

GVPT 241 Political Theory and Thought
Fall 2018
Mon, Wed, 2:00 – 2:50

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Overview

Welcome to GVPT 241 Political Theory and Thought. This course is a survey of the main political thinkers of the Western Tradition. We will begin with Machiavelli, who is widely considered to be the start of the “modern” tradition, but we will also look at Aristotle, who is probably the most influential of all of the thinkers we are surveying. We aim to understand the basics of each thinker, but we also want to discover the themes and ideas that span different periods. We will also consider some perennial issues in the history of political thought, like the “what is freedom?”, “what is justice?”, and “how do we adjudicate between the demands of the individual and the demands of the state?” Finally, we will consider some of the ideas (and ideologies) of US politics today, in order to understand their relationship to this tradition.

As you plod through the dense and often difficult prose, you may wonder why you are reading such arcane writings. There are lots of videos and resources online that offer clearer explanations of some of these thinkers – and we will be utilizing them – but it is also important to understand the primary source material. Moreover, you will be expected to cite passages from the text in your essays and exams.

Aims

The goals of this class are:

1. To learn the basics of some of the key figures in the history of Western Political Thought, and the themes between them.
2. To critically assess the ideas espoused by these thinkers, and practice making reasoned arguments about them.
3. To practice applying these ideas to novel and contemporary .
4. To practice working collaboratively with other students in class activities and projects.

Method

The course entails two full class meetings (Mondays and Wednesdays), and a discussion section later in the week. Lectures will entail a mix of lecturing, discussion, and activities. Discussion sections will entail discussions and activities. Students are expected to complete reading assignments before attending full class meetings, and be prepared to discuss the material.

In addition to our test book, there will be other assignments, videos, and activities on our ELMS site.

Assessment

Assessment will be continuous, and combine both low stakes and high(er) stakes exercises. The weighting is as follows:

Class Participation 10%

There will be regular activities in the full class meetings, and the discussion groups. These will not be graded, but your participation will be recorded.

Mini Quizzes 20%

There will be 20 Mini-Quizzes (approximately 2/week) testing the basics of each reading assignments. These will consist of 5 questions, and be conducted on ELMS. Each quiz is worth 1% of your final grade, and will be due the morning of our class meetings.

Midterm exam 15%

The Midterm will consist of essay questions, and be open book and open [written] notes.

Term Paper 30%

The term paper will be between 1800-2200 words (approximately 5-7 pages double-spaced). More on this soon...

Final Exam 25%

Currently scheduled for **December 13**, the final exam will also be essay-based and open books/notes.

Grades will break down accordingly:

A 93 – 97	C 73 – 77
A- 90 – 92	C- 70 – 72
B+ 88 – 89	D+ 68 – 69
B 83 – 87	D 63 – 67
B- 80 – 82	D- 60 – 62
C+ 78 - 79	F 59 and below

Classroom Decorum

The success of the class depends in part on the quality of interaction between students. Therefore, the use of laptops, tablets, phones, or any devices is prohibited during the full

class meetings and the discussion sections. If you need to make/take a phone call, or send/receive a message please excuse yourself from the room.

More importantly, this course will touch on a number of sensitive topics, and students are encouraged to critically engage the readings, the lecture, and each others' comments. However, I cannot stress enough the necessity to maintain respect towards each other in and out of the classroom.

Finally, students are responsible for familiarizing yourself with the school's policy on plagiarism and academic integrity. It will be taken EXTREMELY seriously in this course. In fact, student will be asked to make the UMD Honor pledge on their exams and term papers. See: <https://www.studentconduct.umd.edu/current-students>.

Attendance

The full class meetings are not mandatory to attend, but I expect everyone to attend regularly and on time. Moreover, there will be activities conducted in the full class meetings that will count towards students' final grades. Attendance in the discussion sections are mandatory, and absences will only be excused for significant medical and (perhaps) legal circumstances. Students must submit documentation from a recognized authority in order to be excused.

Special Needs and Medical Exemptions

Any student who feels they might need special accommodations with regards to testing and assignments should contact the Counseling Center (<https://www.counseling.umd.edu/ads/>). Once registered, this office will advise me on any special accommodation I must provide, and can do so in a confidential manner without revealing the specifics of the condition to me. Of course, should any medical conditions or death of a loved one arise during the term, I would be happy to accommodate, provided I receive some documentation of the of the situation by a physician or authority.

My Availability and Communication

The best way to reach me is by email. I will respond within 48 hours. My office hours are at the top of this document, and I encourage you to email me before coming by my office (so as not to keep you waiting if I am seeing several other students). That said, feel free to come by to discuss any special needs you may have, or simply to chat about the course.

Class Schedule

Most of the readings are from our sole textbook, however I will also be assigning some additional readings and videos in our ELMS classroom.

NOTE: The Teaching Staff for this course reserves the right to amend this schedule.

Wooton, David (ed.), *Modern Political Thought*, Second Edition, Hackett Publishing, 2008.

<u>Week 1</u> Aug 27	What is Political Theory?
Aug 29	Machiavelli and the Renaissance pp. 1 – 5 <i>The Prince</i> (Chapters 1 -13) pp. 6 – 32
<u>Week 2</u> Sep 3	Labor Day
Sep 5	<i>The Prince</i> (Chapters 14 – 26) pp. 32 – 52
<u>Week 3</u> Sep 10	Hobbes, the Reformation, and the Scientific Revolution pp. 89 – 95 <i>Leviathan</i> (Introduction – Chapter 6) pp. 117 – 136
Sep 12	<i>Leviathan</i> (Chapters 10 – 16) pp. 143 – 173
<u>Week 4</u> Sep 17	<i>Leviathan</i> (Chapters 17, 18, 20, 21, 24, 26) pp. 173 – 179, 184 – 193, 201 – 204, 208 - 217
Sep 19	<i>Leviathan</i> (Chapters 28 - 31) pp. 224 - 246
<u>Week 5</u> Sep 24	John Locke, David Hume, and the Right of Revolution pp. 278 – 284 Locke, <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> (Preface – Chapter VI) pp. 285 – 306
Sep 26	Locke, <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> (Chapters VII – XV) pp. 306 – 334
<u>Week 6</u> Oct 1	Locke, <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> (Chapters XVI - XIX) pp. 334 – 353 Hume, <i>Of the Original Contract</i> pp. 354 – 362
Oct 3	Mid Term Exam
<u>Week 7</u> Oct 8	Rousseau, the Enlightenment and the Age of Revolution pp. 363 – 370 Rousseau, <i>Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men</i> (Part One) pp. 371 – 395 (including notes)

Oct 10	Rousseau, <i>Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men</i> (Part Two) pp. 395 – 410 (including notes!)
<u>Week 8</u>	
Oct 15	Rousseau, <i>On the Social Contract, or Principles of Political Right</i> (Forward – Book III, Chapter VI) pp. 427 – 459
Oct 17	Rousseau, <i>On the Social Contract, or Principles of Political Right</i> (Book III, Chapter VII – Book IV, Chapter IX) pp. 459 – 587
<u>Week 9</u>	
Oct 22	Smith, <i>Theory of Moral Sentiments</i> pp. 488 – 501
Oct 24	Burke, <i>Reflections on the Revolution in France</i> pp. 501 – 521 Kant, <i>An Answer to What is the Enlightenment</i> 522 – 532
<u>Week 10</u>	Constitutionalism and the Redefinition of Liberty
Oct 29	<i>Federalist Papers</i> , nos. 9, 10, 14, 48, 51 pp. 543 - 557 Constant, <i>On Ancient and Modern Liberty</i> pp. 558 - 569
Oct 31	J. S. Mill: Feminism and the Pursuit of Happiness pp. 570 – 575 <i>On Liberty</i> (Chapters I – II) pp. 592 – 620
<u>Week 11</u>	
Nov 5	<i>On Liberty</i> (Chapters III – IV) pp. 620 – 651
Nov 7	Midterm Election Digression TBD
<u>Week 12</u>	
Nov 12	<i>The Subjection of Women</i> (Chapters I – II) pp. 652 – 677
Nov 14	<i>The Subjection of Women</i> (Chapters III – IV) pp. 677 - 705
<u>Week 13</u>	Marx and Marxism pp. 706 – 713
Nov 19	Marx, <i>Alienated Labour</i> pp. 766 – 772 Marx and Engels, <i>The German Ideology</i> 775 - 798
Nov 21	Thanksgiving Break

<p><u>Week 14</u> Nov 26</p>	<p>Marx and Engels, <i>The Communist Manifesto</i> pp. 798 – 846 Marx, <i>Capital</i> pp. 832 – 839</p>
<p>Nov 28</p>	<p>Plato, Aristotle and Justice Plato, <i>The Republic</i> (selections)</p>
<p><u>Week 15</u> Dec 3</p>	<p>Aristotle, <i>The Nicomachean Ethics</i> (selections TBD)</p>
<p>Dec 5</p>	<p>Aristotle, <i>The Politics</i> (selections TBD)</p>
<p><u>Week 16</u> Dec 10</p>	<p>Conclusion and Takeaways TBD</p>