

## **Introduction to Political Theory**

PL 210-2

### **Summary of Course Content:**

This course covers the development of political theory and the major political theorists from the classical times to the modern era. Attention is given to the various articulations of political thought including ethics, morals, society and state organization, the rule of law, and the science of politics. The foundations for the formation of the modern nation state are analyzed. The course covers major political thinkers including Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Hegel, and Marx. Modern absolutism, Enlightenment, and Romanticism will be covered. The concepts of natural rights, general will, and individualism will be studied. Ideologies are treated including Liberalism, Nationalism, Communism and their articulations. Utopia, revolution, and the production of totalitarianism are the conclusive topics of the program. Major political and scholarly interpretations of thinkers, schools of thought, and periods covered will be considered. The class format includes lectures, discussion, team work, presentations, and audiovisual materials. The students will be asked to produce a research project, making extensive personal use of information and communication technology. Guest speakers and field trips are planned.

### **Course aims:**

This course attempts to provide the student with a general understanding of the evolution of political theory through the time and an understanding of modern political thought and ideologies. Priority is given to conceptualization of different theories and their historical development. Critical thinking and comparative analysis will be applied to achieve a clear understanding of the foundations of modern political theory.

### **Learning outcomes:**

Students will develop the ability to critically analyze the evolution and the diversity of political speculation. They will be able to relate theories and thinkers with political structures, players, and phenomena within the western and global political context. Students will develop ability to conduct basic research, and organize and present their findings in logical and independent way.

### **Textbook:**

- Deutsch K. L., Fornieri J. R., *An Invitation to Political Thought*. Thomson, 2009. ISBN 100534545637
- Sabine G. H., Thorson T. L., *A History of Political Theory*. Chicago, 1980. ISBN 0039102831
- Morgan M. L. (Ed.), *Classics of Moral and Political Theory*. Cambridge, 2010. ISBN 0872207773
- Supplementary Reading Materials to be assigned (*assigned readings*)

### **Required reserved readings:**

- Castiglione D., Hampsher-Monk L., *The History of Political Thought in National Context*. Cambridge, 2011. ISBN 0521174937
- Strauss L., *History of Political Philosophy*. Third Edition, U. of Chicago, 2009. ISBN 0226777103
- Boucher D., Kelly P., *Political Thinkers: From Socrates to the Present*. Oxford, 2010. ISBN 0199215529

### **Recommended reserved readings:**

- Haddock B., *A History of Political Thought: From Antiquity to the Present*. Polity, 2008. ISBN 745640850
- Klosko G., *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Political Philosophy*. Oxford, 2011. ISBN 0199238804
- Swift A., *Political Philosophy: A Beginner's Guide for Students and Politicians*. Oxford, 2001. ISBN 0745635326

## **Program:**

- Unit 1 Introduction. Methodology. Definitions. The Context of Political Theory. The Invention of Political Philosophy.  
(Jan. 21, 23) (assigned readings)
- Unit 2 Ancient Greek Political thought. Socrates and Plato. The Republic. Virtue and Knowledge. Classes and Souls.  
(Jan. 25, 30) (Deutsch, p. 1-34; Sabine, p. 3-34; Morgan, p. 75-251; assigned readings)
- Unit 3 Aristotle and the Science of Politics. The Rule of Law. The Best Practicable State. From *Polis* to *Cosmopolis*.  
(Feb. 4, 6) (Deutsch, p. 35-70; Sabine, p. 125-140; Morgan, p. 361-418; assigned readings)
- Unit 4 From Feudalism to Capitalism. Augustine and Aquinas. Renaissance. The Discovery of the Individual.  
(Feb. 11, 13, 15) (Deutsch, p. 71-142; Morgan, p. 442-476; assigned readings)
- Unit 5 Machiavelli and Modern Absolutism. The Nature of Politics. The Role of the State. Moore's Utopia.  
(Feb. 18, 20) (Deutsch, p. 183-224; Morgan, p. 482-526; assigned readings)
- Unit 6 The Protestant Reformers: Luther, Calvin, Anabattists, and the Radicals. Political Authority Reconceived.  
(Feb. 25, 27\*) (Deutsch, p. 143-182; assigned readings)

### \* MIDTERM EXAM

- Unit 7 The Individual and the Community. Society, State, and Government. Class Discussion.  
(Mar. 4, 6, 8) (Deutsch, p. 225- 310; Morgan, p. 551-749; assigned readings)
- Unit 8 Rousseau, Hobbes and Locke. The Social Contract and the General Will. The Paradox of Freedom.  
(Mar. 18, 20) (Deutsch, p. 311-350; Morgan, p. 831-890; assigned readings)
- Unit 9 Enlightenment and the Development of the Modern State. Voltaire. Origin of Modern Ideologies.  
(Mar. 25, 27) (Deutsch, p. 351-416; Morgan, p. 752-774; assigned readings)
- Unit 10 Nationalism. Hegel and Dialectic. The Spirit of the Nation. Individualism and the Theory of the State.  
(Apr. 1\*, 3) (Sabine, p. 570- 607; assigned readings)

### \* PROJECT PROPOSAL

- Unit 11 Liberalism. The Question of Liberty. Economic and Political Theory. John Stuart Mill.  
(Apr. 8, 10) (Deutsch, p. 441-466; Morgan, p. 936-994; assigned readings)
- Unit 12 Socialism. Marx and Communism. Dialectical Materialism. Economic Determinism. Social Democracy.  
(Apr. 15, 17) (Deutsch, p. 418-440; Morgan, p.1093-1108; assigned readings)
- Unit 13 Totalitarianism. Utopia and Revoution. Modern Crisis. Irrationalism and Anti-Rationalism.  
(Apr. 24) (Deutsch, p. 467-491; Morgan, p. 1142-1209; assigned readings)
- Unit 14 Political theory in Global Context. The Education of Political Thought. Class Discussion. Conclusion.  
(Apr. 29\*) (assigned readings)

### \* FINAL REAEARCH PROJECT \* PORTFOLIO

(May 6 - May 10, t.b.s.\*)

### \* FINAL EXAM

#### Films/Audiovisual Materials Sessions:

- (1. Feb. (date t.b.s.) at 19:30) "on power"
- (2. Mar. (date t.b.s.) at 19:30) "on diversity"
- (3. Apr. (date t.b.s.) at 19:30) "on ideology"

#### NOTE:

The syllabus schedule may undergo reasonable changes in relation to guest speakers, field trips, make-ups, discussions, events, and other contingencies

## References:

Plato	<i>The Republic</i>	424-347bce	Locke	<i>Two Treatises of government</i>	1689
Aristotle	<i>Politics</i>	384-322bce	Voltaire	<i>Candide</i>	1759
Aristophanes	<i>Ecclesiazusae</i>	391bce	Rousseau	<i>Government of Poland</i>	1772
Lucretius	<i>De rerum natura</i>	99-55bce	Burke	<i>Reflections on the Revolution in France</i>	1790
Augustine	<i>City of God</i>	415	Kant	<i>Perpetual Peace</i>	1795
Aquinas	<i>Summa Theologica</i>	1274	Tocqueville	<i>Democracy in America</i>	1840
Moore	<i>Utopia</i>	1516	Marx	<i>On the Jewish Question</i>	1843
Müntzer	<i>Sermon to the Prince</i>	1524	Stirner	<i>The Ego and His Own</i>	1844
Machiavelli	<i>The Prince</i>	1532	Mill	<i>On Liberty</i>	1859
Luther	<i>On the Jews</i>	1543	Bakunin	<i>Statism and Anarchy</i>	1873
Campanella	<i>The City of the Sun</i>	1602	Nietzsche	<i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i>	1885
Hobbes	<i>Leviathan</i>	1651	Nilus	<i>The Protocols of the Elders of Zion</i>	1898

### Course requirements:

- Regular attendance and participation in class.
- Midterm in-class Exam.
- Final in-class Exam.
- Presentation, Reports and other assignments.
- Final Research Project (with project Proposal and Portfolio).
- Activities.

### Class Attendance and participation:

Regular attendance and active participation in class is required. **Attendance requirements:** A maximum of four absences are allowed throughout the semester. Any additional absence will result in a penalization of one grade level (e.g.: from B+ to B for five absences, B+ to B- for six absences, B+ to C+ for seven absences, etc.). Two latenesses count for one absence. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class by calling students' names. Students not answering will be marked absent. Students arrived late will ask the instructor to be marked late at the end of the class, after which attendance records will not be modified.

**Use of Computers in class:** The use of personal computers and technological devices in class is not permitted except for taking notes, or contributing to class activity during designated times. Students not respecting the rule will be penalized by getting no points in the Class Participation requirement (worth 10% of the final grade). Recording and filming in class is not allowed.

### Midterm in-class Exam:

Midterm and final exams have the same format. The exam has two parts of equal value. The first part is an essay, the student will choose one theme out of three proposed, and will write a well-organized essay. The second part of the exam is made of ten terms to be concisely defined.

### Final in-class Exam:

Midterm and final exams have the same format. The exam has two parts of equal value. The first part is an essay, the student will choose one theme out of three proposed, and will write a well-organized essay. The second part of the exam is made of ten terms to be concisely defined.

### Presentation, Reports and other assignments:

Students are required give a short individual or team in-class presentation on a specific topic of their choice, approved by the instructor and related to the class program. The presentation will be well organized, concise, and include (when opportune) audiovisual and electronic materials. A draft presentation must be submitted to the instructor before presenting in class. An electronic version of the presentation must be given to the instructor in class, in person, during any of the last four classes. Files send by email are not accepted. The deadline is the last class. No materials will be accepted past the deadline.

### Final Research Project:

The final research project (3,000 words) will be on any topic of the student's choice related to the class program. The topic should be precisely defined and worthy of investigation. An electronic version of the project must be given to the instructor in class, in person, during any of the last four classes. Files sent by email are not accepted. The deadline is the last class. No materials will be accepted past the deadline. To produce the final project, students will receive written instructions in class. During the semester, students will show the instructor their final project work in progress and receive checks. **Portfolio:** In order to produce their final project, students will keep a portfolio of research materials during the semester. The portfolio will be shared with, and evaluated by the instructor. The production of the final project is a work in progress during the semester. The portfolio and the paper project are progressive steps toward completion of the final project. A portfolio containing samples of reference materials must be attached to the final project.

### Activities:

**Library session:** The class will meet sometimes in the library to receive instruction on electronic tools and sources. Individual assistance will be provided to the students for their research. To be announced. **Guest speakers:** Guest speakers expert in the fields related to the program may be invited during the semester. To be announced. **Field trips:** Field trips may be scheduled during the semester in connection with ongoing cultural events of interest in Rome. To be announced.

### **Assessment Methods:**

- Class participation: 10%
  - Midterm in-class exam: 20%
  - Final in-class exam: 25%
  - Presentation, reports, and other assignments: 15%
  - Final Research Project (with project Proposal and Portfolio): 30%.
- Improvement over the semester will be rewarded.

Letter grades correspond to the numerical scale:

A to A- = 100% to 90%. B+ to B- = 89% to 80%. C+ to C- = 79% to 70%. D+ to D- = 69% to 60%. F = <60%.

### **Assessment Criteria:**

**A.** Work of this quality directly addresses the question or problem raised and provides a coherent argument displaying an extensive knowledge of relevant information or content. This type of work demonstrates the ability to critically evaluate concepts and theory and has an element of novelty and originality. There is clear evidence of a significant amount of reading beyond that required for the course.

**B.** This is highly competent level of performance and directly addresses the question or problem raised. There is a demonstration of some ability to critically evaluate theory and concepts and relate them to practice. Discussions reflect the student's own arguments and are not simply a repetition of standard lecture and reference material. The work does not suffer from any major errors or omissions and provides evidence of reading beyond the required assignments.

**C.** This is an acceptable level of performance and provides answers that are clear but limited, reflecting the information offered in the lectures and reference readings.

**D.** This level of performances demonstrates that the student lacks a coherent grasp of the material. Important information is omitted and irrelevant points included. In effect, the student has barely done enough to persuade the instructor that s/he should not fail.

**F.** This work fails to show any knowledge or understanding of the issues raised in the question. Most of the material in the answer is irrelevant.

### **Recommended films:**

Some class viewing may be scheduled during the semester. To be announced.

S. Snyder, *300*. R. Scott, *Gladiator*. M. Bogdanov, *The Mandrake Root*. L. Megahey, *The Advocate*. A. Wajda, *Danton*. B. H. A. Riefenstahl, *Triumph of the Will*. N. Mikhalkov, *Burnt by the Sun*.

### **Journals:**

*Political Theory*. *Contemporary Political Theory*. *The Journal of Political Philosophy*. *The Journal of Philosophy*. *Journal of Political Ideologies*. *Telos*. *European Journal of Political Theory*. *History of Political Thought*. *Theoria*. *Critical Review*.

### **Internet sites:**

<https://www.gutenberg.org/>  
<http://www.wiu.edu/users/mfcjh/wiu/class381/webclassical/classica.htm>  
<http://oll.libertyfund.org/>  
[www.iapss.org](http://www.iapss.org)  
[www.politicaltheory.info](http://www.politicaltheory.info)

### **Academic honesty**

As stated in the university catalog, any student who commits an act of academic dishonesty will receive a failing grade on the work in which the dishonesty occurred. In addition, acts of academic dishonesty, irrespective of the weight of the assignment, may result in the student receiving a failing grade in the course. Instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of Academic Affairs. A student who is reported twice for academic dishonesty is subject to summary dismissal from the University. In such a case, the Academic Council will then make a recommendation to the President, who will make the final decision.

### **Students with learning or other disabilities**

John Cabot University does not discriminate on the basis of disability or handicap. Students with approved accommodations must inform their professors at the beginning of the term. Please see the website for the complete policy.

**This syllabus is on line:** [www.gabrielesimoncini.it](http://www.gabrielesimoncini.it)