

PS 160, Fall 2018: Introduction to Political Theory

(4 credits; 3 via lecture, 1 via section)

Tuesday/Thursday 1:00-2:15, Ingraham 19

Instructor:

Daniel J. Kapust

Professor, Department of Political Science

UW-Madison

djkapust@wisc.edu

314 North Hall

Office Hours: Monday, 9:30-11:30 am, held in Peet's Coffee in Memorial Union

I. Scope and Purpose

This course is an introduction to political theory. What is political theory? One way of answering the question is to say that political theory entails the normative and conceptual analysis of politics. For example, rather than ask the question, Why *do* we obey states?, political theory might instead ask, Why *should* we obey states? That is, it asks a normative question: what *should* be done, rather than what *is* done.

This question – Why *should* we obey states? – is the central question of this course, and it structures the choice of texts that we will be studying and how we will study them. We live in a world of states, and we can demonstrate their empirical existence in a number of ways. Whether we should live in a world of states, whether we should obey states, or any particular state: those are different issues. Is there a reason, then, why we should obey governments (apart from the fact that they can fine or imprison us)? Is there a reason why, for all of their problems, democratic forms of rule are better than non-democratic forms of rule? Is there a reason why, under certain circumstances, a state can cease to be legitimate – and may in fact be disobeyed or overthrown? These are some of the questions we will be concerned with in this course.

Of course, we take it for granted that not only do states exist, but that we should obey their laws. But this belief, like any other belief, is not self-explanatory, and should be subjected to critical analysis. And much of what we will do in this course is study intensively how a number of writers – Wolff, Plato, Hobbes, Rousseau, Wollstonecraft, Mill, Rawls, Nozick, and Scott – have explored the nature of this belief. We will discuss obedience, obligation, legitimacy, rights, consent, rebellion, revolution, monarchy, democracy, human nature, religion and politics, and a variety of related topics. And we will start, and end, our discussion with readings which suggest that our understanding of political obligation should be much thinner, if not done away with altogether.

II. Course Objectives

1. To read and analyze a survey of texts dealing with the fundamental questions of political theory.
2. To explore and analyze how political and ethical theories are formulated, and to critically evaluate their strengths and weaknesses.
3. To explore and analyze how different political and ethical theories relate to each other.
4. To explore and analyze the ways in which works of political theory may inform, illuminate, and enrich contemporary political and ethical discussions
5. To analyze and evaluate contemporary culture and individual experience through the lens of philosophical texts.

Through their careful and close engagement with course material, class attendance and participation, and completion of course work, students will develop the following capacities: verbal communication and presentation; expository, analytical, and reflective writing; critical analysis of arguments, concepts, and theories; teamwork and flexibility; and independent research.

III. Assignments

A. Papers (40% of total grade)

All students enrolled in this course will write 2 6-8 page papers, the first due on or before **Tuesday, October 29**, and the second due on or before **Tuesday, November 26**. Each will be worth 20% of your grade.

Further details on the papers:

These papers are to be critical analyses of a creative work – a novel, play, film, television episode, poem, opera, album, etc. – through the theoretical framework provided by one of the course texts. A critical analysis involves asking an interpretive question about the creative work, and developing an answer to that question through the lens of a course text. For example, if we were reading Machiavelli's *Prince* in this course, it might remind you of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and the interpretive puzzles it raises for the viewer or reader. An interpretive question might be, "Why can't Hamlet bring himself to act decisively?" An answer – in the form of a thesis statement – might be, "Drawing on Machiavelli's *Prince*, I will argue that Hamlet is unable to act decisively because he does not know how not to be good." For the first paper, you can write on Wolff, Plato, Hobbes, or Rousseau; for the second paper, you can write on Wollstonecraft, Mill, Rawls, or Nozick.

Papers are to be handed in as papers (i.e. not electronically), and to be stapled and printed in 12 point Times New Roman font with double-spaced lines. We will not accept papers that are not

stapled. Citation style is to adhere to the *American Political Science Review* format, which you can find discussed at length through this link:

<http://acme.highpoint.edu/~msetzler/generalissues/APSRcitation.htm>.

Late papers will be penalized in the following fashion: ½ letter grade off for papers turned in after the regular meeting time (T/Th 1:00-2:15), but on the due date **AND** before the close of the Political Science office closes (4:45 pm); 1 full letter grade per day for papers turned in after 4:45 pm on the due date.

B. Discussion Question Responses and Reactions (15% of total grade)

All students in this class will **write 10 responses** to discussion questions and **respond** to peer discussion questions **5 times**. Due dates for these responses, along with the subject matter for each response, are indicated on the syllabus with the subject “**Reading Response.**” They will be due by or before 1:00 pm on Mondays; after 1:00 pm, the assignment will be “locked;” late work will not be accepted. I will post discussion questions to Canvas for each date that a discussion question is due **24 hours** prior to it being due (that is, Sundays at 1:00 pm). You will thus have 24 hours to answer these questions in **no more than 250 words**. At 1:00 pm that Monday, I will “unlock” the responses for all members of your discussion section to see. You will then **respond** (in 250 words or less) to one peer’s discussion response by no later than **9:00 am** the next day (**Tuesday**). I will “lock” the assignment as of **9:00 am** that day; late work will not be accepted. There are **13 dates** available for you to write your response, but getting 100% on this portion of your grade requires you to **write and respond only 10 times**. You can thus pick one week when you do not want to do the assignment.

Doing this assignment **requires** that you do the reading specified next to the “**Reading Response**” lines on the “**Schedule of Lectures and Readings.**” If the content of your response does not demonstrate that you have done the readings, you will not receive credit. Thus, you will *not* be able to complete the assignment successfully if you do not do the readings. If you miss more than 4 of these, you will receive a **zero** for this portion of your grade.

Your grade for this portion will be calculated as follows:

$$(((\text{Reading Response total}/10)*2) + (\text{Response to Peer total}/5))/2.5*15$$

Thus, if you complete 9/10 Reading Responses and 4/5 Responses to Peers, your grade would be:

$$((.9 * 2) + .4)/2.5 = .88 * 15 = 13.2\%$$

C. Section (20% of total grade)

Discussion section will be worth 20% of your overall course grade. Teaching assistants will hand out detailed section syllabi on the first day of section. While there will be some variation in the

syllabi, **all** sections will feature structured group-based role-playing debates. Roles will be randomly assigned, and the role-play will involve students making arguments on particular topics (chosen for each section) based on particular thinkers studied in the course. Writing within section will include, but is not limited to, preparatory assignments for the papers.

D. Final (25% of total grade)

All students in this class will take a final exam worth 25% of the overall grade. The exam will be held on December 19 from 12:25-2:25 pm.

IV. Grading

Grades will be assigned based on the following scale:

A \geq 93.5	AB = 87.5-93.4	B = 82.5-87.4	BC = 77.5-82.4
C = 69.5-77.4	D = 60-69.4	F \leq 59.9	

V. Course Materials

1. Wolff, *In Defense of Anarchism* (University of California Press)
2. Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: Abridged, with Related Texts* (Hackett)
3. Mill, *On Liberty* (Hackett)
4. Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Hackett)
5. Plato, *Republic* (Hackett)
6. Rousseau, *Of the Social Contract* (Hackett)
7. Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (Basic Books)
8. Scott, *Two Cheers for Anarchism* (Princeton University Press)
9. Douglass, *The Essential Frederick Douglass* (Hackett)

VI. Class Expectations

You can expect me, as your instructor, and your teaching assistant to come to class prepared, to be available for assistance during office hours or by mutually convenient appointment, to answer email correspondence in a reasonable amount of time (**provided your email uses proper punctuation, grammar, spelling, appellation, and is signed**), to provide feedback on your performance, to hand back written work in a reasonable amount of time, and to provide clear instructions and guidelines. You can expect your teaching assistant or me to discuss questions

about evaluation of assignments **in person** and no sooner than **24 hours** after assignments have been returned.

I expect you, as students, to come to class prepared to engage in the material and on time (which involves bringing the assigned materials to class), to be attentive and respectful in class, to check your university-registered email regularly, to read and understand the syllabus and other course guidelines, in addition to adhering to all university policies and policies stated in the syllabus. If you plan to use a laptop, please sit **in the back of the classroom** so that other students are not distracted by laptop screens and typing. If you are using electronic devices for reading texts, however, feel free to sit anywhere in the room.

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated, and will be dealt with severely. For information on academic honesty, see <http://students.wisc.edu/doso/acadintegrity.html>.

This syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations may occur.

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

The following schedule describes two components of the course. First is the topic of the lecture I will be presenting on a particular day, labeled (Lecture); second is the reading you will need to do in order to complete particular reading response assignments (information comes after the “:” following **Reading Response x**).

Thursday, 9/5: Course introduction

1: The Problem of Political Philosophy, and Philosophical Anarchism

Tuesday, 9/10: Wolff, *In Defense of Anarchism* (Lecture)

Reading Response 1 due 9/9: Wolff, *In Defense of Anarchism*, Parts I-III

Thursday, 9/12: Wolff, *In Defense of Anarchism* (Lecture)

2: The Rule of the Wise and Few

Tuesday, 9/17: Plato, *Republic*, Books I and II (Lecture)

Reading Response 2 due 9/16: Plato, *Republic*, Books I and II

Thursday, 9/19: Plato, *Republic*, Books III and IV (Lecture)

Tuesday, 9/24: Plato, *Republic* Books III and IV, cont'd; Book V (Lecture)

Reading Response 3 due 9/23: Plato, *Republic*, Book V

Thursday, 9/26: Plato, *Republic* Book VII (through 517b5); Book VIII (Lecture)

Tuesday, 10/1: Plato, *Republic*, Books VIII-IX, conclusions (Lecture)

Reading Response 4 due 9/30: Plato, *Republic*, Book IX

3: Achieving Stability and Security

Thursday, 10/3: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapter I-VI, X (Lecture)

Tuesday, 10/8: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapters XIII-XVI (Lecture)

Reading Response 5 due 10/7: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapters XIII-XVI

Thursday, 10/10: Hobbes, *Leviathan* Chapters XVII-XIX, XXI (Lecture)

Tuesday, 10/15: Hobbes, *Leviathan* Chapters XXVI, XXIX-XXX (Lecture)

Reading Response 6 due 10/14: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, XXVI, XXIX-XXX

Thursday, 10/17: Hobbes, *Leviathan* Chapters XXVI-XXX (I will lecture on Chapters XXXI and XXXII, but do not expect you to have read them) (Lecture)

4: Achieving Independence

Tuesday, 10/22: Rousseau, *Social Contract* Book I, Chapters 1-7; Book II, Chapters 1-10
(Lecture)

Reading Response 7 due 10/21: Rousseau, *Social Contract* Book I, Chapters 1-7; Book II, Chapters 1-10

Thursday, 10/24: Rousseau, *Social Contract* Book II, Chapters 1-10, cont'd; Book IV, Chapters 1, 8 (Lecture)

5: Protecting Individual Rights

Tuesday, 10/29: Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (I-IV) Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (pp. 86-91); **Paper 1 due**

Reading Response 8 due 10/28: Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (I-IV)

Thursday, 10/31: Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (VIII, IX, XI) (Lecture)

6: Promoting Human Development

Tuesday, 11/5: Mill, *On Liberty*, I-II

Reading Response 9 due 11/4: Mill, *On Liberty*, I-II

Thursday, 11/7: Mill, *On Liberty*, III-V

7: Achieving a Fair Society

Tuesday, 11/12: Rawls, *Theory of Justice*, Chapter I.1-4 (to be supplied via Canvas) (Lecture)

Reading Response 10 due 11/11: Rawls, *Theory of Justice*, Chapter I.1-4.

Thursday, 11/14: Rawls, *Theory of Justice*, Chapter II.10-11, 13; 17 (Lecture)

8: A Libertarian Solution

Tuesday, 11/19: Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, Chapters 1-2 (Lecture)

Reading Response 11 due 11/18: Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, Chapters 1-2

Thursday, 11/21: Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, Chapters 3, 7 (Lecture)

9: Practicing Disobedience

Tuesday, 11/26: Scott, *Two Cheers for Anarchism*, 1-3; (Lecture) **Paper 2 due***

Reading Response 12 11/25: Scott, *Two Cheers for Anarchism*, 1-3

Thursday, 11/28: Thanksgiving

Tuesday, 12/3: Scott, *Two Cheers for Anarchism*, 4-6 (Lecture)

10: Thinking Anew

Thursday, 12/5: Douglass, *The Essential Frederick Douglass* (Selections #1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11) (Lecture)

Tuesday, 12/10: Douglass, *The Essential Frederick Douglass* (Selection 9); conclusions (Lecture)

Reading Response 13 due 12/9: Douglass, *The Essential Frederick Douglass* (Selection 9)