

History of Political Theory: An Introduction

GVPT 241

Instructor: Brandon Ives

Email: bjives@umd.edu

Office Hours: Monday, 3:00 – 5:00; by appointment

Teaching Assistants:

Hyo Joon Chang

Jack Friedman

Kee Park

Madeline Edelstein

Note: I reserve the right to make slight changes to the syllabus throughout the term.

Course Description

This course examines a selection of prominent thinkers on political philosophy. Insight into the relationship between the public and private spheres and individual and society are discussed and examined. We begin first with Plato and the classical period. We then examine more contemporary political philosophers including Hobbes, Locke, and Mill. The course examines specifically how conceptualizations of the self and human nature impact subsequent arguments concerning the role of the public and private spheres and political behavior. The interaction of self and society has further implications for radical forms of political behavior, including political violence and the transformation of political structure. To better understand how and why political philosophers developed their respective views of the self—the basis of theoretical arguments—we will also examine the historical contexts in which they lived. In doing so, this course provides a connection between the context, concept of self, and politics, while striving to understand this connection's importance to contemporary political institutions, political behavior, and political ethics.

Required Texts

Plato: The Last Days of Socrates

Niccolo Machiavelli: The Prince

Thomas Hobbes: Leviathan (selections)

John Locke: Two Treatises of Government (selections)

Jean- Jacques Rousseau: The Social Contract and Discourses (selections)

Karl Marx: Early Writings

J.S.Mill: On Liberty

Course Requirements

Midterms (60%): Two midterm essays are required (5 – 7 pages each). More information on the prompts will follow.

Final Paper (40%): Students are required to submit a final paper (5 – 7 pages). More information on the prompt will follow.

Discussion: Students are required to attend and participate in the weekly discussion sections. Teaching assistants will guide discussions on topics related to the course material. Discussion sections are critical to development and articulation of relevant thought and insight. As such, students are expected to have read the course material prior to the discussion. In line with university regulations on attendance, students can miss one discussion section. All other absences require the appropriate documentation (i.e., medical note). Participation in discussion sections can help your grade should it be on the border line between two grades.

Computers and Electronic Devices

Computers, laptops, and cellphones are to be turned off during lectures and sections. Should students require accommodation to use one of these devices, please show the professor and the appropriate TA the required documentation.

Disability Accommodations

Students registered with the Disability Support Services (301.314.7682) should inform the course instructor and their TA as early as possible to make the appropriate arrangements.

Inclement Weather

Information for official UMD closings and delays can be found at the weather emergency phone line (301.405.7669). Information on closures and delays can also be found at UMD's homepage (<https://www.umd.edu/>).

Religious Holidays

Please contact the appropriate TA for an assignment or class activity in conflict with a religious holiday *at least one week prior to your absence*. It is preferable that the absence is brought to the attention of the appropriate TA in the first week of the course.

Late Assignments

Late assignments will be deducted one letter grade for each day they are late.

Grading System

Grade	Percentage
A+	97-100

A	93-96
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	59 and below

Course Schedule

- Plato: The Last days of Socrates
 - Apology
 - The individual and the Gadfly
 - Do we have gadflies today?
 - Crito
 - State and citizenship
 - Rebellion
- Niccolo Machiavelli: The Prince
 - The historical context: Italian city-states and fragmentation
 - Soulcraft vs. Statecraft
 - Political action
 - The role of violence in changing political behavior
 - Machiavelli and the Modern: implications for political competition today

Paper I Due

- Thomas Hobbes: Leviathan (selections)
 - The historical context: English Civil War
 - Assumptions of human nature and relations
 - What is authority
 - Force as imposed vs. force as accepted
 - The sovereign as ruler and limitation on rule
 - Rebellion: force of change or destabilization
 - Political speech
 - Role of geometry and its application to politics
 - Hobbes' social contract
- John Locke: Two Treatises of Government (selections)
 - The historical context

- Assumptions of human nature and relations
- Labor and value
- Government: Responsibility to Property Rights
- Government and Tyranny
- Citizens
- Locke's social contract

Paper II Due

- Jean-Jacques Rousseau: The Social Contract and Discourses (selections)
 - Discourses on the Origins of Inequality
 - The historical context: inequality in France
 - State of nature and inequality
 - Property and labor division
 - Origins of inequality
 - Impact of inequality
 - Inequality and the US: insights of Rousseau
 - The Social Contract
 - What is sovereignty?
 - General Will
 - Role of the community
 - Role of the individual
 - Ideology and the community
 - Implications for politics today
- Karl Marx: Early Writings
 - The historical context: Industrialization
 - Nature
 - Labor and value
 - Capitalism and production
 - The role of money
 - The individual and her/his role in society
 - Revolutionary change
 - What's it for? revolution and the future
- J.S. Mill: On Liberty
 - The historical context
 - What does it mean to be an individual?
 - Individual and society
 - Conformity
 - Society and its rights
 - Contemporary issue concerning the individual and society: new (or old?) challenges
 - Rights of the individual, group, and nation

Final Paper Due