purposes, leave it on vibrate. Entering and leaving are also significant sources of distraction. It is your responsibility to be on time and to stay for the entire period. In circumstances where you need to leave early, tell the instructor beforehand. Repeated disruptions of class will lead to a reduction in your final grade. Most importantly, class discussions of the issues in political science can lead to strong feelings and heated debate. Because this is a college classroom, all discussion must be respectful and scholarly.

Scholarly Comments

- are respectful of diverse opinions and open to follow up questions and/or disagreement
- are related to class and/or the course material
- focus on advancing the discussion about issues related to the course and/or course material rather than personal beliefs, and
- are delivered in normal tones and a non-aggressive manner.

Unacceptable Comments

- are personal in nature. This includes attacks on a person's appearance, demeanor, or political beliefs.
- include interrupting the instructor or other students. Raise your hand and wait to be recognized.
- often use the discussion to argue for political positions and/or beliefs. If political discussions arise, they must be discussed in a scholarly way (see above).
- may include using raised tones, yelling, engaging in arguments with other students and being threatening in any manner.
- include ignoring the instructor's authority to maintain the integrity of the classroom environment.

3. Academic Integrity

Students are expected to uphold the Academic Honor Code published in Southern Illinois University-Carbondale Student Conduct Code (Section II, Article A). Plagiarism is the most serious academic offense. Violations of this code can lead to failure of the course and a hearing with the university's judicial board to suspend you from the university.

4. Syllabus Change

This syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advanced notice.

5. Disabilities

It is the policy of this university and the instructor to assist those with disabilities. You should notify me as soon as possible of any disability that might impact your performance in this course. Disabilities Support Services can assist you with taking notes, testing, and other accessibility issues.

6. Emergency Procedures

Southern Illinois University Carbondale is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for study and work. Because some health and safety circumstances are beyond our control, we ask that you become familiar with the SIUC Emergency Response Plan and Building Emergency Response Team (BERT) program. Emergency response information is available on posters in buildings on campus, available on the BERT'S website at www.bert.siu.edu, Department of Public Safety's website www.dps.siu.edu, and in the Emergency Response Guidelines pamphlet. Know how to respond to each type of emergency.

Instructors will provide guidance and direction to students in the classroom in the event of an emergency affecting your location. It is important that you follow these instructions and stay with your instructor during an evacuation or sheltering emergency. The Building Emergency Response Team will provide assistance to your instructor in evacuating the building or sheltering within the facility.

Tentative Course and Reading Schedule

Michael Morgan's book will be referred to as the **CPMT**. Readings marked with an * asterisk are outside readings. Copies are/will be available online at DesiretoLearn website.

Introduction to the Course

Tuesday, August 20

- Overview: Discuss syllabus, class policies and semester plans

Thinking for yourself

Thursday, August 22

- *William Deresiewicz, "Solitude and Leadership."

1. Obedience, Authority and Justice

Tuesday, August 27

- *Milgram, Perils of Obedience
- *Cohen, "Four Decades After Milgram."

Thursday, August 29

- No Class (American Political Science Association (APSA) Conference)

Tuesday, September 3

- *Letter from Clergy
- *Martin Luther King, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail." (all)

Thursday, September 5

- Sophocles' *Antigone*, in CPMT, pp. 1-33.

Tuesday, September 10

- **DISCUSSION 1**, Thought Papers due

2. Justice: The Political Philosophy of Plato**Thursday, September 12**

- Plato, *The Apology*, in CPMT, pp. 31-33; 46-63.
- Plato, *The Republic*, in CPMT, Book I and II, pp. 75-93, 93-100, 104(376a) - 107(379d), 109-110.

Tuesday, September 17

- Plato, *The Republic*, in CPMT, Book III and IV, pp. 110-116, 120(401b) - 125(408e), 125(409a) - 140(435e); 143(439d) - 147.

Thursday, September 19

- Plato, *The Republic*, in CPMT, Book V and VI, pp. 147-164, 176(496b) - 178.

Tuesday, September 24

- Plato, *The Republic*, in CPMT, Book VII, VIII and IX, pp. 186-190, 202, 210(554e) - 218(567b), 231(587e) - 234(592b).

Thursday, September 26

- **DISCUSSION 2**, Thought Papers due
- Discussion and Review of Plato

Tuesday, October 1

- **Exam 1**

3. Power and Morality - Machiavelli**Thursday, October 3**

- Machiavelli, "Letter to Francesco Vettori," *The Prince*, in CPMT, Chapters 1,2,3,5 pp. 477-487, 489-490, Chapters 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 (pp. 490-500.).

Tuesday, October 8

- Machiavelli, *The Prince*, in CMPT Chs. 11-13 pp. 500-506, Ch. 14 pp. 506-507, Chs. 15-19 pp. 507-514, Chs. 19-20 pp. 515-519, Ch. 21 pp. 519-521, Chs. 22-23, pp. 521-22, Chs. 24-26, pp. 522-526.

4. Liberalism and Republicanism**Thursday, October 10**

- Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, CPMT, Chapters 1-9 pp. 685-719.

Tuesday, October 15

- NO CLASS (Fall Break)

Thursday, October 17

- Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, CPMT, Chapters 10-14 and Chapters 17-19 pp. 719-730, 736-749.

Tuesday, October 22

- **DISCUSSION 3** and Thought Papers due

Thursday, October 24

- Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, CMPT, pp. 775-776; Preface/ Question, 782-786, Part Two 800-807, 812-815.

Tuesday, October 29

- Jean Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, CMPT, Book I, Chapters 1-9, 831-839; Book II, Chapters 1-6, 840-846, Chapters 11-12, 851-853.

Thursday, October 31

- Jean Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, CMPT, Book III, Chapters 1-8, pp. 853-862, Chapters 10-18, pp. 866-873; Book IV, Chapters 1-3, pp. 873-877, Chapters 5-9, 882-890.

Tuesday, November 5

- **DISCUSSION 4** and Thought papers due
- Discussion and Review

Thursday, November 7

- **Exam 2**

5. Socialism and Communism**Tuesday, November 12**

- Karl Marx, "Alienated Labor," CMPT, pp. 1086-1092; *Communist Manifesto*, CMPT, Part I. pp. 1111-1117.

Thursday, November 14

- Karl Marx, *Communist Manifesto*, CMPT, Part 2 pp. 1117-1122; Part 4 pp. 1127-1128.

6. On Revolution**Tuesday, November 19**

- John Gaventa, *Power and Powerlessness*, Preface and Chapter 1 pp. 1-32.

Thursday, November 21

- Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, Ch.1, pp. 11-48.

Tuesday, November 26

- **DISCUSSION 5** and Thought Papers due

Thursday, November 28

- NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Break)

7. Feminism

Tuesday, December 3

- bell hooks, *Feminism is for Everybody*, Introduction + Chapters 1,2, 5, 11, and 19.

Thursday, December 5

- Discussion on Feminism
- Course wrap up
- Course Evaluation

Wednesday, December 11

- **FINAL EXAM**
- 12:50 - 2:50 pm