

POLS1002: Introduction to Political Theory
Course Syllabus

Class Times: MWF 8-8:50 am, 154 TLS
Email: fred.lee@uconn.edu

Office Hours: MWF 9:30 am-10:30 am
and by appointment, 436 Oak

I. Overview

Let's begin with a rough idea of what "political theory" is all about: political theory aims to understand (1) "*big questions*" of politics in a manner informed by (2) *intellectual history* and (3) *ethical judgment*. We can unpack this formulation in terms of course aims:

1. *This course aims to raise several "big questions" of politics for your consideration.* Among the overarching themes we'll be considering are the relationship (or lack thereof) between justice and power; the similarities and differences between socioeconomics and politics; how inequalities of class, gender, and race are established and challenged; and the aims, vehicles, and problems of revolutionary politics. These questions, from an intellectual-historical perspective, have required a fair deal of imagination and vision to adequately pose and address.
2. *This course aims to familiarize you with various strands of intellectual history.* We will survey some fairly "visionary" political thinkers who come from different times/places (ancient Greece, early-modern Europe, and the late-modern transatlantic world) and who have contributed to diverse intellectual traditions (philosophical, liberal, feminist, socialist, and de-colonial thought). Your engagement with thinkers both familiar and strange, agreeable and disagreeable will hopefully broaden the horizons of your political thinking and practice.
3. *This course encourages you to exercise your capacity for ethical judgment.* Political theory does not aspire to be value neutral; it aspires towards informed judgments which can see "big questions" from various perspectives. I do not propose that our readings can provide definitive, uncontestable answers as to how to organize a just society, how to conceive of equality, etc. They well might, though, inform our judgments about what is politically acceptable, desirable, and fair about the world we live in—as well as incite our imaginations of the world we aspire to live in.

II. Schedule

Part I. Authority, legitimacy, and knowledge

August 25. Introduction to class

August 27. Plato, *Republic*, book 1 [327a-354c]

August 29. No class: I'll be at the American Political Science Association meeting

September 1. No class: Labor Day

September 3. Plato, *Republic*, book 2-3 [357a-383c, 386a-403c, 412b-417b]

September 5. Plato, *Republic*, book 4 [419a-445e]

September 8. Plato, *Republic*, book 5 [449a-480a]

September 10. Plato, *Republic*, book 6 [484a-511e]

September 12. Plato, *Republic*, book 7 [514a-524d, 531d-541b]

September 15. Plato, *Republic*, book 8 [543a- 569c]

September 17. Plato, *Republic*, book 9 [571a-592a]

September 19. Locke, *Second Treatise*, chapters 1-4

September 22. Locke, *Second Treatise*, chapter 5

September 24. Locke, *Second Treatise*, chapters 6-8

September 26. Locke, *Second Treatise*, chapters 9-14

September 29. Locke, *Second Treatise*, chapters 15-18

October 1. Locke, *Second Treatise*, chapter 19

October 3. Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, "To M. Talleyrand-Perigord," "Introduction," chapter 1

October 6. Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, chapters 2-3

October 8. Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, chapter 4

October 10. Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, chapters 7, 12

Part II. Revolution, social transformation, and history

October 13. Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, "Estranged Labor"

October 15. Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, "The Meaning of Human Requirements," "The Power of Money in Bourgeois Society"

October 17. Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Prefaces, "I. Bourgeois and Proletarians"

11.17.14 at 8:00 am: 4-6 page midterm essay due on HuskyCT

October 20. Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, "II. Proletarians and Communists"

October 22. Marx, "[The British Rule in India](#)," "[The Future Results of British Rule in India](#)" (follow hyper-links or google the titles; both articles available on marxists.org)

October 24. In-class screening of Gillo Pontecorvo, *Battle of Algiers*

October 27. In-class screening of Gillo Pontecorvo, *Battle of Algiers*

October 29. In-class screening of Gillo Pontecorvo, *Battle of Algiers*

October 31. Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, “On Violence” (pgs. 1-31)

November 3. Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, “On Violence” (pgs. 31-62)

November 5. Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, “The Trials and Tribulations of National Consciousness” (pgs. 97-124)

November 7. Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, “The Trials and Tribulations of National Consciousness” (pgs. 124-144)

November 10. Arendt, *On Revolution* “Introduction: War and Revolution”

November 12. Arendt, *On Revolution* chapter 1 sections 1-3

November 14. Arendt, *On Revolution* chapter 1 sections 4-5

November 17. Arendt, *On Revolution* chapter 2 sections 1-3

November 19. Arendt, *On Revolution* chapter 2 sections 4-6

November 21. Arendt, *On Revolution* chapter 3

November 24, 26, 28. No class: Thanksgiving break

December 1. Arendt, *On Revolution* chapter 6 sections 1-2

December 3. Arendt, *On Revolution* chapter 6 sections 3-6

December 5. Conclusion to Course

Final examination

III. Requirements

Practically speaking, this course is organized around the activities of reading and writing about political theory. Final grades will be determined in terms of

- 1. 15% reading quizzes.** Seven pop quizzes—consisting of 3 questions about the assigned reading/film—will be randomly distributed over the course of the semester. Your two lowest scores will be dropped and the remaining scores will be averaged automatically. Quizzes will be graded on a scale of 0-3: a 3 is a 95, 2 is an 85, 1 is a 75, and 0 is no credit. Anyone who has read the assigned material (or watched the film) should have no problem earning a 2 on the quiz.
- 2. 40% midterm paper.** A 4-6 double-spaced page essay will respond to 1 out of 3 prompts on either (a) Plato and Locke, (b) Locke and Wollstonecraft, or (c) Wollstonecraft and Plato. All prompts will ask you to perform a “close-reading”—to make a good-faith effort to *understand* what the texts mean and to undertake a thoughtful *evaluation* of what the texts argue. Outside research is not required, and

for the purposes of this short assignment, discouraged. Criteria of evaluation as well as writing guides will be distributed as we approach the due date for this assignment.

- 3. 45% comprehensive final exam.** The exam will consist of short answers (respond to your choice of 5 out of 8 questions) and a medium-length essay on either (a) Marx/Engels and Fanon, (b) Fanon and Arendt, or (c) Arendt and Marx/Engels (respond to your choice of 1 of 3 prompts). A short answer question will require you to explain a concept, framework, argument, or passage from part I or part II of the course. An essay prompt will require you to compare two thinkers from part II with respect to a common theme. Essay topics, but not the exact wording of the prompts will be distributed before the exam.

IV. Make-up and late policies

Make-up quizzes will be administered only in adequately documented cases of participation in official UConn athletic or academic activities. Documentation must be shown to me, your instructor, for evaluation within **one week** of the original quiz date. Make-up quizzes will not cover the material covered in the original quiz; like the quiz you missed, the make-up will be a pop-quiz on potentially any assigned reading and be distributed on potentially any scheduled meeting.

It is your responsibility to inform me, your instructor, about any situations which might interfere with your school work as soon as possible. It is also your responsibility to inform me about the need for paper extensions at least **48 hours** before the paper is due. Otherwise, essays submitted after the specified deadline will be penalized 4 points every 12 hours. E.g. a paper which would have received a 95 will receive a 91 if submitted 11 hours after the deadline; it will receive an 87 if submitted 13 hours after the deadline, etc.

If you have any questions about any of these policies, I would be happy to answer your questions over email or during office hours.

V. Academic integrity

There will be a zero-tolerance policy for any academic dishonesty or misconduct prohibited by the [University of Connecticut's Student Code](#) (quoted below):

"A fundamental tenet of all educational institutions is academic honesty; academic work depends upon respect for and acknowledgement of the research and ideas of others. Misrepresenting someone else's work as one's own is a serious offense in any academic setting and it will not be condoned.

Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, providing or receiving assistance in a manner not authorized by the instructor in the creation of work to be submitted for academic evaluation (e.g., papers, projects, and examinations); any attempt to influence improperly (e.g.,

bribery, threats) any member of the faculty, staff, or administration of the University in any matter pertaining to academics or research; presenting, as one's own, the ideas or words of another for academic evaluation; doing unauthorized academic work for which another person will receive credit or be evaluated; and presenting the same or substantially the same papers or projects in two or more courses without the explicit permission of the instructors involved.

A student who knowingly assists another student in committing an act of academic misconduct shall be equally accountable for the violation, and shall be subject to the sanctions and other remedies described in The Student Code."

VI. Texts

The assigned readings will be available at the campus bookstore. If you purchase these books from a different source, pay attention to the publication information listed below. All these texts are available in several editions, but it would be ideal if we all had the same editions of the same texts. It will be easier to keep us all on the same page, for instance.

1. Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Christopher Rowe (Penguin, 2012) ISBN: 978-0141442433
2. John Locke, *The Second Treatise on Civil Government* (Prometheus, 1986) ISBN: 978-0879753375
3. Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (Penguin, 2004) ISBN: 978-0141441252
4. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and the Communist Manifesto*, ed. Martin Milligan (Prometheus, 1988) ISBN: 978-0879754464
5. Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (Grove, 2005) ISBN: 978-0802141323
6. Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (Penguin, 2006) ISBN: 978-0143039907