

**Introduction to Political Theory, POLS 2070**  
**Fall 2010**  
**2070.01 MWF 10-10:50 Brewster C-102**

**1. Administrative Staff:**

Dr. Spalding

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**2. Course Description and Objectives:**

*The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed, the world is ruled by little else.*

John Maynard Keynes

*Without common ideas there is no common action, and without common action men still exist, but a social body does not.*

Alexis de Tocqueville

We will explore approaches to the essential questions of human social and political life. The text provides an introductory section for each author, and then a current translation of the actual writings of the philosopher under discussion. Even in translation, these were some of the most brilliant men who ever lived, and their writings have shaped, and continue to shape, western civilization; we should read their own writings rather than someone else's opinions. Through reading, lecture and class discussion, we will study each of the philosophers assigned.

**Foundation Curriculum:**

Political Theory is a field of the Social Science discipline of Political Science. Political Theory involves analysis and discussion of the nature of politics, the nature of the good state, and the best ways to achieve it.

- The core substance includes the works of the foundational political theorists, which we will read and discuss.
- The *method or approach* is careful reading, extracting the core meaning and implications from the writings, comparing one scholar's views with others, and thinking about/discussing the possible implications of these ideas, in light of various normative and empirical concerns.
- You will learn how the practice of political theory is undertaken, and its relevance to general knowledge.

**Learning Objectives:**

Identify each philosopher, the context in which he wrote, the essentials of his philosophy, and the implications of his philosophy, including what meaning it may have today.

**Read the assignment prior to the class where we begin discussion.** Read the featured author first, noting comments and questions. This will make it easier for you to participate in class, having your questions and comments handy.

### **3. Requirements & Grading:**

**3 exams, 30% each**

**Attendance, Participation: 10%**

I will call on students from the class roll to ask questions or comment on the material. Participation will include reading quizzes which cannot be made up, and the percent of total classes for which you are present and prepared. If you miss more than 3 classes, I reserve the right to drop you one letter grade on your final grade. It is your responsibility to sign the roll sheet. If you come in late or leave early and neglect to sign the roll sheet, it will count as an absence.

**4. Required Text:** Alan Ebenstein, **Introduction to Political Thinkers** second edition

### **5. Tentative Schedule:**

#### **A. Introduction to Political Philosophy**

**August 25-27:** Syllabus; What are the big questions? What is the nature and enterprise of 'political theory'? Who are the authors we are reading, and why? Themes to follow.

#### **B. The Foundations of Political Philosophy in the Ancient Greek Polis: Objective Truth, Happiness & Justice.**

**August 30/September 13:**

**makeup day, Tuesday September 7, for classes which did not meet Monday, September 6.**

Plato & Justice

*The Republic*

**ch.1**

Aristotle & Political Man

*The Politics*

**ch.2**

#### **C. Medieval Political Thought: Natural Law & Utility**

**September 15: Christianity & Natural Law; Applying Plato and Aristotle?**

Augustine, Aquinas

(no readings)

**September 17/22:**

Machiavelli, Utility & the secular republic

*The Prince*

**ch. 5**

**Exam One: Friday, September 24**

#### **D. The Classical Liberal Tradition: Social Contract, Freedom, Natural Law, Utility**

**September 27/October 20:**

**The State of Nature, and The Social Contract**

Hobbes (life in the state of nature is a war of all against all..).

*Leviathan*

**ch.6**

Locke (life in the state of nature is competitive and insecure...)

*Two Treatises of Government*

**ch.7**

**Setting up Modern Liberalism; Individual Liberty**

John Locke	<i>Two Treatises of Government</i>	<b>ch.7</b>
John Stuart Mill	<i>On Liberty</i>	<b>ch.9</b>
Edmund Burke	<i>Reflections on the Revolution in France</i>	(no readings)

**(Fall Break: October 11)**  
**(Last Day to Drop: October 19)**

## **Exam Two: Friday, October 22**

### **E. Communitarian Critiques of Modernity, Liberalism and Capitalism: Equality, Freedom & Justice; Experiments in Social Engineering**

**October 25-November 15**

Jean Jacques Rousseau	<i>The Social Contract</i>	<b>ch.8</b>
(... man in the state of nature is solitary, equal, pure and uncorrupted...)		

Marx, Marxism, Socialism	<i>The Communist Manifesto</i>	<b>ch.10</b>
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Totalitarianism, Fascism & Nazism		(no readings)
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### **F. The Struggles of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Individualist Critiques**

**November 17-December 3**

Hayek & Individualism	<i>The Road to Serfdom; The Constitution of Liberty; Law, Legislation &amp; Liberty; The Fatal Conceit</i>	<b>ch.11</b>
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**Interpreting The Struggles of the Last Century; How do we think about Politics?**  
**December 6**

**Final Exams:**

**2070.01, 8-10:30 Friday, December 10**