

Introduction To Political Theory, Fall 2019

Instructor Name: Emma Stamm

Email: stamm@vt.edu

Class Time: Tuesdays & Thursdays 3:30PM-4:45PM

Class Location: Randolph Hall 116

Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:00PM-3:00PM & by appointment

Office Location: Lane Hall 212 (Bay 1, Second Floor)

◆ ***About The Course***

Political theory has always served as an interface between philosophical thought and political practice. Yet it has been conceived in very different ways across historical epochs and cultural environments. This course presents foundational political ideas in their original contexts, and establishes continuity between them. It also deploys multimedia modalities to reflect the relevance of canonical political ideas in the present.

With certain exceptions, reading assignments proceed in chronological order. The course begins by defining “political theory” as it is understood in relation to political science. Then, we head towards Ancient Greece before turning to the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, Marxism, Critical Theory, and political theories of identity and intersectionality. You should expect not only to gain a foundation in political theory, but to develop your general capacity for conceptual analysis, with a special focus on applying theoretical frameworks to historical events and current affairs.

◆ ***Required Materials***

Political Thought: A Guide To The Classics, by Laurie M. Bagby (later versions by Laurie M. Johnson). ISBN: 978-0-534-55877-2. There should be copies at Bookholders on Main Street, but there may not be enough, and you can probably find cheaper ones online.

All other required texts will be made available through Canvas, primarily as PDFs.

◆ ***What You’ll Be Doing For PSCI2014 As Expressed In Your Final Grade***

Here’s the breakdown by percentage:

Grade Component 1: Participation/Attendance — 20%

Lively discussion is essential to our class. These contributions count toward your participation grade. Please note that I am more interested in the quality of your in-class comments than the quantity. If you do not feel comfortable speaking up very often, you can partially make up for this by commenting on your classmates’ discussion posts, even if you have chosen not to submit discussion posts yourself. Attendance is counted as part of participation.

Absences will be excused for documented illness, university-sanctioned travel (including athletic events if you are a player, not a spectator), and emergencies, which I will evaluate on a case-by-case basis. You are permitted two unexcused absences without penalty. Your third and fourth unexcused absence each result in two points lost from your participation grade. Your fifth unexcused absence will result in six points lost, which will cut your potential participation grade in half. After five unexcused absences (i.e. six or more), you will receive a 0 for participation.

About participation: please be self-aware and respectful when you speak up. Don't assume that your classmates know the same things you do, give others time to talk, and remember that your contribution should connect to our discussion.

The first writing assignment, which is pass/fail, counts as two percentage points off your participation grade (and thereby your total grade). If it is one day late, you lose one percentage point. After two days, you lose the full two.

Grade Component 2: Choose one: Three discussion posts throughout the semester (Option A) or One full-length paper due mid-October (Option B) — 15%

Option A:

Three times throughout the semester, you will submit a five-hundred word discussion post to Canvas. You type this directly in Canvas; it's not a file upload.

For the discussion post, you will choose one or two theorists whom we have already read. You will reflect on, interpret, and offer original opinions on their ideas. I know this seems open-ended. I'll do one of my own that you can use as an example. You can't do more than one post about the same thinkers or ideas.

You are encouraged to read each other's posts and respond to your classmates online, even if you haven't chosen Option A. If you tend not to speak up in class, you can boost your participation grade by responding to your classmates' online discussion posts. Each discussion post is worth 5% of your participation grade. These are due no later than 10PM on the scheduled dates: September 19, October 17 and November 19.

Option B:

You will submit a 1,500 word paper which presents an original comparison and/or juxtaposition of two thinkers. More about this will be said in class. The entire assignment is worth 15% of your final grade. This is due on October 17, no later than 10PM.

Grade Component 3: Quizzes — 20%

There will be four quizzes. Two are on the syllabus; two will be pop quizzes.

The pop quizzes are far less challenging than the scheduled quizzes. If you've been keeping up with the reading, you'll ace them.

Scheduled quizzes are administered via Canvas. They are open-note and open-Internet. No reading is due on scheduled quiz dates.

Pop quizzes are hard copy and closed-book. You are required to bring a laptop on scheduled quiz days. If you do not have access to a laptop, let me know and I will make sure you have one to use. Each quiz is worth 5% of your final grade.

Note that there are no full-length exams, including no final exam, for the course.

Grade Component 4: Presentations — 20%

Each student will give an 8-10 minute presentation once in the semester. You can present on anything you choose, so long as you draw a connection between your topic and the readings assigned on the day you present. I can suggest presentation ideas if you'd like.

Presentations must include slides. These are due to me via email the night before — any time is fine, as long as I have them by the morning. They cannot include videos.

Grade Component 6: Final Paper — 25%

To be discussed in class, with all details uploaded to Canvas in a timely fashion.

❖ *Housekeeping*

Late Work

Legitimate reasons for submitting assignments late include documented illness, university-sanctioned travel (including athletic events if you are a player, not a spectator), and emergencies. Please inform me of these situations as soon as possible. In the case of athletic events, you must let me know more than twenty-four hours in advance.

Otherwise, turn in your work on time. For the Option A people: each day that a discussion post is late, you will lose two percentage points, so that you get no credit by the third day it is late. For the Option B people, the first paper will be docked one letter grade per day late, a policy which also applies to everyone for the final paper. You may only make up quizzes in the case of an excused absence. Other late assignments will be addressed on a case-by-case basis. In the case of an emergency leading to late work, rapid communication with me about it is key.

Attendance

Because in-class participation is so important to our class, I will take attendance most days. If you are unable to come to class, please let me know as soon as possible. Please refer back to the “Participation/Attendance” grade component to understand how this will affect your grade.

Disability

I am committed to creating a classroom that is accessible for everybody. Please notify me as soon as possible if you require particular accommodations for a disability. I will work with you to ensure you have everything you need, including alternative document formats, seating arrangements, note-takers and more. Virginia Tech's Services for Students with Disabilities website can be found at ssd.vt.edu. They may be reached via email at ssd@vt.edu.

Names, Nicknames, Gender Identity and Pronouns

If you would like to go by a name that's not on the official roster, let me know.

I expect you to correct me if I mispronounce your name — I won't be offended!

Feel free to share your gender identity and pronouns with me. I use “she/her.”

Academic Honesty

Dishonesty and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Note that plagiarism often happens inadvertently.

Please take seriously what is written in the Undergraduate Honor Code:

“Each member of the university community agrees to honor the following: ‘As a Hokie, I will conduct myself with honor and integrity at all times. I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I accept the actions of those who do.’”

Students enrolled in this course are responsible for abiding by the above. A student who has doubts about how the Honor Code applies to any assignment is responsible for obtaining specific guidance from me before submitting the assignment for evaluation. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the University community from the requirements and expectations of the Honor Code.

For additional information about the Honor Code, please visit: <https://www.honorsystem.vt.edu/>

Other

PSCI2014 does not constitute a totalitarian or Fascist program. You are therefore encouraged to share feedback with me, by email or in person, throughout the semester. While you’ll provide commentary in your SPOT reviews at the end of the semester, your suggestions can make a big difference now.

We acknowledge the Tutelo/Monacan people, who are the traditional custodians of the land on which Virginia Tech is situated, and recognize their continuing connection to the land, water, and air that Virginia Tech consumes. We pay respect to the Tutelo/Monacan Nations, and to their elders past, present, and emerging.

Assignment Schedule

Week 1

8/29: Introductions, housekeeping, syllabus review

Week 2:

9/3: Leslie Paul Thiele, introduction and excerpt from chapter 1, *Art and Craft Of Political Theory*

9/5: No class, but first writing assignment is due by 10PM. This includes: a brief autobiography (minimum two paragraphs) and notification of the following: your preferred presentation topic and date, and whether you choose option (A) or (B) for the second grade component. The sooner you send me this first writing assignment, the more likely it is that you will get your preferred topic and date for the presentation. If you are unclear about this assignment, send me an email.

Week 3

9/10: Laurie Bagby, *Political Thought: A Guide To The Classics* pp. 2-12; Plato, *The Republic* Book 7

9/12: Scheduled presentations; Plato, *The Republic* Books 8, 9 and 10

Week 4

9/17: Scheduled presentations; Bagby pp. 48-60 and Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* Ch. 1-3

9/19: Scheduled presentations; Machiavelli, *The Prince* Ch. 5-6 and Bagby pp. 112-132;

Option A: first post is due at 10PM

Week 5:

9/24: Scheduled presentations; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “Discourse on the Arts and Sciences” and “On The Social Contract” Chapters 1-2

9/26: Scheduled presentations; Mary Wollstonecraft, “Vindication of the Rights of Women” pp. 7-12; 53-71

Week 6:

10/1: Scheduled presentations; Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* glossary and pp. 1-37

10/3: Scheduled presentations; Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* pp. 38-73

Week 7:

10/8: Scheduled presentations; Marx and Engels, “Manifesto of the Communist Party” pp. 1-41

10/10: Scheduled presentations; Marx and Engels, “Manifesto of the Communist Party” pp. 42-68

Week 8:

10/15: Scheduled presentations; György Lukács, “Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat” parts 1 and 2

10/17: Scheduled presentations; György Lukács, “Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat” part 3 **Option A: second post is due at 10PM; Option B: 1,500 word paper due at 10PM**

Week 9:

10/22: Scheduled presentations; Frederick Douglass, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?”

10/24: Scheduled presentations; WEB DuBois, *Souls of Black Folk* chapters 1-4

Week 10:

10/29: Scheduled presentations; Martin Luther King Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”

10/31: Scheduled presentations; Angela Davis, “Racism in the Women Suffrage Movement” and “The Approaching Obsolescence of Housework” from *Women, Race and Class*

Week 11:

11/5: Scheduled presentations; Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, "The Concept of Enlightenment" from *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*

11/7: Scheduled presentations; Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception" from *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*

Week 12:

11/12: Scheduled presentations; John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* Episodes 1 and 2

11/14: Scheduled presentations; Herbert Marcuse, "The New Forms of Control" from *One-Dimensional Man*

Week 13:

11/19: Scheduled presentations; Herbert Marcuse, "One-Dimensional Thought: From Negative to Positive Thinking: Technological Rationality and The Logic of Domination" from *One-Dimensional Man*

11/21: Nina Power, *One-Dimensional Woman* pp. 1-39 **Option A: third post due at 10PM**

Week 14:

11/26: Thanksgiving break

11/28: Thanksgiving day

Week 15:

12/3: Scheduled presentations; "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw

12/5: Scheduled presentations; scheduled quiz; no reading due

Week 16:

12/10: Scheduled presentations

Friday, December 13 2019: Final paper due at 10PM