

**POLS 20600-02: Political Theory**

**Fall 2017:** M/W 9:30-10:45, 200 Riley Hall

**Instructor:** Prof. Patrick J. Deneen    **Contact:** pdeneen1@nd.edu; 1-7659

**Office Hours:** T 3-4:45

**Office Location:** Nanovic 2019

**Teaching Assistant:** Ms. Abigail Staysa (astaysa@nd.edu)

**Course Description:**

In this course we will examine the contrasting claims of the “ideal” and the “real” in Western political thought. In particular, political thought of thinkers ranging from antiquity to modernity will be examined for their consideration of the problem or the potential of self-interest in politics. Initially one might think that the political thought of ancient thinkers was marked by a kind of “idealism” – given their efforts to moderate the influence of self-interest in politics - which we might contrast with the “realism” of modern thinkers, who sought to harness self-interest in the service of political ends. However, the readings of this course will show that such an assumption is problematic, given that the ancient thinkers did not believe, on the one hand, that self-interest could serve as a basis for political organization (as did Machiavelli and Hobbes), nor, on the other hand, that self-interest could be eradicated, in contrast to some modern thinkers (Mill) who hoped that it might. One of the questions we will explore is whether the very “realism” of modern thought – expressed with great force in the thought of Machiavelli and Hobbes – may point to subtle connections with the “idealism” of later modern thinkers like Mill. The realism, and idealism, of modern thinkers will be contrasted with the alternative stance of ancient thought, as well as the “new science” of Alexis de Tocqueville.

**Books:**

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Focus)

Aristotle, *Politics* (Chicago)

Hobbes, Thomas, *Leviathan* (Hackett)

Machiavelli, *Selected Political Writings* (Hackett)

Mill, J. S., *Utilitarianism, On Liberty, Representative Government* (Oxford)

Plato, *Republic* (Focus)

Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (Chicago)

**Assignments and Grading:**

There will be a Mid-term and a Final Examination. Both exams will be cumulative and will test your knowledge of the course material based on readings, lectures and discussion.

Additionally, you are assigned to write two (2) 4-page papers (double-spaced, 12-point font). **The first paper** is due on Sept. 11 *for all students* (on Plato); **the second paper** can be turned in on three optional dates, either on (Hobbes), (Mill), or (Tocqueville). Questions for the papers will be distributed several weeks in advance.

Your final grade will be determined as follows:

Each Paper (x2):	12.5%
Midterm:	25%
Final Exam:	40%
Attendance and Participation:	10%

#### Grading Scale

A	1000-930	C	779-730
A-	929-900	C-	729-700
B+	899-880	D+	699-680
B	879-830	D	679-630
B-	829-800	D-	629-600
C+	799-780	F	599-000

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Explanatory Comments</u>
A	Exceptional	<i>All</i> work meets or exceeds the highest expectations for the course
A-	Outstanding	Superior work in <i>all</i> areas of the course
B+	Very Good	Superior work in <i>most</i> areas of the course
B	Good	Solid work across the board
B-	More than Acceptable	More than acceptable, but falls short of solid work
C+	Acceptable	Meets <i>all</i> the basic reqs. and standards for the course
C	Acceptable	Meets <i>most</i> of the basic reqs. and standards in several areas
C-	Acceptable	Work falls short of meeting basic standards in several areas
D	Minimally Passing	Work just over the threshold of acceptability
F	Failing	Unacceptable performance

#### **Course Expectations:**

**Academic Integrity:** Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. I will follow and enforce strictly the university's policies regarding academic integrity.

**Honor Code:** Class members are expected to understand the principles and procedures set forth in the University of Notre Dame Academic Code of Honor (<http://www.nd.edu/~hnr/code/>) and abide by its pledge: "*As a member of the Notre Dame community, I will not participate in or tolerate academic dishonesty.*"

**Students with Disabilities** will be accommodated as extensively as possible. Please talk directly with the instructor regarding any necessary arrangements.

**Reading:** This course has a demanding reading schedule. There are roughly 100-150 pages of reading per week. The readings for the course are sometimes challenging and difficult. That said, they are also extremely rewarding. You are expected to read all assigned materials for the day that they will be discussed in lecture.

While reading the assigned texts is essential and sufficient for the course, for students who may lack some background knowledge in political philosophy, or desire more

knowledge of the individual thinkers under examination and others who will be mentioned in lectures, it is recommended to consult the third edition of *History of Political Philosophy*, ed. Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey.

**Attendance and Class Participation:** You are expected to attend all class lectures. I appreciate being informed when you are unable to attend lectures; while I do not take formal attendance at lectures, I am a quick study of faces and I notice absences. I will also ask the T.A. to take notice of absences.

**Timely Paper Submissions:** I do not gladly agree to extensions, and would ask that you plan your schedule to account for any anticipated conflicts or especially busy times around due dates. **Any unexcused late paper submissions will be penalized by one-third grade if it is late, and an additional one-third for every two days of tardiness.** The deadlines for the papers are posted in this syllabus, and have included a great degree of flexibility, so I urge you now to plan your semester accordingly. Paper extensions will only be granted when accompanied by a note from a Dean or appropriate medical personnel. These strictures are implemented as a matter of equity: it is a disadvantage to those classmates who are able to complete assigned work by the deadline if they are compared against others who benefit from additional time. As a matter of fairness to your classmates, I ask you to respect the deadlines.

**Classroom Etiquette:** I respectfully request that **computers not be used during class**, and instead notes be taken using notepads. I make this request recognizing that it will be inconvenient for some, but in the belief that the use of connected computers during lectures not only presents unnecessary temptations for the user, but distractions for those around the user. Further, the use of laptops creates physical “walls” between the teacher and students that I find to be obstructing, in addition to being a visual distraction.

I request that hats not be worn in class, other than for religious observance.

## **Lecture and Reading Schedule:**

August 23: Introduction - Plato's *Republic*, Book 1

August 28: Plato's *Republic*, Books 2-3

August 30: Plato's *Republic*, Books 4-5

September 4: Plato's *Republic*, Book 6-7

September 6: Plato's *Republic*, Books 8-9

September 11: Plato's *Republic*, Book 10 (**1<sup>st</sup> Paper Due – Plato – REQUIRED**)

September 13: Aristotle, *Ethics*, Books 1-2, 6.5-8

September 18: Aristotle, *Ethics* 10.8-9, *Politics*, Book 1

September 20: Aristotle, *Politics*, Books 3, 4

September 25: Aristotle, *Politics*, Books 7.1-4, 8

September 27: Machiavelli, *Selected Political Writings*: "The Letter to Vettori"; DISCOURSES, I.1; THE PRINCE, "Dedicatory Letter," chs. 1, 6, 7, 8, 9

October 2: Machiavelli, *Selected Political Writings*: THE PRINCE, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 25, 26

October 4: Machiavelli, *Selected Political Writings*: DISCOURSES, Preface, I.1-13, 16-18, 26-7, 34, 42

October 9: Machiavelli, *Selected Political Writings*: DISCOURSES II. Preface, 1-3, 19; III. 3, 8, 9, 41

October 11: Midterm Examination (In-Class)

FALL BREAK

October 23: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Author's Introduction, I. 1-10

October 25: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, I. 11-16

October 30: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, II. 17-25

November 1: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, II. 26-31

November 6: Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Ch. 1; *On Liberty*, Ch. 1

**(2d Paper Optional Due Date – Hobbes — November 6)**

November 8: Mill, *On Liberty*, Chs. 2, 3

November 13: Mill, *On Representative Government*, Chs. 2, 3

November 15: Mill, *On Representative Government*, 6, 8

November 20: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Author's Introduction, I.i.3 pp. 40-65  
I.i.5, 56-65, I.i.7, 235-245

**(2nd Paper Optional Due Date – Mill – November 20)**

November 22: THANKSGIVING

November 27: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, II.i.1, 8, 11; I.ii.1, 2, 13, 20

November 29: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, II.iv.3, 6

December 4: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, I.ii.8, pp. 251-264; I.ii.9, pp. 278-288;  
II.ii.4, 5, 8.

December 6: Summary Lecture: Leo Strauss, "The Three Waves of Modernity"  
(<https://ia700501.us.archive.org/5/items/LeoStraussTheThreeWavesOfModernity/Strauss-ThreeWavesOfModernity.pdf>)

**(2nd Paper Optional Due Date – Tocqueville – December 6)**

FINAL EXAM: Friday, December 15, 8-10 a.m. in Riley 200 (To be Confirmed)