

University of Montana
Department of Political Science

PSCI 250E
Spring 2020
MWF 9-9:50 am

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Introduction to Political Theory

Course Description:

Introduction to Political Theory (PSCI 250E) familiarizes students with the basic concepts and issues that preoccupy the political theorist, including the origins of government and society, the nature of justice, and the meaning of political legitimacy. We will begin by considering the tension between politics and philosophy and continue with an examination of the major political thinkers from Plato to Marx, who have influenced the way we think about human nature, justice, the good life, government, freedom, citizenship, etc. We will conclude with the "end of political theory" debate.

At the outset, let us consider some basic questions about the relationship between political philosophy and ideology. First, is there a political theory that is not an ideology, or a theorist that is not an ideologue? If ideology is not the same as political philosophy or as good (as Plato suggests), then how does one avoid being labeled an ideologue? Lastly, what does it mean to you when someone says: "today it is no longer possible to construct a genuine political philosophy"?

Course Objectives: upon successfully completing the course work, the student should be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the political and ethical values associated with classical and modern thinkers, including Plato, Aristotle, Locke, Burke and Marx.
2. Identify major themes and ideas associated with the ideologies of utopianism, classical and reform liberalism, utilitarianism, conservatism, feminism, Marxism, as well as contemporary variations such as neo-Marxism.
3. Provide an interpretative, critical essay on a dystopian novel, examining how the ethical ideals of Plato are embraced, perverted and/or negated. (See attached Paper Guideline.)

Texts:

R. Grey (editor) **POLITICAL THEORY & THE HUMAN PREDICAMENT: AN INTRODUCTION TO MAJOR POLITICAL THINKERS**, San Diego: Cognella Publishing, 2018, 2nd edition; can be purchased **on-line:** <https://titles.cognella.com/political-theory-and-the-human-predicament-9781516529766>

B.F. Skinner, **WALDEN TWO**

Grading:

The work of the course consists of reading all assignments, participating by raising questions and attending lectures —students who ask questions usually have good lecture notes, completing the scheduled **two-part midterm** (30% of course grade), and the **final** (35% of course grade.) In addition, each student must complete on time **an analytical essay** of Skinner, *Walden Two* (35% of course grade.)

* Please see attached for instructions on the *Walden Two* paper. Late papers will receive a grade reduction for every day it's late.

Extra Credit Assessment Essay Exam (3 pts each exam):

University of Montana & Political Science Department is asking you to take an essay exam as part of the University's require Assessment of Student Learning in the Ethics Perspective of General Education.

Your score on the exam will **NOT** affect in any way your course grade or academic standing in the Department or at the University. You will receive *two extra points* for taking the first assessment exam, and two *extra credit points* or taking the second assessment exam during the last week of classes.

Our Social Contract: "Life is short, but there is always time for courtesy," Ralph Waldo Emerson

Emerson believed, as I do, that manners matter a great deal in life. Insofar as our course is concerned, I expect reciprocal courtesy to exist between us. This will be our 'social contract.' For my part, I will take all of my teaching responsibilities with the utmost seriousness. In return, you need to read all of the material with care, to actively listen, to raise questions, and to reflect on what you have learned. In addition, I expect you to come to class on time, to stay for the entire lecture, and to refrain from any behavior that might distract me or the students around you. Please do not talk with your neighbors or read newspapers during the lecture. Please turn off your cell phones. It is imperative that we create an atmosphere conducive to learning. As J.S. Mill reminds us, "what we achieve depends less on the amount of time we possess, that on the use we make of our time."

Academic Misconduct

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or disciplinary sanction by the University of Montana. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code, which is available for review online at: <http://life.umt.edu/VPSA/name/StudentConductCode>.

Accessibility and Students with Disabilities

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction by supporting collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students. If you have a disability that requires accommodation, please present the instructor with a letter from Disability Services for Students (DDS), Lommasson Center 154 (243-2243), indicating the existence of a disability and suggested accommodations.

The instructor has attempted to make all course materials accessible. If you find course material that has barriers to accessibility, please notify the instructor as soon as possible so the oversight can be corrected as quickly as possible.

Tentative Course Schedule:

- 1/13 Introduction to the Course & Political Theory
Read: *Political Theory & the Human Predicament*: Introduction & Chapter 1, Plato, *The Apology* (all)
- 1/15 Plato's Socrates: Who is the just individual?
Read: Chapter 2: Plato, *The Republic*, Book I
- 1/17 Assessment Exam (extra credit)
- * * * * *Monday January 20th, Martin Luther King Day, No Class* * * * *
- 1/22 Plato's Socrates: Who is the just individual?
Read: Chapter 2: Plato, *The Republic*, Book II

- 1/24- Plato's Organic Theory of the State
1/27 Read: Chapter 2: Plato, *The Republic*, Books II; IV
- 1/27- Utopianism: Plato's Ideal State & Perfect Justice: Community of Wives
1/31 Children, and Property
Read: Chapter 2: Plato, *The Republic*, Book III, V, VII
Recommend: Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*
- 2/3- Possibility of the Ideal State: the Ship & Cave Allegories
2/5 Read: Chapter 2, Plato, *The Republic*, Book VI & VII
- 2/7- Decline of the Ideal State
2/10 Read: Chapter 2, Plato, *The Republic*, Book VIII
- 2/10- Plato v. Aristotle
2/12 Read: Chapter 3: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book II (pp. 129-136)
- 2/14 Review & Discussion of Plato
- * * * * * *Monday February 17th, President's Day Holiday. . .No Class* * * * * *
- * * * * * *Wednesday, February 19th Midterm Part I: Plato's Republic* * * * * *
- 2/21 Aristotle: Politics As Science
Read: Chapter 3: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book II (pp. 129-136)
- 2/24 Aristotle's Biological Analysis: Family, Village, Polis
Read: Chapter 3: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book I (pp. 119-129); Book III (pp. 136-150)
- 2/26- Aristotle's Classification of Constitutions & the Best Practical State
2/28 Read: Chapter 3: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book IV (pp. 150-151); Book II (pp. 151-154); Book IV (pp. 155-161)
- 3/2- Aristotle on Revolution
3/4 Read: Chapter 3: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book V (pp. 161-170))
- 3/6 Review & Discuss Aristotle
- * * * * * *Monday March 9th Midterm Part II: Aristotle's Politics* * * * * *
- ++*Start Reading Skinner, Walden II*
- 3/11 Machiavelli: Political Realist or Idealist?
Read: Chapter 4: Machiavelli, *The Prince*
- 3/13 Essay Discussion of *Walden Two* essay
- * * * * * *March 16th to 22nd* * * * * * *Spring Break* * * * * *
- 3/23- Hobbes v. Locke: the State of Nature & Social Contract Theory

- 3/25 Read: Chapter 5: Hobbes, *Leviathan*; Chapter 6: Locke, *Two Treatises on Government* (pp. 209-240; pp. 255-283)
- 3/27 Classical Liberalism: Locke & Revolution
Read: Chapter 6: Locke, *Two Treatises*, (pp. 283-293)
- *** *Walden Two Analytical Essay due Friday, April 27th* *** *See last page of syllabus* *****
- 3/30 Locke & Property Rights (review: pp. 261-267)
Read: Chapter 6: Locke, *Two Treatises*
- 4/1 Classical Liberalism: Hume, Smith & "the Automatic Social Mechanism" of the Free Market
Read: Chapter 7: Hume & Smith; Chapter 8
- 4/3 Utilitarianism: Bentham, James Mill & John Stuart Mill
Read: Chapter 11: Bentham, *Principles of Morals*
- 4/6 John Stuart Mill & Reform Liberalism
Read: Chapter 12 J.S. Mill, *On Liberty*
- 4/8-
4/10 Edmund Burke & the Critique of Political Idealism
Read: Chapter 9: Burke, *Reflections*
- 4/13 Anti-Feminist & Feminist Political Theory: Mary Wollstonecraft & J.S. Mill
Read: Chapter 3: Aristotle, *History of Animals*, Book IX (p. 171); Chapter 10: Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men & A Vindication of the Rights of Women*; Recommend: J.S. Mill, *The Subjection of Women*
- 4/15-
4/17 Marx's Critique of Liberalism & Conservatism
Read: Chapter 13: Marx, *Economic & Philosophical Manuscript*
- 4/20 Marx & the "Earthquake Theory" of Revolution
Read: Chapter 13: Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*
- 4/20-
4/24 Neo-Marxism: the Orthodox School vs. Revisionists
Recommend: Bernstein's *Evolutionary Socialism* (1899); Karl Kautsky, *The Class Struggle* (1899); Rosa Luxemburg, selections from *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks* (1970); Lenin's *Imperialism* (1917)
- 4/27 End of Political Theory?
Recommend: Bell, *The End of Ideology* (1962) & Fukuyama, *End of History* (1992)
- 4/29 Assessment Essay Exam II (extra credit)
- 5/1 Review for Comprehensive Final
Read: Lecture notes & review selected readings.

***** *Final is Thursday May 7th at 10:10 am-12:10pm in LA11* *****

Guidelines for Essay

"Walden Two: Politics & Society in the Year 2020?"

(35% of course grade)

I. Purpose

A. Objective: Provide an **analytical essay** comparing and contrasting the ideas/themes found in *Walden Two* with the political theories we have covered in the course. An interpretive essay is not a book review or an editorial. A critical essay supports its analysis with direct references to the novel, showing the extent Skinner borrows, satirizes, and/or negates the ideas of Plato.

II. Content

A. Description & Thesis (10% of essay value)

We do not want more than a cursory attempt at describing the content of Skinner's *Walden Two*. Assume that the reader is familiar with the plot of the book. (No more than one paragraph.)

III. Analysis (70% of essay value)

This part of the paper should constitute the major portion of your work. Look for the ideas that Skinner draws upon in terms of Plato's utopia. What ideals of Plato does Skinner borrow? And what ideas/ideals of Plato does Skinner's fundamentally rejecting reject (e.g. regarding justice etc.)? Can you, for instance, identify radical, conservative, and/or liberal ideas in his model community?

Or you *might* compare & contrast Skinner's underlying assumptions about human nature, "male" & "female" natures with Plato's. Is there a class, caste, or elites in this society? What is the role of their political leaders (what legitimizes their authority). Does this utopia dispense with state coercive power? Explain. What is the character of the economic system and the nature of social relationships in Skinner's utopia? What is the value system of the "Walden Two" society? Consider, for instance, the political socialization process of the inhabitants: what they are taught, if anything, regarding gender roles, history, community etc.

IV. Conclusion: (20% essay value)

Finally, does Skinner's vision of an ideal state offer us a unique contribution to political philosophy or is it merely a hybrid of political theories we have studied in class? Explain

V. Format

a. Quotations

All quotations or paraphrasing in your work from any material must be enclosed in quotation marks and properly cited as to their origin. See a writing manual for consistent format. **Plagiarism**: *Representing another person's words, ideas, data, or materials as one's own* is a violation of the university code of conduct and will result in a grade of F on the paper, please see:

<http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/documents/StudentConductCode>

c. Bibliography

You should include a complete bibliography for all outside books used for this paper.

d. Editing:

Be sure to edit and proof your final copy! Points will be deducted for grammatical and spelling errors.

Please attach grading sheet (next page)

Please Attach To Your Paper
PSC250E: Introduction to Political Theory
Spring 2020

Description & Thesis – 10% (3.5 points) _____

- Clear and coherent thesis statement
- Relevant to materials presented in lectures and throughout course materials

Analysis – 55% (20 points) _____

- Strong supporting evidence of the thesis
- Relevant information is clearly presented
- Fully developed arguments
- Credit is given to outside sources, where appropriate

Conclusion - 30% (7.5 points) _____

- Conclusion: a clear restatement of the answer to the central question

Format, Mechanics & Bibliography - 5% (4 pts) _____

- Format: 5-6 typed, double-spaced pages, 10-12 point font
- Grammar: Neatness, spelling, grammar, punctuation, and organization
- Bibliography: Follows Chicago/Turabian citation style guidelines

TOTAL: (35 points) _____

Additional Comments:
