

## **PSC 124: POLITICAL THEORY, SUMMER COLLEGE, 2021**

**Lecture Monday to Friday, from 3:00 to 4:30 pm on Zoom**

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**SEFA SECEN**

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027 Eggers Hall

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Are human beings political animals? What is just society and polity? Who should rule and what is the source of political legitimacy? What are limits of power? This course is an introduction to political theory and seeks answers to these questions that have always been at the heart of politics. It considers fundamental political concepts – human nature, citizenship, virtue, power, sovereignty, governance, justice and freedom. The course surveys several of the main figures, debates, and movements in the history of political philosophy and contemporary political theory. For each week, we read a seminal primary source as well as recent secondary sources.

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- Familiarizing students with the central debates in the field of political theory
- Providing an overview of the works of some of the discipline's most pertinent thinkers
- Teaching students how to critically and analytically engage with the canonical texts
- Helping students acquire the essential political vocabulary to formulate political questions and answers

### **GRADING**

Course requirements include participation, discussion leadership, and a research paper. The table below shows the overall breakdown of your final grade. You can also use it to calculate your final grade on your own.

Attendance and Participation	25%
Discussion leadership	20%
Discussion leadership handout	5%
Research Paper presentation	10%
Research Paper	40%

**Participation and Attendance:** You are expected to attend all lectures, read the articles assigned weekly, come ready to be called by your name and contribute to the class discussion.

**Discussion Leadership:** Each student will lead one seminar summarizing and analyzing the material, including current controversies surrounding it. In addition to the primary sources, read recent articles on the author in such journals as Political Theory, European Journal of Political

Theory, Contemporary Political Theory, Polity, and Radical Philosophy. Make a 1-2-page handout that summarizes the material, and speak for about 20 minutes. Ideally, we will be inspired to have a lively discussion.

**Research Paper:** Each student will write a 15-20-page research paper (5,000 words). Students should consult with the professor about their topics throughout the summer college. The paper should have the following general format: (1) Specify a problem or question that needs to be addressed. You can raise this problem by pointing to real world controversies, political science literatures, or theoretical debates. The first 3-4 pages should grab the reader's attention and lay out a plan to address the question. (2) Explain how one author on the syllabus addresses the question. Read the material on the syllabus and relevant secondary literature. 8-10 pages. (3) Consider how another author on the syllabus addresses the question. (4) Present your own thoughts about how to answer the question. You can support your thesis by citing the text, political science literatures, or real-world events. 3-4 pages. For general advice, see, "Writing Political Theory: Lessons from an Apprenticeship," PS: Political Science & Politics, vol. 38, no. 3, July 2005.)

**Research Paper Presentation:** Students will present their research papers. Each student will be given 25 minutes. Students are expected to identify the philosophical question they were interested in, discuss how it was addressed by different political philosophers, and present their own thoughts and perspectives.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

### **WEEK 1:**

**Monday, August 9**      What is Political Theory?

Leslie Paul Thiele, Thinking Politics, Theory and Vision, Chapter 1

Leo Strauss, An Introduction to Political Philosophy, "What is political philosophy?" pp. 3-57

**Tuesday, August 10**      Classical Political Philosophy

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Ancient Political Philosophy, pp. 1-13

Leo Strauss, An Introduction to Political Philosophy, "On Classical Political Philosophy" pp. 59-79

**Wednesday, August 11**      Modern Political Philosophy

Leo Strauss, An Introduction to Political Philosophy, "The Three Waves of Modernity" pp. 81-98

Niccolò Machiavelli, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, pp. 1-16

Niccolo Machiavelli, Prince (Entire), Recommended

**Thursday, August 12** Popular Sovereignty

Hobbes's Moral and Political Philosophy, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, pp. 1-10

Hobbes, Leviathan, part 2, chapter 18, pp. 133-141

**Friday, August 13** Proto-Liberalism

Locke, Second Treatise of Government, Introduction, vii-xxi

**WEEK 2:**

**Monday, August 16** Social Contract

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract, Introduction, xi-xxiii

**Tuesday, August 17** Varieties of Freedom

An introduction to John Stuart Mill's on Liberty, Libertarianism

John Stuart Mill's Moral, Social, and Political Philosophy, the Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy in the Nineteenth Century, pp. 1-21

Marx and Engels, The Communist Manifesto (Entire)

**Wednesday, August 18** Liberal Reconstruction of Enlightenment

John Rawls, A Theory of Justice, Chapter 1, pp. 3-19

John Rawls, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, pp. 1-26

**Thursday, August 19** Paradigmatic Alternatives, Non-Western Political Philosophy Traditions

Antony Black, History of Islamic Political Thought: From the Prophet to the Present, Introduction pp. 1-7

M. A. Muqtedar Khan, Islam and Good Governance, Chapter 6, pp. 161-208

**Friday, August 20** Islam and Democracy

Khaled Abou El Fadl, Islam and the Challenge of Democracy pp. 3-36

**WEEK 3:**

**Monday, August 23** Black Political Thought

Melissa Victoria Harris-Lacewell, Barbershops, Bibles, and BET, Chapter 1, pp. 1-35

**Tuesday, August 24** Chinese Political Thought

Social and Political Thought in Chinese Philosophy, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy  
pp. 1-19

**Wednesday, August 25** Research Paper Presentations

**Thursday, August 26** Research Paper Presentations

**Friday, August 27** Research Paper Presentations

**Monday, August 30, 5 pm:** Research papers due