

# INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL THEORY

Political Science 2060  
Louisiana State University

Spring 2016  
MWF 9:30-10:20am  
Stubbs 116

“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

## INTRODUCTION

### Introduction to the course

Welcome!

### What is political theory?

Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (1963)

## QUESTIONS ABOUT HAPPINESS

### Education and Freedom

Frederick Douglass, “Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass” (1845)  
C.S. Lewis, “Learning in War-Time” (1939)  
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I.1-3 (350BC)

### Happiness

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I (350BC)  
C.S. Lewis, “First and Second Things” (1942)

### Fulfillment

N.R. Kleinfield, “The Lonely Death of George Bell” (2015)  
Brendan O’Neill, “David Bowie’s dignified death...” (2015)  
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book II (350BC)

## QUESTIONS ABOUT COMMUNITY

### Stories of Community

Augustine, *City of God* (426)  
Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651)

## **Law and the Human Person**

Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (1265-1274)  
Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651)  
Wendell Berry, "Fidelity" (1993)

## **Interdependence**

Jane Addams, "Filial Relations" (1902)  
Pope Francis, *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* (2015)

## **Friendship**

Wright Thompson, "Four Nights at Elaine's: The Last Will and Testament of a Great Saloon" (2011)  
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VIII (350BC)  
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book IX (350BC)

## **Language**

George Orwell, "Politics and the English Language" (1946)

## **QUESTIONS ABOUT JUSTICE**

### **Justice**

Plato, *Euthyphro* (c. 395BC, pp. 41-61)  
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book V (350BC)

### **Order**

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651)

### **Revolution**

Thomas Jefferson, *Declaration of Independence*  
Malcolm X, "The Ballot or the Bullet" (1963)

### **Nonviolent Resistance**

Martin Luther King, Jr., "Pilgrimage to Nonviolence" (1960)  
Martin Luther King, Jr., "Showdown for Nonviolence" (April 16, 1968)  
Freedom songs

### **Virtue**

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VII  
Hannah Arendt, "Action," *The Human Condition* (1958, pp. 175-199)

## Prophetic Voice

*Amos* (c. 750BC)

Plato, *Apology of Socrates* (c. 399BC)

## CONCLUSIONS

Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail" (1963)

Martin Luther King, Jr., "I Have a Dream" (1963)

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## COURSE OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

The objective of this course is to introduce undergraduate students to political theory, the practice of asking fundamental questions about human nature and political society. The questions and themes essential to political theory include questions about human happiness, community, and justice. In this course, we will survey some of the most significant contributors to political thought in the West. Our authors include two ancient Greek philosophers, a Hebrew prophet, two black American pastors and political leaders, an American founder, an American civic theorist and activist, a woman with a great love for politics and thinking, a current pope, an agrarian poet, an emancipated slave and activist, an early church father, a great sports writer, an Oxford don and storyteller, and one of the most widely read English-language novelists of all time. As we learn to think about politics, we are learning to ask and reflect on the question, "what does it mean to live well as human beings?" Enjoy.

**Additional Objectives:** This course is an approved general education credit for the social sciences; 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

|                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Reflection journal entries = 40% | Four 1-page reflections (10 pts each)  |
| Midterm Exam = 15%               | In-class, Friday, March 11   |
| Unannounced quizzes = 25%        | Five quizzes based on readings and lecture notes (5 pts each). Entirely unannounced. |
| Final Exam = 20%                 | 3-5pm, Wednesday, May 4, in Stubbs 116   |

## Grading Scale

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 = <60

LSU has a plus/minus grading scale for final course grades. Your course grade is based on five 1-page journal entries (40%), a midterm exam (15%), five pop quizzes (25%), and a final exam (20%). I will provide further instruction on the journal entries and expectations for writing. For each pop quiz, you will need a narrow Scantron and a pencil; *be prepared*. For the midterm and final exam, you will need a narrow Scantron and a Blue Book. Your final exam will be in Stubbs 116, **3-5pm, Wednesday, May 4, 2016**. All late material will be penalized. I reserve the right to administer unannounced bonus quizzes.

#### **PRESENCE, READING, AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Your success in this class depends upon your consistent presence, participation, and integrity. College is about challenging yourself to learn, to think about what matters and about who you want to be. Those are difficult tasks, but tasks more than worth the effort. University life requires us to prepare, to think, and to be present. Presence is about much more than simply showing up to class. It is about sharing in the task of understanding and analysis. That said, showing up to class is an important prerequisite for success. Your classmates, and you, depend on your presence for success in university life.

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 author is asking and arguing, and then to thoughtfully evaluate his work. Of course, 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.

In university, all you have is your integrity. All forms of cheating, including plagiarism, harm both the person who commits the offense and the class as a whole. I expect high integrity—there is no other way to accomplish what we are here to do. Those who fail this standard should expect to face themselves, as well as the LSU Office of Student Advocacy & Accountability. Familiarize yourself with the LSU Student Code of Conduct for an outline guidelines and consequences.

#### **CONDUCT 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 when approved for official note-takers. Using pen and paper instead limits the distractions your laptop presents to you and your neighbor. Studies show using pen and paper 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 and other course materials (posted as PDF files or Internet links) as well as your grades.

#### **RESOURCES**

Office hours. These are for you. Come during regularly scheduled hours, or we can arrange another time.

Group study. I encourage you to organize your own group study, as it facilitates your understanding of the material and challenges you to think about the major questions and arguments of the texts.

Studio 151. For tutoring in writing, schedule: <https://sites01.lsu.edu/wp/cxc/studio151/>

## REQUIRED TEXTS

\* *Students should purchase the following anthology (available at the LSU bookstore and through online retailer such as Amazon, AbeBooks, etc.).*

\*\* *Students should print all other selections on syllabus from Moodle.*

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, transl. Martin Ostwald (Prentice Hall 1962)  
[ISBN 0023895306] \*

Plato and Aristophanes, *Four Texts on Socrates*, transl. Thomas G. West (Cornell University Press, 1998) [ISBN 978-0801485749] \*