

POLITICAL SCIENCE 380 - ELEMENTS OF POLITICAL THOUGHT

Term II / TR 11:20-12:35
Briggs 136

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Purpose of the Course: The purpose of this course is to introduce and explore the fundamental elements of political thought. The course attempts to accomplish this by focusing on two intersecting facets of political theory. **First**, we will examine **political ideology**: what it is, what the ideologies we see employed in everyday discourse entail, and where our own thinking about politics fits on an ideological spectrum. We will come to understand each ideology's image of political life, historical evolution, and contemporary expression. **Second**, we will explore several of the most salient **issues**, or **themes**, of political theory, the questions that have driven the discipline since its beginnings twenty-six centuries ago: the pre-political state of nature, the nature of political power, the dynamic between individual liberty and the authoritative state, the question of how (or how many) should rule, and the relationship between liberty and justice, particularly as it pertains to the distribution of things we value. In this second portion of the course, we will concentrate on two separate but interrelated issues: **the relationship between the individual and her/his community** (or: the connection between individual rights and one's responsibility to society), and a particular manifestation of this tension - **political obligation**. One of the central goals of the course is to provide the foundations in political theory for each student to be intelligently conversant in the field. Another is to encourage an exploration of the role of values in political life, at both the individual and more general levels.

In addition, Political Science 380 subscribes to and is designed to emphasize and promote several broad educational goals germane to a liberal arts education: (1) the ability to **read** actively and critically; (2) the ability to **think** logically, analytically, and independently; (3) the ability to **communicate** clearly and effectively, both orally and in writing; and (4) the ability to **learn** on one's own. The class format and assignments are structured to enhance the achievement of these goals.

Political Science 380 - Elements of Political Thought - satisfies one of the six required courses for the undergraduate major in Political Science. In addition, it satisfies Objective 6B. (Social Responsibility: Contemporary Social Problems) of the University's Core Curriculum.

Course Format: The format of this class may be different from what you are used to: it is not primarily a traditional lecture course. Rather, the course is based on the premise that you will learn more if you actively contribute to the learning process by participating, as opposed to sitting passively, merely absorbing what you are "taught." Although I may, very occasionally, offer a lecture, that teaching/learning method will be the distinct exception. Instead, my more usual role will be to organize the course material for our class discussions, and to initiate, focus and direct our discussions to ensure that we cover important course material. Therefore, discussion, and your preparation for discussion, is central, expected, and required.

What, exactly, will we discuss? In addition to being **discussion-centered**, this class is **text-based**. Our discussions will center on the assigned readings (rather than on whatever opinions we may happen to come to class with on a particular day), so it is imperative that you come to each and every class period prepared to discuss the text. This means you must complete the readings prior to the day they will be discussed. More importantly, you must complete the readings in such a way that you are prepared to discuss them intelligently. Your input is essential to the class, and is required: not participating is not an option! In sum, you are required to attend each and every class prepared to thoughtfully discuss reading assignments and, in general, to make a positive contribution to the class and the learning environment therein. If you have any misgivings or anxieties about your ability or willingness to prepare and participate at this level, see me after the first class meeting.

Course Requirements & Grades: There are **seven** requirements, five of which count in the computation of your final grade. The **first and second**, ungraded, requirements are the completion of two short essays. These are listed in the syllabus, with due dates of **Thursday, 10 January** and **Thursday, 17 January**. Because these deal with your opinion - your personal ideology and your willingness to be obligated to a service draft - they can't be graded. Nonetheless, they are requirements in the sense that you must complete them to pass the course.

The third through seventh requirements are graded. These five requirements are equally weighted: each counts for one-fifth of your final grade. The **third** requirement is the afore-mentioned class participation and contribution. This includes not only your ongoing contribution to the community that constitutes this class, but also your participation in and contribution to group exercises and presentations. The **fourth** and **fifth** requirements are two mid-term exams, given on **Thursday, 7 February** and **Thursday, 21 March**. The **sixth** requirement is an integrative essay, of roughly 10 pages in length, on political obligation. This essay is due no later than **4 P.M., Thursday, 18 April** (the last day of class). This assignment is described in detail on an attachment to this syllabus. The **seventh** and final requirement is the final exam. It will be cumulative, and administered, per the Registrar's final exam schedule, on **Tuesday, 23 April, 11:00-12:50 A.M..**

I understand how important grades are to you. They are important to me as well, and I work very hard at two grade-related issues: first, to provide as much assistance as possible to ensure you get the highest grade you are capable of and willing to work for, and, second, to make sure that you get nothing more or less than the grade you deserve. In this context, I invite you to discuss any and all aspects of your grade with me at any time.

Policy Concerning Attendance: My policy on attendance is simple: to do your best, whatever that may be, you need to attend each and every class. Since the majority of administrative information (i.e., changes in the schedule, readings, exam dates) is announced at the beginning of each class period, it is important to come to each and every class on time. In addition, coming to class late is disruptive and disrespectful to those already at work, myself included. On a related topic: disable the audio alert (i.e., ringing, beeping) on all pagers and cell phones during class time.

Policy Concerning Late Work: My policy on late work is straightforward: **any** and **all** work submitted after the announced due date and time is defined as late. The penalty for late work is one full grade on that piece of work. (That is, a B becomes a C, a C+ becomes a D+). This policy applies to all work required in this class, including exams. If, for some reason, you do not take an exam at its scheduled time, and if, in the unlikely event I allow a make-up exam, you will be penalized one grade. Computer and/or printer problems, the contemporary manifestation

of "my dog ate it," do not constitute legitimate excuses, so anticipate these potential problems in advance.

Policy Concerning Incompletes: First, I do not like Incompletes. I rarely give them, and will do anything to avoid giving them. Second, I can imagine one or two very rare circumstances in which I might find it appropriate to give an Incomplete. Third, under no circumstance will an Incomplete grade be assigned to avoid assigning an earned grade. An Incomplete is reserved for those very special and rare cases where the student has successfully completed the majority of the course work, and at the end of the term comes forth with a legitimate emergency situation over which s/he had no control that prevents the completion of one final piece of work. Since a low grade under these circumstances strikes me as unjust, I will, at the student's initiation, consider an Incomplete. The bottom line is: I expect you to take responsibility for doing your work, and for doing it on time; failure to do so will not be rewarded with an Incomplete at the end of the term. It is incumbent on you, should you be experiencing difficulties that are affecting or may come to affect your academic performance in this class, to contact me. The worst thing you can do is disappear without a trace.

Readings: Since this is a text- and discussion-based class, the reading is absolutely essential. The reading load is moderate, to encourage not only completion of all reading assignments prior to the due date, but also to allow a certain amount of time beyond mere reading to comprehend the reading in a way that will prepare you to contribute to class discussion. Thus, you must read the required pages, but with enough concentration and rigor to be able to contribute to our understanding through class discussion. The following books have been ordered through the bookstore. They are required; you should purchase them and bring the appropriate volume/s to each class period.

Jonathan Wolff. An Introduction to Political Philosophy. Oxford University Press/Opus, 1996.

Kenneth R. Hoover. Ideology and Political Life. Harcourt, 2001, 3rd edition.

Stephen Nathanson. Should We Consent To Be Governed? A Short Introduction to Political Philosophy. Wadsworth, 2001,

2nd edition.

I will supply readings listed in the syllabus that are not in these texts. In addition, I may, from time to time, direct you to additional readings as I discover them. Feel free to bring relevant reading to the attention of the class.

Finally, a liberally educated person is committed to keeping informed about the world in which we live. One of the best ways of doing this is to read a reputable daily national/international newspaper. You are strongly encouraged to purchase and read The New York Times, which is available at special discount student rates, the details of which I will provide at our first class meeting.

Writing Assignment Instructions: All writing assignments **must** be word-processed or typewritten, double-spaced, edited, spell-checked, and proofread. Your long essay must be paginated. If a paper is submitted not according to these requirements, it will be returned for editing and resubmission once the corrections are made. That may, of course, make it a late paper. I encourage you to put your best foot forward each and every time you submit a piece of work. If you are confused about any aspect of a writing assignment, please ask for clarification.

Note: The instructor reserves the right to make changes in the syllabus.

COURSE SCHEDULE & ASSIGNMENTS

INTRODUCTION

T 1/8 Course Mechanics
 Political Ideology Questionnaires

read: syllabus

FOUNDATIONS

R 1/10 Introduction to Political Ideology

read: Hoover, ch.1, pp. 3-12.

Assignment #1

Write an essay of not more than two pages, which begins (i.e., the first sentence of which **must be**) as follows: "I am a/n _____ because...", where the blank must be filled in with **a word or two-word phrase** that makes reference to political ideology. For this assignment, political ideology is defined as "a political worldview, usually associated with a strongly held and all-encompassing view of political events and values." The essay is **due** no later than the beginning of class **Thursday, 10 January**. We will discuss the topic, in conjunction with Hoover ch. 1, in class that day.

T 1/15 Introduction to Political Theory: Human Nature, Statelessness, and Political Power

read: Wolff, ch.1, pp. 6-36.

ISSUE: POLITICAL OBLIGATION

R 1/17 Introduction to Political Obligation: Is (Obedience to)the State Justifiable?

read: Nathanson, ch.1, pp. 1-4 & Wolff, ch.2, pp. 37-67.

Assignment #2

Write an essay of not more than three pages in which you answer the following question: **When, if ever, are the citizens of a state obligated to a service draft?** For this assignment, political obligation is defined as "the duties and responsibilities (citizens) owe to the nation or each other through political communities." Obligation to a service draft means more than simply registering at the local Selective Service Board on the occasion of one's 18th birthday. Rather, it means that if a country calls on its citizens to serve in its armed forces, including under potentially life-threatening circumstances, those citizens are obligated to and, thus, must, serve. Write this essay from a universal and general perspective: focus on any/all citizens of any/all states, not on you personally and not on the United States specifically. (HINT: Write the essay without using the words "I" or "me", and without reference to any particular country.). The essay is **due** no later than the beginning of class **Thursday, 17 January**. We will discuss the topic in class that day.

- T 1/22 Political Obligation #1: Super Patriotism
read: Nathanson, ch.2, pp. 9-26.
- R 1/24 Political Obligation #2: Anarchism
read: Nathanson, ch.4, pp. 46-63.
- T 1/29 The Case Against Anarchism
read: Nathanson, ch.5, pp. 64-80.
- R 1/31 Political Obligation #3: Political Cynicism
read: Nathanson, ch.3, pp. 27-45.
- T 2/5 Political Obligation #4: Critical Citizenship
read: Nathanson, ch.6, pp. 81-101.

Thursday, 7 February: MID-TERM EXAM #1

POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES

- T 2/12 Classical Liberalism
& R 2/14

review: Hoover, ch.1, pp. 3-12, esp. pp. 6-10.
read: Hoover, ch.2, pp. 13-37.
- T 2/19 Traditional Conservatism
& R 2/21

read: Hoover, ch.3, pp. 39-51.
- T 2/26 Reform Liberalism

read: Hoover, ch.5, pp. 65-84.
- R 2/28 The Left: I - Marxism-Leninism

read: Hoover, ch.6, pp. 85-110.

The Left: II - Democratic Socialism

read: Hoover, ch.7, pp. 111-134.

Spring Break

T 3/12 Individualist/Libertarian Conservatism

read: Hoover, ch.4, pp. 53-64.

R 3/14 Fascism

read: Hoover, ch.8, pp. 135-146.

T 3/19 Feminism

read: Hoover, pp. 149-153 & ch.10, pp. 155-164.
Wolff, ch.6, pp. 202-221.

Thursday, 21 March: MID-TERM EXAM #2

ISSUES IN POLITICAL THOUGHT

T 3/26 The State Power-Citizen Liberty Dynamic

read: Wolff, ch.4, pp. 115-146.

R 3/28 Who (How Many) Should Rule?

read: Wolff, ch.3, pp. 68-114

T 4/2 The Liberty-Justice Dynamic

read: Wolff, ch.5, pp. 147-195.

Last Day to Submit Paper Drafts

ISSUE: INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS &/VS. SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

R 4/4 Introduction: The Individual & the Political Community

& T 4/9

read: Wolff, ch.6, pp. 196-202.

How Americans Bowl, & Why

read: Robert D. Putnam, "Bowling Alone: America's
Declining Social Capital," Journal of

Democracy 6:1, January 1995, pp. 65-78.

R 4/11 Libertarianism as Radical Individualism
& T 4/16

read: William E. Hudson, "The Second Challenge:
Radical Individualism," ch.3, Hudson,
American Democracy in Peril. Seven
Challenges to America's Future. Chatham, NJ:
Chatham House Publishers, 1995, pp. 69-109.

R 4/18 Balancing Individual Rights with Community

read: Hudson, ibid., pp. 303-305.
Amitai Etzioni, "Preface: We, the
Communitarians," "The Responsive
Communitarian Platform: Rights and
Responsibilities," & "Introduction," from
Etzioni, Rights and the Common Good. The
Communitarian Perspective. New York: St.
Martin's Press, 1995, pp. iii-vi, 11-23, &
9.

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TERM PAPER DUE: NLT 4 P.M., 18 APRIL
FINAL EXAM: TUESDAY, 23 APRIL, 11:00 A.M.-12:50 P.M.

INTEGRATIVE ESSAY ASSIGNMENT

Write an essay of roughly 10 (double-spaced) pages in length, in which you answer the question: "When, if ever, are the citizens of a state obligated to a national service draft?"

You have written on this topic before, briefly, in Assignment #2. In the present essay, argue and write from a broader and more general perspective: when, if ever, might a person, regardless of national citizenship, be obligated to his or her country's national service draft? That is, create a political theory of obligation generally and broadly applicable to all or most people all or most of the time, and argue the worth of that theory.

This must be an **integrative** essay, in that it must synthesize and incorporate material in the course beyond just that immediately relevant to political obligation narrowly defined. That is, your theory of political obligation **must** consider not only that specific topic but also how it relates to other political **issues** we consider in the course. Keep in mind that questions of political obligation intrinsically deal with the issue of political community, that is, the relationship between individual rights and social responsibilities. You do not have to make reference to each and every one of these issues, but, in the construction of your essay, you must integrate those that are clearly relevant to the position you are taking on political obligation. In addition, your theory of political obligation **must** engage the literature on political **ideologies** we have considered. It may even be grounded in a particular position on the political ideology spectrum. At a minimum, attempt to locate your position on political obligation on the ideological spectrum we have worked with.

I will, in grading your essay, consider its mechanics as well as its content. Your final draft must be word-processed, double-spaced, paginated, edited, spell-checked, proofread, and stapled together. Before you submit your final draft, it would be wise to check the 'Writing Assignment Instructions' section of the syllabus. I will read, but not grade, (partial or complete) drafts of your paper provided I receive them by **Tuesday, 2 April**. There are **two additional requirements: First, you must underline the central thesis of your essay**, limited to one sentence. A central thesis is **not** a statement of what the essay is going to be about or attempt to do. Rather, it is a

declaration of the conclusion you have reached. In this assignment, it is your basic answer to the "When, if ever,..." question. The thesis statement is typically found in the first paragraph of an essay, and is often repeated in the last.

Second, you must submit, with your final draft, the **outline** from which you worked. Your essay is **due** not later than **Thursday, 18 April, 4 P.M.** I am, as always, available to provide assistance; please seek me out.