



Political Theory and Philosophy

GVPT 241
Fall 2023

Description

Like the theoretical component of every science, political theory is the practice of providing provisional explanations to political phenomenon. This function is the *empirical* aspect of political theory. But unlike other scientific theories, there is a *normative* function of political theory as well. Many governments around the world claim to be democratic in some way, even authoritarian regimes that are clearly undemocratic. Some of them are being disingenuous. But others are working with a different conception of “democracy.” The practice of political theory is 1) to understand how the concepts and values of politics *are* understood and utilized by citizens and politicians, but also 2) to make arguments about how these concepts and values *should be* understood and utilized. The USA was founded in part on the fundamental equality of all people. Does this mean that the practice of slavery should be tolerated by the state? Only the practice of political theory can answer this question.

This course is an introduction to a curated collection of topics and concepts in the practice of political theory. The primary goals are to get students to understand how the practice of political theory can explain and influence the practice of politics in the world, and to get students to love political theory. Anyone who has opinions about the world is a political theorist, even if it is from your armchair. This course will make you a better one.

Learning Outcomes

GVPT 241 is part of the Scholarship in Practice category of the [General Education](#) requirements of the University of Maryland. As such, by the end of the course students should be able to:

- *To understand the major theories and issues in the practice of political theory.*

Dr Sujith Kumar

Kumars13@umd.edu

TYD 1153

Office Hours

Tues/Thurs

Noon – 1PM

and by appointment

Live Lecture

Tues/Thurs

2:00 – 2:50 PM

LEF 2205

Graduate Teaching Assistant

Isaiah Espinoza

gespinoz@umd.edu

Undergraduate Teaching Assistants

Akshay Kapilashrami

akshay03@terpmail.umd.edu

Anika Reddy

Areddy12@terpmail.umd.edu

Guinivere Roberts

sware12@terpmail.umd.edu

Katherine Badia

kbadia@terpmail.umd.edu

Francis Franch

ffranch@terpmail.umd.edu

Mason Hill

mhill112@terpmail.umd.edu

Julia Chan

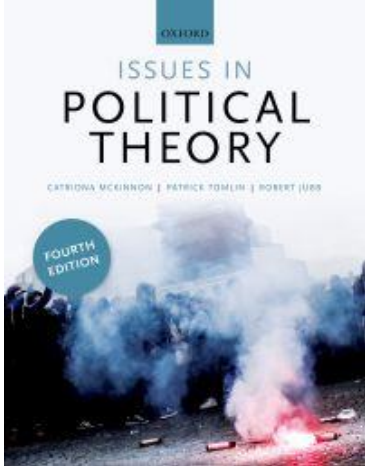
jchan404@terpmail.umd.edu

Rochelle Shubinsky

rshubins@terpmail.umd.edu

- *To apply the theories and concepts of political theory to contemporary political controversies.*
- *To critically assess the theories and concepts in political science.*
- *To practice working collaboratively with other students, and presenting that work.*

Required Readings and Resources

	<p>Catriona McKinnon, Robert Jubb, Patrick Tomlin</p> <p>Print ISBN: 9780198784067</p> <p>eText ISBN: 9780192523174</p> <p>UMD Bookstore</p>
<p>Other Readings</p>	<p>Made available through ELMS</p>

Campus Policies

It is our shared responsibility to know and abide by the University of Maryland's policies that relate to all courses, which include topics like:

- [Academic integrity](#)
- Student and instructor conduct
- Accessibility and accommodations
- Attendance and excused absences
- [Grades and appeals](#)
- Copyright and intellectual property

Please visit www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html for the Office of Undergraduate Studies' full list of campus-wide policies and follow up with me if you have questions.

Activities, Learning Assessments, & Expectations for Students

- Students are required to complete all of the readings, and are expected to attend the lectures in person.
- Students must keep on top of the reading, which will range from 40 – 80 pages per week.

- Students are required to attend their assigned Discussion Sections with questions and comments, and any other work prepared.
- Students will be assessed in weekly online discussions.
- Students will be assessed by 5 online quizzes throughout the semester.
- Students will also be assessed by a short writing assignment, and a group project.

Course-Specific Policies

The lateness penalty: 10% of assignment grade after 1 day late, 5% after second day, 2% after third day, and then 1% of assignment grade for each additional day.

Communication Policy: Your UTAs are the first points of contact for course-related queries. They will also be keeping weekly office hours. Students may also contact Isaiah or myself directly for whatever reason. For all email communications, please allow 24 hours for a reply, and up to 48 hours over the weekend.

Absence Policy: The University has returned to its normal absence policy, meaning students are able to miss one Discussion Section meeting without penalty. All other absences, medical or otherwise, must be accompanied with a note from an authority figure (doctor, employer) in order to be excused. If you are unwell and cannot attend your section, all effort must be made to inform your UTAs in advance. **All absences due to religious or official athletic engagements must be discussed** in advance, so that proper accommodations can be made, if necessary.

COVID-19 Policies: If you have symptoms of possible COVID, or test positive, you must contact UMD HEAL (www.umd.edu/HEAL, 301-405-4325) to report your case and receive instructions. If you must isolate, you will not be penalized for missing your Discussion Sections. You are also asked not to attend Lectures, which will be recorded and made available upon request only.

Get Some Help!

Taking personal responsibility for your own learning means acknowledging when your performance does not match your goals and doing something about it. I hope you will come talk to me so that I can help you find the right approach to success in this course, and I encourage you to visit tutoring.umd.edu to learn more about the wide range of campus resources available to you. In particular, everyone can use some help sharpen their communication skills (and improving their grade) by visiting ter.ps/writing and schedule an appointment with the campus Writing Center. You should also know there are a wide range of resources to support you with whatever you might need (see go.umd.edu/assistance), and if you just need someone to talk to, visit counseling.umd.edu or [one of the many other resources on campus](#).



Most services are free because you have already paid for it, and **everyone needs help...** all you have to do is ask for it.

Finally, about AI...

In this course, our expectation is that you will not turn in any written work generated by artificial intelligence (AI)-powered programs such as ChatGPT or DALL-E. Submission of AI-generated will be considered an academic integrity violation. My reasoning for this is that these programs may provide inaccurate or biased information, but more importantly, they do not serve the course goal of developing critical thinking and writing skills. If you wish to use AI tools for a reason other than generating text, then you must seek my approval first. If you have any questions about this policy or are not sure if a resource you have found will violate this policy, please ask.

Grades

Students will be assessed using the following assignments.

Learning Assessments	Points Each	Category Weight
Discussion Section Participation	100	10%
Online Discussions	100	20%
Quizzes	100	25%
Short Writing Assignment	100	15%
Group Project	100	30%

Final Grade Cutoffs									
+	97.0%	+	87.0%	+	77.0%	+	67.0%		
A	93.0%	B	83.0%	C	73.0%	D	63.0%	F	<60.0%
-	90.0%	-	80.0%	-	70.0%	-	60.0%		

Course Schedule

<u>Week 1</u> Aug 29	<u>Intro and Political Obligation</u> What and why political theory?
Aug 31	“Political Obligation”, in <i>Issues in Political Theory</i>
Sept 1	Discussion Section
<u>Week 2</u> Sept 5	<u>Liberty: Positive vs Negative Freedom</u> “Liberty”, in <i>Issues in Political Theory</i>
Sept 7	John Christman, “Liberalism and Individual Positive Freedom”
Sept 8	Discussion Section
<u>Week 3</u> Sept 12	<u>Liberty II: Positive, Negative, and the Triadic Conception</u> John Stuart Mill, “Chapter 3”, <i>On Liberty</i>
Sept 14	Henrik Skaug Saetra, “Tyranny of Perceived Opinion”
Sept 15	Discussion Section
Sept 15-18	Quiz 1 due
<u>Week 4</u> Sept 19	<u>Crime and Punishment</u> "Crime and Punishment", in <i>Issues in Political Theory</i>
Sept 21	Reading TBD
Sept 22	Library Skills Workshop
<u>Week 5</u> Sept 26	<u>Toleration</u> “Toleration”, in <i>Issues in Political Theory</i>
Sept 28	Noah Feldman, “Morality, Self-Interest and Toleration”
Sept 29	Discussion Section
<u>Week 6</u> Oct 3	<u>Multiculturalism</u> “Multiculturalism”, in <i>Issues in Political Theory</i>
Oct 5	Susan Moller Okin, “Mistresses of their own Destiny”
Oct 6	Discussion Section
Oct 6-9	Quiz 2 due

<u>Week 7</u>	<u>Gender</u>
Oct 10	“Gender”, in <i>Issues in Political Theory</i>
Oct 12	Marilyn Frye, “Oppression”
Oct 13	Discussion Section
<u>Week 8</u>	<u>Social Justice and Equality</u>
Oct 17	“Equality and Social Justice”, in <i>Issues in Political Theory</i>
Oct 19	TBD
Oct 20	Discussion Section
<u>Week 9</u>	<u>Global Poverty</u>
Oct 24	“Global Poverty”, in <i>Issues in Political Theory</i>
Oct 26	Thomas Pogge, “What is Global Justice?”
Oct 27	Discussion Section
Oct 27-30	Quiz 3 due
<u>Week10</u>	<u>Human Rights</u>
Oct 31	“Human Rights”, in <i>Issues in Political Theory</i>
Nov 2	Simon Caney, “Climate Change, Human Rights, and Moral Thresholds”
Nov 3	Discussion Section
<u>Week 11</u>	<u>War and Intervention</u>
Nov 7	“War and Intervention”, in <i>Issues in Political Theory</i>
Nov 9	Alison Jagger, “What is Terrorism, and Could it Ever be Morally Permissible”
Nov 10	Discussion Section
<u>Week 12</u>	<u>Democracy</u>
Nov 14	“Democracy”, in <i>Issues in Political Theory</i>
Nov 16	John Stuart Mill, “Chapter VII”, in <i>Considerations on Representative Government</i>
Nov 17	Discussion Section

Nov 21	Reading TBD
Nov 20-22	Quiz 4 due
<u>Week 13</u>	<u>Sovereignty and Borders</u>
Nov 28	“Sovereignty and Borders”, in <i>Issues in Political Theory</i>
Nov 30	Jean Jacques Rousseau, Book I, ch. 6, 7; Book II, ch. 1-5; Book IV, ch. 1, 2, in <i>The Social Contract</i>
Dec 1	Discussion Section
<u>Week 14</u>	<u>The Environment</u>
Dec 5	“The Environment”, <i>Issues in Political Theory</i>
Dec 7	Reading TBD
Dec 8	Discussion Section
TBD	Quiz 5 due
Dec 13	Final Exams Begin (there is not final exam for 241)
TBD	Final Project Due

John Locke, *Two Treatises on Government*, Book II, Chapters 1-2, 8; Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapters 13, 14, 17, 18