

POLI 304: Contemporary Political Theory (Fall 2022)

Objectives

Description from Academic Bulletin: 19th and 20th century political theories

Requirements Fulfilled: Carolina Core (VSR), Founding Documents (FND)

Prerequisites: None

This course examines the origins of the most important dilemmas we face in contemporary political life, through a survey of key political texts from the late 18th century to the present. It is divided into six parts, each of which is organized around *both* a rough historical period *and* a guiding thematic question.

- Atlantic Revolutions (1776-1815): can political orders be founded on terms of freedom and equality?
- Industrial Upheavals (1815-1848): how should societies grapple with rapid industrialization?
- Imperial Transformations (1848-1914): how should different nations, cultures, and peoples interact?
- Civilizational Ruptures (1914-1945): where did humanity go wrong, and how can we fix it?
- Postwar Refoundings (1945-1989): what kind of world should be created from the ashes of the old?
- Contemporary Challenges (1989—): can we make the world a better place?

By the end of the course, successful students will be able to:

- Interpret and analyze difficult political and philosophical texts from a variety of historical settings
- Recognize, employ, and critically assess core concepts and arguments from the history of ideas
- Trace the historical origins of contemporary political challenges
- Understand how the American founding and subsequent developments fit within a global context

Carolina Core Outcome:

VSR - Students will be able to examine different kinds of social and personal values, analyzing the ways in which these are manifested in communities as well as individual lives.

Requirements

Your grade in the course will be determined by the following combination of factors.

- 20%: Attendance and Participation
- 20%: Response Papers
- 40%: Final Exam
- 20%: Final Project

Grading: I understand graded assignments as tools for helping you achieve your own learning goals. My assumption is that most of you want to develop the skills and learn the material we will cover in this course. If you fail to complete the reading, come to class, or finish an assignment on time, this does not indicate to me that you have no interest in doing so; only that you have other demands on your time. Grades thus give you an extra external incentive to do things that you ideally want to be doing anyway—such as completing the reading, attending class, developing analytical writing skills, and solidifying your understanding of the course material.

Materials: all readings are either available for free online (and linked below), or will be made available through Blackboard (B), so you do not need to purchase any separate texts. However, you must have reliable computer and internet access, and must check your email regularly to keep up with deadlines and other details that may change. Make sure you have access to the course on Blackboard and let me know as soon as possible if you do not. For help with technology or software, please contact the Division of Information Technology (DoIT) [here](#).

Attendance and Participation (20%)

Beginning August 23, every student's name will be printed on a slip of paper and laid out at the beginning of class. Assuming you get to class on time (i.e., by 6:05), you may declare yourself "present and prepared" by finding your name and dropping it in a box. During lecture, several names will be drawn randomly from the box, and those whose names are chosen may be called on to answer questions related to the readings.

There are 25 classes between August 23 and the end of term. Each time you put your name in the box, you get one point for attendance and participation, up to a maximum of 20, constituting 20% of your course grade. This means you can miss up to five classes without losing points. Beyond that, you lose one point each time your name is not in the box. (Exceptions to this policy will be made only when required by the University and supported by official documentation. COVID-related absences must be handled through the [Student Ombuds](#).)

If your name is chosen, but your engagement indicates that you are not sufficiently prepared (i.e., your answers are obviously wrong, inappropriate, off-topic, etc...), five points will be deducted from your participation score. In this case, I will contact you privately after class, rather than announcing it publicly, and will allow you to earn back (at least some of) those points by writing an extra response paper (to be graded on the same five-point scale outlined below). If your name is called and you are not present at all, this will be considered academic dishonesty, and ten points will be deducted, which you will not be able to earn back or otherwise make up.

Response Papers (20%)

At the end of each of the first five parts of the course, you will write a 600-800-word response paper. In the last lecture for each part (usually on a Thursday), I will assign several prompts to choose from, and the response paper will usually be due the following Monday (see schedule below for details). Each response will be graded on a 5-point scale, based on whether it: (a) directly answers the prompt; and (b) displays depth and originality; with 1 point deducted for each 24 period it is late (see the full rubric on Blackboard). Your top four scores will be added together, for a maximum score of 20, which constitutes 20% of your course grade). This means you may skip one response entirely; alternatively, if you write all five, I will drop the lowest score.

Final Exam (40%)

The final exam is scheduled for December 8 at 7:30pm. It will involve three essay questions (worth 10 points each) and 20 short-answer questions (worth 0.5 points each), totaling 40 points and constituting 40% of your course grade. You will be able to choose which essay prompts to answer from a longer list. The prompts for the response papers will be roughly similar to those you will be asked to address in the essay portion of your final exam, so these are the best opportunity you'll have to practice for the exam and receive feedback.

Final Project (20%)

The format of the final project is up to you, and creativity is encouraged. The only requirement is that you use one or more course texts to demonstrate your proficiency in the final course objective: tracing the historical origins of contemporary challenges. Possible formats include: a dialogue, a policy brief, a party manifesto, a science fiction story, a podcast, a comic strip, a Youtube video, an op-ed, etc.

You will submit a ~500-word proposal to me by 5pm on Monday, November 21 (i.e., just before Thanksgiving), but you are also encouraged to come to my office hours beforehand, and throughout the semester, to discuss your final project. The final version must be submitted two weeks later, by 5pm on Monday, December 5.

It will be evaluated on the basis of whether it creatively illustrates the historical origins of some contemporary political challenge (full rubric to be posted on Blackboard). Two points will be deducted for each 24-hour period it is late (with exceptions only where required by the University and supported by official documentation).

Course Policies

1. Academic Integrity: You are responsible for knowing what constitutes academic dishonesty and for avoiding all forms of it. Violations of the university's academic integrity policy will result in a failing grade for the relevant assignment and referral to the [Office of Academic Integrity](#).

2. Disabilities: Students with disabilities should contact me during the first week of class to ensure that appropriate accommodations are provided. See also the [Office of Student Disability Services](#).

3. Electronics: Use of phones and laptops is prohibited during class, unless you have received special permission from me. Tablets without keyboards may be used to display readings but should not be used for note-taking. Studies show that taking notes by hand improves retention.¹ Moreover, a wealth of human experience reveals that we are weak beings forever subject to temptation, and must be restrained in order to achieve our own best interests.² However, there are exceptions, and if you feel that you are among them, please contact me.

Course Schedule

Aug 18 (Th): Introduction

I: Atlantic Revolutions (1776-1815): can political orders be founded on terms of freedom and equality?

Aug 23 (Tu): *Declaration of Independence* ([link](#)) and *Constitution of the United States* ([link](#))
Publius (Madison / Hamilton), *Federalist Papers* # 1, 10, 15, 48, 51 ([link](#))

Aug 25 (Th): *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* ([link](#))
Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man* (selections, see Blackboard)
Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (selections, see Blackboard)

Aug 30 (Tu): Olympe de Gouges, *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen* ([link](#))
Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (selections, see Blackboard)

Sep 1 (Th): *Haitian Constitution of 1801* ([link](#))
C. L. R. James, *Black Jacobins* (selections, see Blackboard)

Sep 5 (**Mon**): Response Paper #1 due (for Atlantic Revolutions) (**5pm**)

II: Industrial Upheavals (1815-1848): how should societies grapple with rapid industrialization?

Sep 6 (Tu): Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (selections, see Blackboard)

Sep 8 (Th): Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (selections, see Blackboard)

Sep 13 (Tu): Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Communist Manifesto*, preamble + chapter 1-2 ([link](#))

Sep 15 (Th): **NO CLASS**—Prof. Bagg at American Political Science Association – read Shelley!

¹ Mueller, Pam A. and Daniel M. Oppenheimer (2014), "The Pen is Mightier than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand over Laptop Note Taking," *Psychological Science*. 25 (6): 1159-1168.

² See, e.g., Homer, (~750 BCE), *The Odyssey*.

- Sep 20 (Tu): Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (selections, see Blackboard)
- Sep 22 (Th): John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Socialism* (selections, see Blackboard)
Jane Addams, "A Modern Lear" (selections, see Blackboard)
- Sep 26 (Mon) Response Paper #2 due (for Industrial Upheavals) (5pm)

III: Imperial Transformations (1848-1914): how should different nations, cultures, and peoples interact?

- Sep 27 (Tu): Herbert Spencer, *Social Statics* (selections, see Blackboard)
John C. Calhoun, *A Disquisition on Government* (selections, see Blackboard)
- Sep 29 (Th): Roger B. Taney, *Dred Scott vs. Sanford* (selections, see Blackboard)
Abraham Lincoln, *Emancipation Proclamation* ([link](#))
Frederick Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" ([link](#)) (abridged [video](#) version)
Ida B. Wells, "Lynch Law in America" (selections, see Blackboard)
- Oct 4 (Tu): *Cherokee Nation vs. Georgia* (selections, see Blackboard)
Luther Standing Bear, *My People the Sioux* (selections, see Blackboard)
- Oct 6 (Th): Mahatma Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj* (selections, see Blackboard)
Sun Yat-Sen, "The Three Principles of the People" (see Blackboard)
- Oct 10 (Mon): Response Paper #3 due (for Imperial Transformations) (5pm)

IV: Civilizational Ruptures (1914-1945): where did humanity go wrong, and (how) can we fix it?

- Oct 11 (Tu): Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *State and Revolution* (selections, see Blackboard)
Benito Mussolini, "The Doctrine of Fascism" (selections, see Blackboard)
- Oct 13 (Th): NO CLASS – Fall Break
- Oct 18 (Tu): Friedrich Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (selections, see Blackboard)
Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (selections, see Blackboard)
- Oct 20 (Th): Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (selections, see Blackboard)
- Oct 25 (Tu): Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (selections, see Blackboard)
- Oct 27 (Th): NO CLASS – Prof. Bagg at Association for Political Thought – read Shklar / write response!
- Oct 31 (Mon): Response Paper #4 due (for Civilizational Ruptures) (5pm)

V: Postwar Refoundings (1945-1989): what kind of world should be created from the ashes of the old?

- Nov 1 (Tu): Universal Declaration of Human Rights ([link](#))
Judith Shklar, "The Liberalism of Fear" (see Blackboard)
- Nov 3 (Th): Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism* (selections, see Blackboard)
Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth* (selections, see Blackboard)

Nov 8 (Tu): *NO CLASS – Election Day*

Nov 10 (Th): Sharon Statement ([link](#))
Port Huron Statement ([link](#))
Malcolm X, “The Ballot or the Bullet” ([link](#))

Nov 15 (Tu): Vaclav Havel, “The Power of the Powerless” (selections, see Blackboard)

Nov 16 (**Wed**): Response Paper #5 due (for Postwar Refoundings) (**5pm**)

VI: Contemporary Challenges (1989—): can we make the world a better place?

Nov 17 (Th): Joseph Chan, “Hong Kong, Singapore, and Asian Values: An Alternative View” ([link](#))
Amartya Sen, “Democracy as a Universal Value” ([link](#))

Nov 21 (**Mon**): Final Project Proposal due (~500 words) (**5pm**)

Nov 22 (Tu): Russell Muirhead & Nancy Rosenblum, *A Lot of People are Saying...* (see Blackboard)

Nov 24 (Th): *NO CLASS – Thanksgiving Holiday*

Nov 29 (Tu): Olúfẹ̀mi O. Táíwò, *Reconsidering Reparations* (selections, see Blackboard)

Dec 1 (Th): Shosanna Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism* (selections, see Blackboard)

Dec 5 (**Mon**): Final Project due (**5pm**)

Dec 8 (**Th**): Final Exam (**7:30-10pm**)