

**INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL THEORY:
ORDER, SCIENCE, AND THE QUESTION OF HUMAN PERFECTIBILITY**

Instructor: Miss Sarah Beth Vosburg
Email: svosbu2@tigers.lsu.edu
Office: 216 Stubbs Hall
Office Hours: 9-10:30am, Wednesday and Friday, and by appointment

COURSE OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to introduce undergraduate students to political theory, the practice of asking fundamental questions about human nature and political society. The questions and themes that guide political theory, as Dante Germino sums them, include the following: “What is man? What kind of society is required for the full development of his humanity? What are the principles of right order for individuals and society?” (*Beyond Ideology*, p. 38). Our introduction to political theory takes the form of an introduction to the history of the search for order. While the activity of political theory finds uncertain answers at best, the pursuit and the insights it yields are valuable. For the inquiry orients us in reality as it helps us to answer the question, “what does it mean to live well as human beings?”

The answers one gives to the fundamental questions of political theory, in turn, shape one’s conclusions about the nature and limits of politics, law, science, and the possibility of human perfectibility, or progress. In short, contemporary questions in politics return us to the fundamental questions of political theory.

ADDITIONAL EDUCATION OBJECTIVES

This course is a general education elective; and, as such, it is designed to contribute to your understanding of self and of culture. In this light, the course is intended to acquaint you with some of the classic narratives and philosophies of western civilization, so as to give you an understanding of other cultures and other times; to acquaint you with some of the moral and ethical issues of politics; and to encourage critical and analytical thinking, as well as a precise and graceful use of language. As a social science general education elective this course is designed to enhance your understanding of the informing factors of global interdependence, including economic forces, political dynamics, and cultural and linguistic difference.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Quizzes = 10%
Exam I = 25%
Exam II = 30%
Final Exam = 35%

Your course grade is based on quiz grades (10%), two semester exams, and a final exam (25% + 30% + 35%). You will take 12 quizzes, and I will drop your lowest two quiz grades. The quizzes will typically be multiple-choice or require short answers. Note well: the quizzes will not be announced in advance, and there will be no make up quizzes. You will be provided with review questions in advance of the exams, which will mainly be essay in nature and will also contain a short section of multiple-choice questions. You will need a Blue Book and a Scantron for each exam (available at the LSU bookstore). You are encouraged to organize your own group study, as it facilitates your understanding of the material and challenges you to think critically about the major questions and arguments of each text. The final exam for this course will be given 5:30-7:30pm, Monday, December 3, 2012.

Grading Scale: 90-100% = A; 80-89.9% = B; 70-79.9 = C; 60-69.9 = D; <60% = F

Required Texts

N.B. Required texts for this course include books to be purchased as well as readings provided on Moodle as PDF files or Internet links.

**Students should purchase the books marked with a single asterisk (available at the LSU bookstore and through online retailers).*

***Students should print the selections marked below with a double asterisk from Moodle.*

- Dante Germino, *Beyond Ideology***
- Plato, *Apology of Socrates*** and *Crito***
- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics** (Prentice Hall 1962) [ISBN 0023895306]
- St. Thomas Aquinas, *On Law, Morality, and Politics** (Hackett 2003) [ISBN 0872206637]
- Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan** (Hackett 1994) [ISBN 0872201775]
- John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government** (Hackett 1980) [ISBN 0915144867]
- *The Federalist*, nos. 1, 9, 10, 51, 55**
- John Adams, *The Revolutionary Writings of John Adams*, ed. C. Bradley Thompson** and *The Political Writings of John Adams*, ed. George Peek, Jr.**
- Friedrich Nietzsche, “The Madman,” in *The Gay Science***
- Eric Voegelin, “The Murder of God,” in *Science, Politics, and Gnosticism***
- Ronald Bailey, “The Case for Enhancing People,” *The New Atlantis*, no. 32, Summer 2011**
- Leon Kass, “Ageless Bodies, Happy Souls: Biotechnology and the Pursuit of Perfection,” *The New Atlantis*, no. 1, Spring 2003**
- Nick Bostrum, “In Defense of Posthuman Dignity,” *Bioethics*, vol. 19, no. 3, 2005**
- Peter Augustine Lawler, “Compassionate Conservatism and Biotechnology,” in *Stuck with Virtue***
- C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man** (HarperOne 2001) [ISBN 0060652942]

Reading, Attendance, and Academic Integrity

Your success in this class depends upon your consistent attendance and participation. Before each class period, you should read the assigned materials and thoughtfully consider their significance for our study. Our task is to read sympathetically in order to read critically – that is, to understand what each theorist is asking and arguing, and then to thoughtfully evaluate his work. Of course, in order to facilitate analysis and ease of reference, you should *bring your copy*

of the text to class. At the end of each class period, I will announce the readings for the next class period.

Etiquette and Electronics in Class

Classroom etiquette acknowledges that class time is set apart for a special purpose and requires students to respect others in word and in deed. Make sure you are ready to begin when our class starts and wait until it is over to pack your notes and belongings. Be attentive to what others say, and make an effort to contribute to class discussions. Know that, unless there is an emergency, leaving before class is over is unacceptable. **The use of laptops, tablets, and smart phones is *not* allowed in class**, except for official note-takers. Using pen and paper instead not only limits the distractions your laptop presents to you and your neighbor; it also contributes to better understanding and more effective learning overall. Audio recorders are allowed, but strictly for your personal use.

Moodle

Login to Moodle through your myLSU account to access readings (posted as PDF files or Internet links) and your grades.

INTRODUCTION: POLITICAL THEORY AND OUR BRAVE NEW WORLD

"All the giants in the history of political theory appear to have held strong views regarding the burning public issues of their day. Indeed, their strong interest in these issues may be said to have brought them to reflect on politics in the first place. In the course of such reflection, however, they were led to transcend the arena of partisan combat...in order to consider the general principles of right order in the psyche and in society."

– Dante Germino

Dante Germino, *Beyond Ideology***

PART I: THEOCENTRIC MAPS OF REALITY: MAN AND THE MORAL COMMUNITY IN CLASSICAL AND CHRISTIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT

"No, gentlemen, the difficult thing is not to escape death, I think, but to escape wickedness—that is much more difficult, for that runs faster than death."
– Plato

"Surely, knowing about excellence or virtue is not enough: we must try to possess it and use it, or find some other way in which we may become good."
– Aristotle

"Hence, since everything that is subject to Divine Providence is regulated and measured by the Eternal Law...it is evident that everything participates in the Eternal Law, inasmuch as, by the imprinting of the Eternal Law, it has an inclination to its own proper acts and ends."
– St. Thomas Aquinas

Plato, *Apology of Socrates and Crito***

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics**

St. Thomas Aquinas, *De Regno*** and *On Law, Morality, and Politics**

**PART II: ANTHROPOCENTRIC MAPS OF REALITY:
MAN AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN HOBBS AND LOCKE**

“For whatsoever is the object of any man’s appetite or desire that is it which he for his part calleth *good*; and the object of his hate and aversion, *evil*; and of his contempt, *vile* and *inconsiderable*.”
- Thomas Hobbes

“And ‘tis not without reason, that he [man] seeks out, and is willing to joyn in Society with others who are already united, or have a mind to unite for the mutual *Preservation* of their Lives, Liberties, and Estates, which I call by the general Name, *Property*.”
- John Locke

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan**

John Locke, *Second Treatise of Civil Government**

**PART III: THE NEW SCIENCE OF POLITICS AND THE TRUE MAP OF MAN
IN THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE**

“...[I]t is the duty of all men to deny themselves and obey the laws of nature and the laws of God. However clear the duty, we know it will not be performed; and, therefore, it is our duty to enter into associations and compel one another to do some of it.”
- John Adams

“Justice is the end of government. It is the end of civil society. It ever has been, and ever will be, pursued, until it be obtained, or until liberty be lost in the pursuit.”
- James Madison

Alexander Hamilton and James Madison, *The Federalist*, nos. 1, 9, 10, 51, 55**

John Adams, selections from *The Revolutionary Writings of John Adams* (ed. Thompson) and *The Political Writings of John Adams* (ed. Peek, Jr.)**

PART IV: AFTER MODERNITY: THE QUEST FOR ORDER CONTINUES

“God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him.”
- Friedrich Nietzsche

“Historically, the murder of God is not followed by the superman, but by the murder of man...”
- Eric Voegelin

Nietzsche, “The Madman,” in *The Gay Science***

Voegelin, “The Murder of God,” in *Science, Politics, and Gnosticism***

PART V: POLITICAL THEORY AND CONTEMPORARY POLITICS

“Either we are rational spirit obliged for ever to obey the absolutes of the *Tao*, or else we are mere nature to be kneaded and cut into new shapes for the pleasures of the masters who must, by hypothesis, have no motive but their own ‘natural’ impulses. Only the *Tao* provides a common human law of action which can over-arch rulers and ruled alike. A dogmatic belief in objective value is necessary to the very idea of a rule which is not tyranny or an obedience which is not slavery.”
- C.S. Lewis

Ronald Bailey, “The Case for Enhancing People,” *The New Atlantis*, no. 32, Summer 2011**

Leon Kass, “Ageless Bodies, Happy Souls: Biotechnology and the Pursuit of Perfection,” *The New Atlantis*, no. 1, Spring 2003**

Nick Bostrum, “In Defense of Posthuman Dignity,” *Bioethics*, vol. 19, no. 3, 2005**

Peter Augustine Lawler, “Compassionate Conservatism and Biotechnology,” in *Stuck with Virtue***

C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man**