Introduction to Political Philosophy
El Camino College, Spring 2015

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Office Hours (ARTB 320): Tuesday and Thursdays 9:30 – 11:00 pm, or by appointment.

Course Time & Location:

Section 2736: Mondays and Wednesdays, 1:00 pm – 2:25 pm (SOCS 120)

Course Description:

In this course, students will examine political theory as presented in the primary works of major Western thinkers. Fundamental issues to be explored include human nature, justice, power, the role of the state, and the legitimate scope of government.

Course Methodology:

The first lecture of the week will focus on a particular branch of study within political theory (or philosophy), for example, the meaning of political liberty. The second lecture of the week will focus on a particular political philosopher and his or her contribution to that branch of study, for example, relating to the topic of liberty we will examine selections of John Stuart Mill’s seminal essay, “On Liberty.” In addition to the readings, students will be expected to attend all lectures and participate. Course assignments will include both a midterm and final exam as well as a 5-6 page research paper on a topic provided by the instructor. Also, there will be a short weekly quizzes on the Key Concepts from the course textbook.

Expected Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and Course Objectives:

By the end of the semester, students should (1) have an understanding of how philosophers, from ancient Greece through the modern era, have considered and conceptualized a variety of ideas critical to the discourse of political theory; (2) apply analytical and interpretive frameworks to particular theories and concepts; (3) write clear critical analyses of the context, content, and implications of particular political theories; (4) describe and assess the value of a state based on privilege versus one based on equality, or the apparent conflict between liberty and equality in a democratic state; (5) describe two distinct theories of the just state, and compare and contrast their ideas on political power and social justice.

Specifically, students will be able to:
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.

Course Requirements and Assignments:

GRADING BREAKDOWN:
- Class participation and attendance – 5%
- Quizzes – 20%
- Midterm Exam – 25%
- Research Paper (5-6 pages) – 25%
- Final Exam – 25%

PARTICIPATION and ATTENDANCE
Attendance and participation in lectures is mandatory and attendance will be taken at the start of each class.

QUIZZES
There will be 14 in-class quizzes during the course. Quizzes will be given at the end of class and students will have 10 minutes to finish. The quizzes will not be difficult, but are designed to encourage students to attend lectures and keep up with the readings.

MIDTERM & FINAL EXAMS
The course exams will consist of three sections: (1) a set of multiple choice questions pertaining to the key themes and concepts of the course; (2) a set of short-answer questions requiring students to briefly elaborate on the major issues, answers should be roughly a paragraph long; (3) two essay questions of which the students will select one to respond to, answers should be roughly 3 to 5 paragraphs long (students will receive the possible essay questions before the exam). Exams require a bluebook and will be closed book and no notes.

RESEARCH PAPER
Students will write one 5-6 page (double spaced) paper addressing a question concerning the themes and issues introduced during the course. Students will be assigned the paper topic on Wednesday, April 1. Papers will be due at the start of class.
on Wednesday, April 22. Papers will be evaluated on the degree to which they respond to the assigned question, the accuracy and force of their arguments, and the clarity of their writing.

EXTRA CREDIT

Various extra credit assignments and projects may be given throughout the course at the instructor’s discretion.

Course Texts: All texts are available at the college bookstore. Both texts are required.


Course Schedule:

Please complete the assigned reading BEFORE each lecture.

Week 1

Monday, January 19
Martin Luther King Day
CLASS DOES NOT MEET.

LECTURE 1: Wednesday, January 21
Course Introduction
Reading: PT, pp. 1-8

Week 2

LECTURE 2: Monday, January 26
Political Authority and Obligation
Reading: PT, chapter 1.

LECTURE 3: Wednesday, January 28
Hume, “Of the Original Contract”
Reading: PP, pp. 429-38.

Week 3

LECTURE 4: Monday, February 2
Nation and State
Reading: PT, chapter 2.

LECTURE 5: Tuesday, February 4
Hobbes, “Leviathan”
Week 4

LECTURE 6: Monday, February 9
War and Intervention

Reading: PT, chapter 3.

LECTURE 7: Wednesday, February 11
Machiavelli, “The Prince”

Reading: PP, pp. 256-70.

Week 5

Monday, February 16
President’s Day
CLASS DOES NOT MEET.

LECTURE 8: Wednesday, February 18
Democracy
Reading: PT, chapter 4.

Week 6

LECTURE 9: Monday, February 23
Liberty
Reading: PT, chapter 5.

LECTURE 10: Wednesday, February 25

Week 7

LECTURE 11: Monday, March 2
Toleration
Reading: PT, chapter 6.

LECTURE 12: Wednesday, March 4
Locke, “Letter Concerning Toleration”
Reading: PP, pp. 343-50.

Week 8

LECTURE 13: Monday, March 9
Equality and Social Justice
Reading: PT, chapter 7.

LECTURE 14: Wednesday, March 11
Rousseau, “Origin of Inequality”
Reading: PP, pp. 355-70.

SPRING BREAK: Saturday, March 14 – Friday, March 20
CLASS DOES NOT MEET.
Week 9

LECTURE 15: Monday, March 23
Midterm Review

Wednesday, March 25
MIDTERM EXAM

Week 10

LECTURE 16: Monday, March 30
Human Rights

Reading: PT, chapter 8.

LECTURE 17: Wednesday, April 1
Paper Topics Assigned

Reading: PP, pp. 826-29.

Week 11

LECTURE 18: Monday, April 6
Multiculturalism

Reading: PT, chapter 9.

LECTURE 19: Wednesday, April 8
Okin, “Is Multiculturalism Bad?”

Reading: via email.

Week 12

LECTURE 20: Monday, April 13
Citizenship

Reading: PT, chapter 10.

LECTURE 21: Wednesday, April 15
Aristotle, “Nicomachean Ethics”

Reading: PP, pp. 154-75.

Week 13

LECTURE 22: Monday, April 20
Gender

Reading: PT, chapter 11.

LECTURE 23: Wednesday, April 22
Held, “Non-contractual Society”

Reading: PP, pp. 782-95.

PAPERS DUE TODAY: WEDNESDAY APRIL 22
Week 14

LECTURE 24: Monday, April 27
Global Justice

Reading: PT, chapter 12.

LECTURE 25: Wednesday, April 29
Kant, “Perpetual Peace”

Reading: PP, pp. 528-36.

Week 15

LECTURE 26: Monday, May 4
Environment

Reading: PT, chapter 13.

LECTURE 27: Wednesday, May 6
Hardin, “Tragedy of the Commons”
Carson, “Silent Spring”

Reading: via email.

Week 16

LECTURE 28: Monday, May 11
Generations
Coates, “The Case for Reparations”

Reading: PT, chapter 14 and Coates via email.

Wednesday, May 13
FINAL EXAM

Course Policies and Suggestions:

1. You will do well on your exams if you read and re-read the texts carefully, attend class and participate, and ask for help if you feel yourself getting confused or behind.

2. Large classes are not ideal, but many studies have shown that students learn well in them if everybody works together carefully. To be specific: (a) please put away non-class material during lecture; (b) please silence or preferably turn off all cellphones during lecture; (c) while taking notes on laptop computers or tablet devices is acceptable, please refrain from visiting websites unrelated to the course or lecture (e.g. Facebook, etc.); (d) finally, please do not talk in class unless called upon. This as well as the other rules are important. Please be considerate of your fellow students (and the instructor).

3. Please bring the readings to class each day. Frequent references will be made to the text and reading along will be immensely useful to you later when you are preparing for exams.

4. Please take advantage of office hours. Lecturers enjoy talking with and getting to know their students. It is especially important that you contact your instructor if you feel confused or if you are falling behind. Instructors are here to help.
5. Students are encouraged to ask questions in class. While the last portion of class will be set aside for this specific purpose, questions during the lecture are also welcome, even if they are only for clarification or repetition. Every question is useful, and if you feel confused it is likely that other people do as well.

6. Please arrive to class on time. Important announcements (deadlines, discussion of paper topics and exams and so on) frequently come in the first five to ten minutes of class. If you arrive late you risk missing important information that could influence your grade.

7. The course paper is due at the beginning of class on the day stipulated in the course schedule. All late papers lose three marks per day late (e.g. an A+ paper becomes an A-paper) unless a verifiable doctor’s note is provided.

8. Please bring blue books for both the midterm and the final exam (two blue books will be needed).

9. Your paper should be typed, double spaced, with one-inch margins, page numbers, and written in 12-point font size.

10. Make sure that your correct and current email address is registered with the college so that you can receive course emails. The instructor will occasionally send out class emails regarding additions or updates to the course readings as well as other matters relating to the course material. Check your email often.

11. If you have any questions about this course, its assignments, quizzes, exams, readings or other requirements, please contact the instructor by email or after class or during office hours.

ADA Statement:

El Camino College is committed to providing educational accommodations for students with disabilities upon the timely request by the student to the instructor. A student with a disability, who would like to request an academic accommodation, is responsible for identifying herself/himself to the instructor and to the Special Resources Center. To make arrangements for academic accommodations, contact the Special Resources Center at phone number 310-660-3295.