

POL 10a: Introduction to Political Theory

Spring 2014

Lown 002

M, W, Th 1:00 – 1:50 PM

Professor Jeffrey Lenowitz

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Olin-Sang 206

Office Hours: Thursdays, 2:00-4:30

Course Description:

This course is designed as an introduction to the field of political theory, which focuses on the concepts, principles, and values used to explain and evaluate political life. Rather than be comprehensive, this course seeks to give students a sense of what this particular approach to the study of politics has to offer. As such, we will concentrate on four central themes in both historical and contemporary political thought:

- 1) Why do we need political authority? What reasons do we have for wanting to live under the control of a centralized authority that often compels us to do things against our will?
- 2) Can political authority ever be legitimate, such that it rightfully demands our compliance? In other words, under what circumstances, if any, do we have a duty to obey our government?
- 3) Assuming that we need or cannot avoid some sort of political authority, who should it be? Who should rule us? Who or what should wield the coercive forces of government?
- 4) Finally, what makes a political authority and the society that it helps create just? How should we conceptualize justice as it applies to government? For the most part, this means focusing on distributive justice, meaning the normative criteria appropriate for evaluating how political authority distribute fundamental goods.

We will approach these and subsidiary questions from two prominent perspectives in political theory. The first, associated with the history of ideas, involves looking at how different political concepts and ideas evolved over time as authors throughout history reflected on similar questions and engaged in dialogue with one another. The second perspective is more analytical and philosophical, and involves joining these and more contemporary authors in carrying out a normative and interpretative analysis of the issues.

Objectives

The objectives of this course are threefold. First is for students to gain general competence in the several areas of political theory described above. This will provide a foundation for further work in political theory and political science more generally. The second objective

is for students to start deploying and evaluating the use of core political concepts with greater care and sophistication, and to start questioning their own political assumptions. By focusing on the foundations for political authority—the reasons governments have power, how they ought to behave, and what citizens owe to them—students will be able to critically evaluate their own political world and see whether their normative beliefs match up with their policy preferences and political actions. The third and final objective is for students to continue developing their critical thinking skills, which will enable them to better comprehend complex texts, evaluate claims, and formulate their own arguments.

Requirements and Grading:

Students are expected to complete all assigned readings in accordance with the class schedule and to be prepared to discuss them in depth. This course combines lectures with vigorous discussion, both in the main sessions and in the discussion sessions. None of this will be useful unless all material is read before class. Note also that these readings are not easy, and some might require rereading, so please give yourself ample time. At the minimum, you will be spending three hours of out of class effort for every one hour of instruction. In addition, attendance to both lecture and discussion sections is mandatory unless accompanied by a legitimate explanation given ahead of time.

- Participation, 15% (behavior and attendance in discussion and lecture)
- Writing Responses, 15% (Three, half page each, collected randomly)
- 2 short papers (5-7 pages), 40%
- Final exam, 30%

* Please note that if you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.

Academic Integrity:

All students are expected to be familiar with and to follow the University's policies on academic integrity (see <http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/sdc/ai>). Faculty may refer any suspected instances of alleged dishonesty to the Office of Student Development and Conduct. Instances of academic dishonesty may result in sanctions including but not limited to, failing grades being issued, educational programs, and other consequences.

Technology Policy:

Computers and tablets can be used in class for note taking purposes. However, you must seek my express permission first, and if anyone is caught using one of these devices for ANY purpose other than taking notes, your participation grade will be severely penalized. This means no checking Facebook, email, blogs, or using Wikipedia to get an answer for class discussion. Cell phones should be out of sight during the period of instruction; checking them will also result in a reduced participation grade.

Texts Available for Purchase:

Many readings for the course will mainly be drawn from the assigned texts below, all of which are available at the bookstore. For the texts originally written in English you are more than welcome to seek alternative editions, as well as finding them online. I chose the ones below because I believe them to contain the best supplementary materials and best version of the text. For translated texts use the editions I assign. Translations vary widely in quality and content, making it hard to use something different. Additional readings will be posted in Latte.

Aristotle. *Politics*. Translated by C.D.C. Reeve. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998.

Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated by David Ross. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. Edited by Richard Tuck. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Locke, John. *Two Treatises of Government*. Edited by Peter Laslett. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

** Nozick, Robert. *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. New York: Basic Books, 2013.

Plato. *Five Dialogues: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Meno, Phaedo*. Translated by G.M.A. Grube. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2002.

Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice*. Revised ed. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Wolff, Robert Paul. *In Defense of Anarchism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

Class Schedule:

Monday, January 13: Introduction; Moral Philosophy and Politics

Part 1: Why do we need government?

Wednesday, January 15: Intro and Political Naturalism

- Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Book 10, Chapter 9.
- Aristotle. *Politics*. Book 1, Chapters 1-7.

Thursday, January 17: Political Naturalism continued

- Aquinas. *Summa theologiae*. Ia 96 articulus 4
- Aquinas. *De regimine Principum*. Preface and Book 1, chapter 1.

Wednesday, January 22: Hobbes and the State of Nature

- Hobbes. *Leviathan*. Introduction, 1-2, 5-8

Thursday, January 23: Hobbes and the State of Nature

- Hobbes. *Leviathan*. 10, 11, 13-16

Monday, January 27: Hobbes and the State of Nature

- Hobbes. *Leviathan*. 17, 18, 20, 21, 29

Wednesday, January 29: Locke and the State of Nature

- Locke. *Two Treatises of Government*. Second Treatise, chapters 1-5.

Thursday, January 30: Locke and the State of Nature

- Locke. *Two Treatises of Government*. Second Treatise, chapters 7, 9, 12

Monday, February 3: Locke and the State of Nature

- Locke. *Two Treatises of Government*. Second Treatise, chapters 13, 15-16

Wednesday, February 5: Rousseau

- Rousseau. *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*. Preface to conclusion (you can ignore the notes).

Thursday, February 6: Locke, Hobbes, Rousseau in Conversation

Part 2: Can government be justified? Do we have a duty to obey?

Monday, February 10: The Problem

- Sophocles. *Antigone*

Wednesday, February 12: Plato, Socrates, and disobedience

- Plato. *Apology*.

Thursday, February 13: Plato, Socrates, and...obedience?

- Plato. *Crito*

Monday, February 24: Divine Command & Associative Accounts

- Holy Bible. *Romans* 13.1-6
- Robert Filmer. *Patriarcha*. Selections on Latte.
- Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Book 8, chapter 1-13.
- **First short paper due**

Wednesday, February 26: Transaction Accounts – Consent Theory

- Locke. *Two Treatises of Government*. Second Treatise, chapter 8

Thursday, February 27: Transaction Accounts – Consent Theory

- Simmons, A. John. "Denisons' and 'Aliens': Locke's problem of political consent." *Social Theory & Practice* 24: 2 (1998)
- Hume. "Of the Original Contract."

Monday, March 3: Transaction Accounts – Reciprocation

- Hart, H.L.A. "Are There Any Natural Rights."
- Rawls, John. "Legal Obligation and the Duty of Fair Play."

Wednesday, March 5: Transaction Accounts – Reciprocation

- Simmons, A. John. "The Principle of Fair Play." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 8: 4 (1979).
- Nozick, Robert. *Anarchy, State, & Utopia*. Selections.

Thursday, March 6: Utilitarianism

- Bentham. "A Fragment on Government."
- Hume. "Of the Origins of Government."

Monday, March 10: Philosophical Anarchism

- Wolff, Robert Paul. *In Defense of Anarchism*. 1-67

Part 3: Who should rule? Who or what should be the government?

Wednesday, March 12: Aristotle and the best practical regime

- Aristotle. *Politics*, Book IV.

Thursday, March 13: Aristotle and the ideal regime

- Aristotle. *Politics*, Book VI

Monday, March 17: Plato on knowledge and democracy

- Plato. *The Republic*. Selections on Latte.

Wednesday, March 19: Democracy Defended

- Robert A. Dahl. *Democracy and Its Critics*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989. "Introduction," Chapters 6 and 8.

Thursday, March 20: Representative Democracy

- Mill. *Considerations on Representative Government*. Chapter 3 and 6
- Madison. *Federalist 10*

Monday, March 24: Deliberative Democracy

- Josh Cohen. "Deliberation & Democratic Legitimacy." In *Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics*. Edited by James Bohman and William Rehg. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997.
- Bruce Ackerman and James Fishkin. *Deliberation Day*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004. Selection posted on latte.

Wednesday, March 26: Deliberative Democracy

- Iris Marion Young. *Inclusion and Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. Chapter 1
- Cass Sunstein. "The Law of Group Polarization." *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 10:2

Thursday, March 27: Minimalist Democracy

- Joseph Schumpeter. *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1950.

Monday, March 31: Epistemic Democracy

- Josiah Ober. "Epistemic Democracy in Classical Athens: How Diversity Can Foster Innovation."
- Scott E. Page. *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008. Chapter 8.

Part 4: What makes a government just? How should we distribute?

Wednesday, April 2: Aristotle and Merit

- Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Book V.
- Aristotle. *Politics*. Book 3.9

Wednesday, April 3: Income inequality

- "Working for the Few: Political Capture and Economic Inequality." 178 Oxfam Briefing Paper. 20 January 2014. Posted on Latte.
- United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Inequality Matters: Report of the World Social Situation 2013*. ST/ESA/345. (New York: United Nations, 2013). Posted on Latte.

Monday, April 7: Utilitarian Justice

- Mill. *Utilitarianism*. Chapters 1, 2, 5

Wednesday, April 9: Libertarian Justice

- Nozick. *Anarchy, State, & Utopia*. Chapter 7, part 1.

Thursday, April 10: Rawls – Method

- John Rawls. *A Theory of Justice*. Second Edition. §1-4, 7-11, 22

Monday, April 14: Rawls – Main Argument

- John Rawls. *A Theory of Justice*. Second Edition. §12-17, 20-21, 24, 26, 29-30

Wednesday, April 23: Rawls – 1st Principle

- John Rawls. "The Basic Liberties and their Priority." §1-5, 7-11.

Thursday, April 24: Rawls – 2nd Principle

- John Rawls. *A Theory of Justice*. §31, 67, 87.
- John Rawls. *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*. Figure 1 and §34-40.

Monday, April 28: Class Conclusion

- **Second Paper due**

Monday, May 5: **Final Exam**