



# Political Theory and Philosophy

**GVPT 241**  
Spring 2022

## 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](mailto:Kumars13@umd.edu)

### Live Lecture

Tues/Thurs

2:00 – 2:50 PM

LeFrak 2205

### Office Hours

Tues/Thurs

Noon – 1PM

and by appointment

### Graduate Teaching Assistant

Joel Mabry

[mabryjp@umd.edu](mailto:mabryjp@umd.edu)

### Teaching Assistants And Sections

#### **0101**

9AM, KEY 0123

Holly, Gabriel

#### **0102**

10AM, LEF 2166

Mathieu, Jessica

#### **0103**

9AM, TYD 2109

Cameron, Michelle

#### **0104**

10AM, LEF 2101

Liza, Jordan

#### **0105**

11AM, TYD 0111

Liza, Jordan

#### **0106**

1PM, LEF 1220

Holly, Gabriel

#### **0107**

1PM, LEF 1201

Mathieu, Jessica

#### **0108**

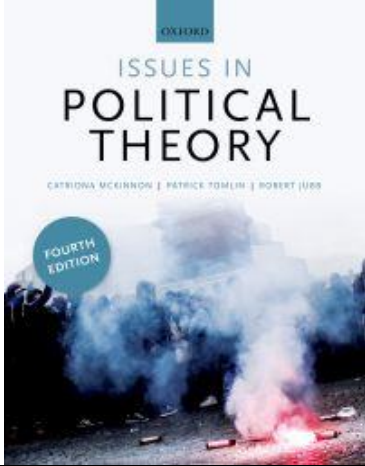
1PM, TYD 0111

Cameron, Michelle

- *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.*

**Prerequisites**  
N/A

## Required Readings and Resources

	<p>Catriona McKinnon, Robert Jubb, Patrick Tomlin</p> <p>Print ISBN: 9780198784067</p> <p>eText ISBN: 9780192523174</p> <p><a href="#">UMD Bookstore</a></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](http://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 Joel 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](http://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 through our ELMS classroom.

### 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](http://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](http://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](http://go.umd.edu/assistance)), and if you just need someone to talk to, visit [counseling.umd.edu](http://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.

## Grades

Students will be assessed using the following assignments.

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

<b>Final Grade Cutoffs</b>									
+	97.00%	+	87.00%	+	77.00%	+	67.00%		
A	93.00%	B	83.00%	C	73.00%	D	63.00%	F	<60.0%
-	90.00%	-	80.00%	-	70.00%	-	60.00%		

## Course Schedule

<u>Week 1</u>	<b><u>Intro and Political Obligation</u></b>
Jan 25	Lecture
Jan 27	Lecture
Jan 28	Discussion Section
<u>Week 2</u>	<b><u>Liberty: Positive vs Negative Freedom</u></b>
Feb 1	Lecture
Feb 3	Lecture
Feb 4	Discussion Section
<u>Week 3</u>	<b><u>Liberty II: Positive, Negative, and the Triadic Conception</u></b>
Feb 8	Lecture
Feb 10	Lecture
Feb 11	Discussion Section
Feb 14	<b>Quiz 1 due</b>
<u>Week 4</u>	<b><u>Crime and Punishment</u></b>
Feb 15	Lecture
Feb 17	Lecture
Feb 18	Discussion Section
<u>Week 5</u>	<b><u>Toleration</u></b>
Feb 22	Lecture
Feb 24	Lecture
<b>Feb 25</b>	<b>Library Skills Workshop</b>
<u>Week 6</u>	<b><u>Multiculturalism</u></b>
Mar 1	Lecture
Mar 3	Lecture
Mar 4	Discussion Section
Mar 7	<b>Quiz 2 due</b>
<u>Week 7</u>	<b><u>Social Justice and Equality</u></b>
Mar 8	Lecture

Mar 10	Lecture
Mar 11	Discussion Section
<u>Week 8</u>	<b><u>Gender</u></b>
Mar 15	Lecture
Mar 17	Lecture
Mar 18	Discussion Section
<b>Mar 20</b>	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>
<u>Week 9</u>	<b><u>Global Poverty</u></b>
Mar 29	Lecture
Mar 31	Lecture
Apr 1	Discussion Section
Apr 4	<b>Quiz 3 due</b>
<u>Week10</u>	<b><u>Democracy</u></b>
Apr 5	Lecture
Apr 7	Lecture
Apr 8	Discussion Section
<u>Week 11</u>	<b><u>Human Rights</u></b>
Apr 12	Lecture
Nov 14	Lecture
Nov 15	Discussion Section (Good Friday, Passover, Tax Day)
<u>Week 12</u>	<b><u>Sovereignty and Borders</u></b>
Apr 19	Lecture
Apr 21	Lecture
Apr 22	Discussion Section (Earth Day)
Apr 25	<b>Quiz 4 due</b>
<u>Week 13</u>	<b><u>Sovereignty and Borders</u></b>
Apr 26	Lecture

Apr 28	Lecture
Apr 29	Discussion Section
<u>Week 14</u>	<b><u>War and Intervention</u></b>
May 3	Lecture
May 5	Lecture
May 6	Discussion Section
<u>Week 15</u>	<b><u>The Environment</u></b>
May 10	Lecture
TBD	<b>Quiz 5</b>