

Political Theory 4054: Modern Political Thought

Florida Atlantic University, Spring 2020

Course Credits: 3.000

Prerequisites/Corequisites: None

TR 3:30-4:50PM, College of Business Boca 109

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Office: Social Science 384C

Office Hours: Tues. & Thurs.
2:00-3:00PM, or by appt.

Course Description

Whereas ancient political philosophers sought to discover the precepts and practices that would allow the *polis* or political community to flourish as an exemplar of the good or morally excellent life, modern political thought is marked by a rejection of the intersection between morality and politics. Beginning with Niccolò Machiavelli in the 15th century, political philosophy turned away from the pursuit of justice and towards the goal of establishing order. This shift brought with it new, more scientific methods of study and a focus on man as he is and not as he ought to be, as seen in the work of thinkers like Thomas Hobbes and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. By breaking away from the ancients (albeit not entirely), early modern political theorists and their successors—such as Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill—raised many important and enduring questions about the purpose of government, its proper scope, and human nature. The goal of this course is to think with the moderns about these questions. We will also venture into contemporary political thought, which raises its own set of concerns about truth, power, and technology in the modern age. Our ultimate goal is to gain a sympathetic understanding of modern political thought while also beginning to contemplate the good and the bad of the departure from ancient political thought.

Objectives

- 1) Become familiar with major questions, themes, and approaches in modern political thought.
- 2) Learn to read and interpret political theory texts.
- 3) Improve ability to construct persuasive arguments, both verbal and written.
- 4) Practice a more contemplative and self-aware form of citizenship, and consider its effects on political life and personal fulfillment.

Classroom Expectations

This class brings to life the art of Socratic conversation. For this method of teaching to work, students must show up having carefully read the material assigned for that day. Throughout the session, I will ask questions to help you all uncover the meaning of the text for yourselves. This questioning can take many forms. I may ask you to turn to a specific passage, read it aloud, and then explain what you think the author means. I may ask a more open-ended question (e.g., “What does the author say about x?”) and expect you to provide the textual evidence. I may break you up into small groups to discuss whether or not the argument is persuasive.

Though I may stop at points to clarify some fundamental concepts with the help of a few Powerpoint slides, a video clip, etc., the vast majority of our class time will be spent working

through the material *together*. While I generally do not “call” on students, I expect (and make every effort to invite) broad participation. It should be evident from this description that if no one has done the readings, or only a few students have done the readings, then the class will not go very far. Such is the nature of Socratic inquiry: it depends heavily on student engagement. The purpose of this is to help you become a better reader and thinker. You and your classmates will get out of the class what you put in. Aim to be a good classroom citizen.

Preparing for Class

- As you will discover, political theory readings tend to be dense, requiring focused attention. There are no “abstracts” at the top, nor is it possible to skim these readings and retain much understanding. Rather, the readings are similar to what you would expect from a philosophy course: a series of arguments you must closely follow. This means you should set aside ample time *before* class to read the material listed on the syllabus for that day, as you will likely find that you need to *re-read* parts of the text.
- You should also be an active reader. As you read, write a few words summarizing each paragraph in the margins, underline/highlight any phrases or passages that stand out to you, look up the definitions of unfamiliar words, write down any questions or reactions you have in response to the arguments the author is making, etc. **If you do not like reading, you should reconsider taking this course. You cannot pass without doing the readings.**

Participating in Class

- For a Socratic discussion to work, everyone must be present—not just physically, but psychologically. You cannot be present if you are checking email, chatting online, watching ESPN, etc. Accordingly, use of electronic devices is strongly discouraged during class time. **If you choose to use an electronic device, be prepared for me to call on you.**
- Many find the texts assigned in this course controversial; among other ideas, you will encounter criticism of democracy, promotion of communism, and justification of violence. Each class session, I will push you to think “sympathetically” about the text by taking on the voice of the author in defense of the arguments. This means at times I will appear to adopt some unsavory positions. If you are uncomfortable with teachers who play “devil’s advocate,” or don’t like it when teachers sometimes withhold their own opinions in an effort to get you to think for yourself, then you probably will not enjoy this class.
- I expect you to treat your peers and me with respect. We may disagree, but we will do so cordially. That means being an attentive listener, raising your hand and waiting to be called on, and critiquing the argument rather than the person who made it.

After Class

- With many students and limited class time, not every question will be satisfactorily addressed for every student. If you find yourself confused about anything, first try re-reading the text. If you are still lost, please don’t hesitate to visit me during office hours or send me an email.

Required Texts

The following books are available for purchase at the FAU Bookstore. **I highly recommend that you purchase paper copies of these exact editions.** Throughout each class session, you will be asked to turn to specific pages in the book. If you do not have the same edition or cannot easily

turn to a given page, you will be lost and unable to contribute as effectively. Keep in mind that copies of each book will be available on 24-hour reserve at the FAU library. **Also, please be aware that if you decide to read texts from an electronic device, you should be prepared for me to call on you.**

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. 2nd ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1977. ISBN: 9780679752554.

Hobbes, Thomas. *The Leviathan*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996. ISBN: 9780521567978.

Mill, John Stuart. *On Liberty*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1978. ISBN: 9780915144433.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *The First and Second Discourses*. Trans. Roger D. and Judith R. Masters. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1969. ISBN: 9780312694401.

Smith, Adam. *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1976. ISBN: 9780865970120.

Course Requirements

Participation:	20%	
Quizzes:	20%	
Discussion Leadership:	10%	
Term paper:	50%	(Paper Proposals: 5%; Peer Drafts & Edits: 10%; Paper #1: 15%; Paper #2: 20%)

Participation (20%)

Your participation grade will be comprised of two, equally weighted components: attendance and participation in class discussions/activities.

- Attendance: I will take attendance each time we meet. Everyone is permitted *one unexcused absence* and *two excused absences*. **Excused absences require make up work, which is due within a week of the absence.** For an absence to be excused, you must clear it with me in advance or, in cases of illness or emergency, as soon as possible. The following generally count as *unexcused* absences: slept through alarm; need to study/work; need to finish an assignment; leaving early/arriving back late from vacation; bad hangover.

If you think you will miss more than three classes due to University-approved activities, please see me at the start of the semester. Please note I will abide by *FAU's official attendance policy*: "Students are expected to attend all of their scheduled University classes and to satisfy all academic objectives as outlined by the instructor. The effect of absences upon grades is determined by the instructor, and the University reserves the right to deal at any time with individual cases of non-attendance. Students are responsible for arranging to make up work missed because of legitimate class absence, such as illness, family emergencies, military obligation, court-imposed legal obligations or participation in University-approved activities. Examples of University-approved reasons for absences include participating on an athletic or scholastic team, musical and theatrical performances and debate activities. It is the student's responsibility to give the instructor notice prior to any anticipated absences and within a reasonable amount of time after an unanticipated absence, ordinarily by the next scheduled class meeting. Instructors must allow each student who is absent for a University-approved reason the opportunity to make up work missed without any reduction in the student's final course grade as a direct result of such absence."

- **Participation:** Attendance makes up only half of your overall participation grade; the other half is based on your participation in class discussions/activities. This means **you cannot earn above a 50% for your participation grade if you never speak in class, even if you have perfect attendance.** Students who struggle with classroom participation should therefore schedule a meeting with me during the first week of class to discuss strategies for increasing classroom participation. It is also possible to *supplement* one's participation grade with office hour visits, emails demonstrating engagement with the material, posts on the Canvas discussion board, etc. If, on the other hand, you do not struggle with public speaking, note that speaking frequently does not guarantee you a good participation grade. **I value quality of contributions over quantity.** You must reference details from the readings and point the class to specific passages to earn a good participation grade.

Quizzes (20%)

A short quiz will be administered promptly at the beginning of each class. These quizzes will test how closely you read the text(s) assigned for that day. Please note: **if you do not do the reading, you will not pass the quiz.** As you will discover, the quizzes will ask about details not found on Sparknotes, Wikipedia, etc. It is therefore essential to do the readings in full. During the quiz, you may use notes you have handwritten on a separate sheet of paper or in a notebook created for this class. To ensure your grade is not adversely affected by a particularly difficult quiz, **I will drop your lowest three quiz scores.** There are **no make-up quizzes.** If you walk into class after the quiz has already been collected, you will not be able to take it.

Discussion Leadership (10%)

There is no better way to learn something than to try to teach it. Therefore, once during the semester you will lead the class discussion for anywhere from 10-20 minutes. To lead the discussion effectively, you must come prepared with questions to ask the class, passages to point us to, and a movie/TV show clip, song, or other activity to help illustrate the relevance of an important concept from the readings. This assignment won't be easy for many, but it will help you learn the material and become more comfortable asking questions and speaking about it.

Term Paper (50%)

The major requirement of the course is a 10-12 page (double-spaced) term paper. Don't let the length fool you. This paper is designed to help you become a better thinker and more persuasive writer, whether you consider yourself to be a "good" writer or not. This class will stress the link between clear, compelling writing and sound thinking. It will advance the view that writing *is* thinking and that one way to develop your thinking is to work on your writing. As such, we will write, re-write, and re-write some more. The process will be grueling and, if done right, will throw you into existential perplexity (a rarely experienced feeling in our modern age of instantaneous "answers"). However, by breaking it down into smaller pieces and teaching writing as a process at which anyone can excel, I hope you will find the assignment manageable and rewarding.

The term paper will be completed in two cycles. Each cycle will involve writing a paper proposal, a peer draft, and a final paper. You will also edit a peer's paper for each cycle. For the first cycle, you will work on crafting a 4-5 page paper (hereafter, Paper #1) that analyzes either Hobbes' or Rousseau's approach to a political question of your choice. After writing and receiving feedback from me on a 1-page paper proposal, you will write an initial draft of Paper #1, which you will exchange with an assigned peer editor. Based on her or his feedback, you will craft the final

version of Paper #1. I will then give you extensive comments on this paper, which you will use to revise the paper as you build on it to create the full, 10-12 page paper (Paper #2). Like Paper #1, Paper #2 will involve writing a 1-page paper proposal, a peer draft, and a final version. Paper #2 will consist of your analysis of Hobbes'/Rousseau's approach to the political question of your choice (i.e., a revised Paper #1) plus an analysis of either Smith's or Mill's approach to the same question. Yet, it will go beyond analysis, as you will be asked to craft your paper around your stance on which author's approach to the question is most compelling. By the end of the semester, you will have re-conceptualized and revised your paper numerous times, as well as received feedback from various sources. This is a paper you won't forget!

Term Paper Due Dates

Paper Proposal #1	Feb. 6 th
Peer Draft #1	Feb. 20 th
Peer Edit #1	Feb. 22 nd
Paper #1	Mar. 1 st
Paper Proposal #2	Mar. 29 th
Peer Draft #2	Apr. 17 th
Peer Edit #2	Apr. 19 th
Paper #2	Apr. 26 th

Grading Policies

- *Quizzes:* There are no make up quizzes. If you miss a quiz for an unexcused absence, that quiz will count as one of your 3 dropped scores. If you miss a quiz for an excused absence, then the number of points for that quiz will be subtracted from the total number of quiz points when calculating your quiz grade. In other words, if you miss a quiz for an excused absence, then the quiz simply won't count for or against you.
- *Discussion Leadership:* Unless you receive an excused absence for one of the legitimate reasons listed in the "attendance" section above, you must lead discussion on the assigned day. If you miss class that day due to an unexcused absence, you will receive a 0 on the assignment.
- *Essays:* Essays are due at the beginning of class on the date listed. You must submit both a hard copy and an electronic copy. Late papers will be penalized 5% if less than an hour late. Beyond an hour late (even by a single minute), papers will be penalized 10% per every 24-hour period late. This means that your paper will not be accepted for any credit if it is 10 or more days late. The best way to avoid a late penalty is to make sure to submit your work well ahead of the deadline. **Note that copy-editing and revision are integral parts of the writing process. Papers that show an unacceptably high level of error or carelessness (for instance, five or more errors in a paragraph) will be returned for you to proofread before resubmitting them. You will have five business days to edit the paper and to resubmit it with an automatic penalty of 10%. After five days, the grade on the paper will automatically drop to an F.**
- *Graded Work:* I will not discuss grades on any assignments for 24 hours after they have been returned. If, after 24 hours reflection, you do not understand why you received a particular grade, send me a written memo via email and I will respond as soon as possible.
- *Extra Credit:* There will be an extra credit question on every quiz, allowing you to accumulate extra credit points throughout the semester. In addition, you can receive 5 extra credit points

(out of 100) on your final essay by visiting my office to discuss the material with me. To receive the extra credit, you must: (1) bring the text with you; (2) come prepared with a few questions or passages you want to discuss; and (3) visit for at least 15 minutes. You can only receive the extra credit points once, though additional office hour visits can help to supplement your participation grade.

Grading Scale

A = 94-100	A- = 91-93.99	B+ = 87-90.99	B = 83-86.99
B- = 80-82.99	C+ = 77-79.99	C = 73-76.99	C- = 70-72.99
D+ = 67-69.99	D = 63-66.99	D- = 60-62.99	F = below 60

Students at Florida Atlantic University are expected to maintain the highest ethical standards. Academic dishonesty is considered a serious breach of these ethical standards, because it interferes with the university mission to provide a high quality education in which no student enjoys an unfair advantage over any other. Academic dishonesty is also destructive of the university community, which is grounded in a system of mutual trust and places high value on personal integrity and individual responsibility. Harsh penalties are associated with academic dishonesty. For more information, see http://wise.fau.edu/regulations/chapter4/Reg_4.001_5-26-10_FINAL.pdf.

Please note that I take plagiarism very seriously. If I catch you plagiarizing on a paper, you will receive an automatic “F” in the course and will be reported to the university, which will likely result in a permanent honor violation notation on your transcript. So that we are all on the same page, here is the university’s definition of plagiarism (found in the document linked above):

- “1. The presentation of words from any other source or another person as one’s own without proper quotation and citation.*
- 2. Putting someone else’s ideas or facts into your own words (paraphrasing) without proper citation.*
- 3. Turning in someone else’s work as one’s own, including the buying and selling of term papers or assignments.” (FAU Code of Academic Integrity, 2.B)*

Disabilities

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA), students who require reasonable accommodations due to a disability to properly execute coursework must register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) and follow all SAS procedures. SAS has offices across three of FAU’s campuses – Boca Raton, Davie and Jupiter – however disability services are available for students on all campuses. For more information, please visit the SAS website at www.fau.edu/sas/. If you require a special accommodation, please make an appointment at the beginning of the semester to discuss the accommodation with me.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAP) Center

Life as a university student can be challenging physically, mentally and emotionally. Students who find stress negatively affecting their ability to achieve academic or personal goals may wish to consider utilizing FAU's Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) Center. CAPS provides FAU students a range of services – individual counseling, support meetings, and psychiatric services, to name a few – offered to help improve and maintain emotional well-being. For more information, go to <http://www.fau.edu/counseling/>.

Course Schedule

(CV) = reading on Canvas

Section I: Early Modern Political Thought

Date	Topic	Readings	Deadlines
8-Jan	Introduction		
10-Jan	A New Political Art: Power, Not Justice	☐ Machiavelli, <i>The Prince</i> , Dedicatory Letter; Ch. I, VI-VIII, XV, XVII-XVIII (CV)	
15-Jan	Origin of Sovereign Power	☐ Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , Epistle Dedicatory; Introduction; Part I, Ch. XIII-XVI	
17-Jan	Purpose, Scope, and Forms of Power	☐ Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , Part II, Ch. XVII-XIX	
22-Jan	Liberty of Subjects	☐ Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , Part II, Ch. XXI, XXIX	
24-Jan	Science of Politics	☐ Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , Part II, Ch. XXXI, Review and Conclusion	
29-Jan	Return to the Self	☐ Rousseau, <i>Second Discourse</i> , pp. 77-98	
31-Jan	State of Nature	☐ Rousseau, <i>Second Discourse</i> , pp. 99-117	
05-Feb	On Civilization	☐ Rousseau, <i>Second Discourse</i> , pp. 117-141	Proposal #1
07-Feb	Property: Root of Inequality	☐ Rousseau, <i>Second Discourse</i> , pp. 141-160	
12-Feb	The Body Politic and Despotism	☐ Rousseau, <i>Second Discourse</i> , pp. 160-181	

Section II: Modern Political Thought

Date	Topic	Readings	Deadlines
14-Feb	Origin of Judgments	☐ Smith, <i>Moral Sentiments</i> , Part I, Sec. I	

19-Feb	Influences on Judgment	<input type="checkbox"/> Smith, <i>Moral Sentiments</i> , Part I, Sec. II	Peer Draft #1
21-Feb	Influences on Judgment	<input type="checkbox"/> Smith, <i>Moral Sentiments</i> , Part I, Sec. III	Peer Edit #1
26-Feb	Justice	<input type="checkbox"/> Smith, <i>Moral Sentiments</i> , Part II, Sec. I & II	
28-Feb	Self-Judgment and Society	<input type="checkbox"/> Smith, <i>Moral Sentiments</i> , Part III, Ch. I; Part IV; Part V	Paper #1
05-Mar	<i>No Class</i>	<i>Spring Break</i>	
07-Mar	<i>No Class</i>	<i>Spring Break</i>	
12-Mar	Liberty vs. Authority	<input type="checkbox"/> Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> , Ch. 1	
14-Mar	Discussion & Thought	<input type="checkbox"/> Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> , Ch. 2	
19-Mar	Individuality	<input type="checkbox"/> Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> , Ch. 3 & 4	
21-Mar	Applications	<input type="checkbox"/> Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> , Ch. 5	

Section III: Contemporary Political Thought

Date	Topic	Readings	Deadlines
26-Mar	Origins of Morality	<input type="checkbox"/> Nietzsche, <i>Genealogy of Morals</i> , Preface, First Essay, p. 24-36 (CV)	
28-Mar	Origins of Morality	<input type="checkbox"/> Nietzsche, <i>Genealogy of Morals</i> , p. 36-56 (CV)	Proposal #2
02-Apr	Technology & Power	<input type="checkbox"/> Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology" (CV)	
04-Apr	Body of the Condemned	<input type="checkbox"/> Foucault, <i>Discipline and Punish</i> , Part I, Ch. 1	
09-Apr	Generalized Punishment	<input type="checkbox"/> Foucault, <i>Discipline and Punish</i> , Part II, Ch. 1	
11-Apr	Gentle Punishment	<input type="checkbox"/> Foucault, <i>Discipline and Punish</i> , Part II, Ch. 2	
16-Apr	Docile Bodies	<input type="checkbox"/> Foucault, <i>Discipline and Punish</i> , Part III, Ch. 1	Peer Draft #2
18-Apr	Panopticism	<input type="checkbox"/> Foucault, <i>Discipline and Punish</i> , Part III, Ch. 3	Peer Edit #2
25-Apr, 1:15-3:45PM	Concluding Remarks	Paper #2 Due	Paper #2