



El Camino College
COURSE OUTLINE OF RECORD – Official

Course Acronym:	PHIL
Course Number:	117
Descriptive Title:	Political Philosophy
Division:	Behavioral and Social Sciences
Department:	Philosophy
Course Disciplines:	Philosophy, Political Science
Catalog Description:	In this course, students will examine political theory as presented in the primary works of major Western thinkers from Plato to Marx. Fundamental issues to be explored include human nature, justice, power, the role of the state, and the legitimate scope of government. Note: Philosophy 117 is the same course as Political Science 7.
Prerequisite:	
Co-requisite:	
Recommended Preparation:	Eligibility for ENGL C1000 or equivalent
Enrollment Limitation:	
Hours Lecture (per week):	3
Hours Laboratory (per week):	0
Outside Study Hours:	6
Total Course Hours:	54
Course Units:	3
Grading Method:	Letter Grade only
Credit Status:	Credit, degree applicable
Transfer CSU:	Yes
Effective Date:	12/16/2013
Transfer UC:	Yes
Effective Date:	fall 2014
General Education:	Area 2B - Social and Behavioral Science, Area 2C - Social and Behavioral Science, Area 3 - Humanities
ECC	
Term:	
Other:	

CSU GE:	Area C2 - Arts and Humanities - Humanities: Literature, Philosophy, Languages other than English, Area D - Social Sciences
Term:	
Other:	
IGETC:	Area 3B - Humanities, Area 4 - Social and Behavioral Sciences
Term:	
Other:	
CalGETC:	
Term:	
Other:	
Student Learning Outcomes:	SLO #1 Greek Philosophers In a written essay students will analyze how philosophers, from ancient Greece through the modern era, have considered and conceptualized a variety of ideas critical to the discourse of political theory. SLO #2 The State In a written essay students will describe and assess the value of a state based on privilege versus one based on equality, and the apparent conflict between liberty and equality in a democratic state. SLO #3 Social Justice In a written essay students will describe and analyze the different theories of the "just state", and compare and contrast their ideas on political power and social justice.
Course Objectives:	1. Analyze and interpret the writings of Western classical and modern political theorists. 2. Distinguish between the descriptive and normative elements of political thinking. 3. Identify and evaluate the changing roles of Western political theory, and the relation between theory and practice. 4. Assess and analyze the theoretical foundations of enduring political questions including the role of the state, the obligation of citizens/subjects to the state and vice versa, basic values that should be pursued, and to what end, and by what means those values should be pursued. 5. Distinguish between various philosophical conceptions of the social contract. 6. Explain and analyze the concept of natural law.

	7. Identify and explain the foundations of political legitimacy and how it may be maintained. 8. Explain and distinguish the relation between theories of human nature and conceptions of the just state.
Major Topics:	I. Introduction to Political Theory (5 hours, lecture) A. Definition of Political Theory B. Human Nature and Political Theory C. Relevance of Political Theory for Today II. Introduction to Plato and Aristotle (8 hours, lecture) A. Perspectives on Human Nature B. Requisite Conditions for Good Governance: Justifications of Power C. Plato's Cave Analogy D. Aristotle's Alternative Forms of Government III. Introduction to Machiavelli (6 hours, lecture) A. Examination of Power: Acquisition, Limitations, and Relationship of Legitimacy B. Perspectives on Human Nature C. Role of the State IV. Hobbes-Locke (8 hours, lecture) A. The Nature of Man B. Impact on the Nature of Government and Society C. Rights and Obligations of the Citizens and the State D. The Social Contract Theory V. Rousseau (6 hours, lecture) A. The Nature of Man and the Stages of Transformation of Human Nature B. The Social Contract and the General Will C. Rousseau's Meaning of Freedom: Significance of the Individual

	VI. Rousseau in Comparison to John Stuart Mill (6 hours, lecture) A. Nature of Freedom and the Individual B. Essential Character and Ends of Government VII. Marx (6 hours, lecture) A. Overview of Historical Materialism B. The Dialectic and the March of History C. Examination of Alienation VIII. Application of Theoretical Debates to the Contemporary World (9 hours, lecture) A. Liberty Versus Equality B. Rule of Privilege (Elitism) Versus Equality C. Limits on Liberty in the Modern States D. Ethnic and Gender Differences
Total Lecture Hours:	54
Total Laboratory Hours:	0
Total Hours:	54
A.1. Primary Methods of Evaluation (Part 1 - CCN courses only):	
A.2. Primary Method of Evaluation (Part 2 - all courses; choose one):	1) Substantial writing assignments
Typical Assignment Using Primary Method of Evaluation:	Read a selection in the text from Aristotle and consider the following: What types of inquiry does Aristotle consider in formulating his conclusions? Why is man a political animal? What is a political community? What makes one a citizen? In a four- to five-page essay, critically analyze these issues and integrate readings from other thinkers.
Critical Thinking Assignment 1:	It has been argued by Rousseau that an individual finds fulfillment and freedom only as a member of the whole community. How does this version of liberty differ from those of John Locke or John Stuart Mill? Write a three- to five-page essay analyzing these divergent opinions and explain why you think one or the other has greater validity.
Critical Thinking Assignment 2:	After closely reading the material in your text, write a three- to five-page essay on the advantages of a state based on the rule of privilege. Incorporate the arguments presented by a minimum of two of the philosophers studied. After explaining the positive aspects, critique your position by referring to a selection of relevant philosophers (your choice).
Other Evaluation Methods:	Class Performance, Essay Exams, Objective Exam, Term or Other Papers

Instructional Methods:	Discussion, Lecture
If other:	
Work Outside of Class:	Required reading, Study, Written work (such as essay/composition/report/analysis/research)
If Other:	
Up-To-Date Representative Texts:	Stephen Cahn, ed. Political Philosophy: The Essential Texts. 3rd ed. Oxford, 2014 (Discipline Standard). W. Julian Karab-Karpowicz. On the History of Political Philosophy: Great Political Thinkers from Thucydides to Locke. 1st ed. Routledge, 2017. (Discipline Standard)
Alternative Texts:	
Required Supplementary Readings:	Excerpts of original texts from Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Mill, and Marx.
Other Required Materials:	
Requisite:	
Category:	
Requisite course(s): List both prerequisites and corequisites in this box.	
Requisite and Matching skill(s): Bold the requisite skill. List the corresponding course objective under each skill(s).	
Requisite Skill:	
Requisite Skill and Matching Skill(s): Bold the requisite skill(s). If applicable	
Requisite course:	
Requisite and Matching skill(s): Bold the requisite skill. List the corresponding course objective under each skill(s).	
Requisite Skill:	Eligibility for ENGL C1000
Requisite Skill and Matching skill(s): Bold the requisite skill. List the corresponding course objective	This course involves reading college level textbooks, developing projects, and answering essay questions. A student's success in this class will be enhanced if they have these skills.

under each skill(s). If applicable	Summarize, analyze, evaluate, and synthesize college-level texts. Write a well-reasoned, well-supported expository essay that demonstrates application of the academic writing process.
Enrollment Limitations and Category:	
Enrollment Limitations Impact:	
Course Created by:	Elizabeth Shadish
Date:	09/12/2013
Original Board Approval Date:	12/16/2013
Last Reviewed and/or Revised by:	Roberto Garcia
Date:	09/26/2025
Last Board Approval Date:	12/16/2025
Effective Term:	FA 2026