

Professor Manfred B. Steger
M 10:30-1:00; Saunders 624
Office: Saunders 615; Tel.: 956-8092
Email: manfred@hawaii.edu

POLS 335: HISTORY OF POLITICAL THOUGHT

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Course Description

Serving as an introduction to modern political theory from Renaissance Italy to contemporary America, this course invites students to participate in the historical study of political ideas. We proceed from the premise that political theory is never just “abstract philosophy” disconnected from the “real world”, but rather an engaged search for answers to concrete political problems confronting us today. In our own age, for example, various globalization dynamics have forced many political thinkers to respond to political issues that are beyond the reach of nationally based political institutions and their associated political philosophies. Still, in building their own theoretical models, contemporary political theorists consciously draw on ideas first articulated by such pivotal thinkers as those discussed in this course. Although the political theorists discussed in this class subscribe to different political and cultural norms, they are all united in their role as self-conscious, political and social critics. Indeed, political theory is by nature a critical enterprise, for the purpose of its activity consists in challenging established categories and traditions. Yet, most theorists combine their roles as Socratic “gadflies” with a constructive effort to outline their vision of the “good life.”

In raising questions like “What is the role of ethics in politics?,” “Is it possible and/or desirable to achieve a rational political order?,” AND “What are the connections among power, obedience, resistance, and order?,” we will not only appraise some of the pivotal writings in modern political theory, but we will also follow the arduous journey of seven first-rate political thinkers into the realm of social norms, values, and political ideals. While we always bring our own culturally and historically specific standpoints and sets of biases to our reading of political texts, the goal of this course lies in expanding our present intellectual horizon of understanding by encountering and attempting to understand theories and views that at first sight may seem strange, alien, and even hostile to our own perspective. If successful, our readings and class discussions will help us to both appreciate our distance from and our kinship with those political theorists whose perspectives may differ markedly from our own. Employing such a critical, as well as open-minded, strategy of interpretation corresponds to the never-ending human quest for meaning and knowledge, as well as to the desire for more comprehensive interpretations and reflections.

Required Texts

(Available for purchase in the UH bookstore or free downloads).

- 1) Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*. Dover Thrift Editions, 1992. ISBN: 978-0486272740.
- 2) John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government*. Dover Thrift Editions, 2002. ISBN: 978-0486424644.
- 3) Thomas Jefferson, *The Declaration of Independence*. In Marx and Engels, pp. 63-67 (see item 6).
- 4) *The French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen*. In Marx and Engels, pp. 79-81 (see item 6).
- 5) Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Arts & Sciences* [First Discourse]
(Digitally available at no cost at:
https://www.google.com/webhp?sourceid=chromeinstant&rlz=1C5CHFA_enUS562US563&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=rousseau+first+discourse+pdf).
PRINT OUT YOUR OWN HARD COPY AND BRING TO CLASS!
- 6) Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto and Other Revolutionary Writings*. Dover Thrift, 2003.
ISBN: 978-0486424651; and *Estranged Labor* (digitally available at no cost at:
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/labour.htm>).
Wage Labor and Capital (Digitally available at no cost at:
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1847/wage-labour/index.htm>).
PRINT OUT YOUR OWN HARD COPIES AND BRING TO CLASS!
- 7) Mahatma Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj* (digitally available at no cost at:
<http://www.soilandhealth.org/03sov/0303critic/hind%20swaraj.pdf>).
PRINT OUT YOUR OWN HARD COPY AND BRING TO CLASS!
- 8) Bell Hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. South End Press, 2000. ISBN: 978-0896086135.

Relevant Secondary Literature:

- 1) G. Sabine, *A History of Political Theory*
- 2) S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision*
- 3) S. Okin, *Women in Western Political Thought*
- 4) T. Ball, *Reappraising Political Theory*
- 5) D. Tannenbaum and D. Schultz, *Inventors of Ideas*
- 6) H. Pitkin, *Fortune Is a Woman*
- 7) J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*
- 8) S. De Grazia, *Machiavelli in Hell*
- 9) C. B. MacPherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*

- 10) R. Ashcraft, *Locke's Two Treatises of Government*
- 11) E. Cassirer, *The Question of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*
- 12) R. Masters, *The Political Philosophy of Rousseau*
- 13) S. Avineri, *Karl Marx: Social and Political Thought*
- 14) L. Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, 3 vols.
- 15) S. E. Bronner, *Socialism Unbound*
- 16) B. Parekh, *Gandhi*
- 17) J. Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict*
- 18) Y. Chadha, *Gandhi: A Life*
- 19) A. Davis, *Women, Race & Class*
- 20) G. Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy*

Learning Objectives

The five principal learning objectives of this course are:

- *To gain a clear understanding of the theoretical features, historical context, and social impact of major political ideas and their codifiers;*
- *To acquire the knowledge and skill to analyze major political ideas with an critical eye toward the workings of power relations in society;*
- *To expand our present intellectual horizon of understanding by encountering and theories and views that at first sight may seem strange or even hostile to our own perspective;*
- *To make a critical connection between theory and practice by understanding the relevance of "old" political ideas and themes for current political problems;*
- *To produce and deepen critical forms of knowledge and understanding that contribute to emancipatory strategies of social and political transformation.*

Requirements & Written Work

It is important to me to encourage you to maintain an exploratory mind and create your own "active learning environment"—not solely interacting with me, but with each other as well. I EXPECT REGULAR STUDENT ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION. You must be willing to engage in class discussions. I will facilitate student discussions by creating a safe context that allows you to speak up freely. But I do not accept the equation of subjective experience with "truth." You must be able to confront the questions I ask, regardless of your own preferences. Most of all, I am interested in preparing you for independent research which requires a tolerant, reflective mind, best summarized by Immanuel Kant's dictum: "*Sapere aude*"—"Have the courage to use your *own* understanding!"

You are expected to complete the weekly reading assignments and attend class prepared to discuss the texts. The format of this course will consist of lectures with plenty of opportunity for discussion. We will also view some films and video clips in class (see course schedule below). Since it is imperative for a well-educated person to articulate his/her ideas in public, you will also engage regularly in small and large group interactions, including formal presentations of

your reactions to the readings. Hence, your active participation in the discussion contributes to your final grade.

One half of a class period at the end of each thinker will be entirely devoted to in-depth discussions of the readings assigned for that section. Since it is imperative for a well-educated person to lead a discussion on a topic of her/his choice in public, student teams (up to six students) will be responsible for a formal presentation conceived as an exercise in “*Constructive Criticism*.” Each student has 5 minutes to identify three strengths and three weaknesses in their chosen author’s argument (entire group) and **EXPLAIN WHY THESE ARE STRENGTHS OR WEAKNESSES**. Or the team may choose to nominate only one or two team speakers who will have thirty minutes to identify and explain the total of six strengths/weaknesses. Evaluation of your **COLLECTIVE** presentation will take place in consultation with the instructor immediately following your presentation. **No book reports, please!** Again, each team is given up to thirty minutes to present its case—in a sophisticated and constructive manner—to the class. Then, other students have a chance to react by presenting their own arguments, pro or con, for another thirty minutes. I will serve as a facilitator and “vibe watcher,” and then respond to the class discussion at the end of the presentation. Obviously, the main responsibility for the quality and direction of these presentations and discussions rests with *all* students. Hence, your active participation in the discussion is an act of solidarity and reciprocity! **Sign up for your team on a first-come-first-serve basis. You must be a team of at least three students in order to qualify for sign up.**

Written work will consist of three (3) interpretive papers comparing themes or problems or issues taken from the required readings (five double-spaced, typed pages, font 12).

Paper I on Machiavelli and Locke (due 9/28)

Paper II on Rousseau and Marx/Engels (due 11/16)

Paper III on Gandhi and Hooks (due 12/14)

These three *interpretation papers* should engage in a comparison of *one* self-selected theme/issue/problem taken from the assigned text(s) of the relevant section(s). In each paper, you should carefully compare how the two writers deal this *one* theme/problem such as “equality,” “race,” “oppression,” “human nature,” “gender,” “violence,” “power,” and so on. With as much sophistication as possible, you should indicate how that theme/problem reveals the differences or similarities in the thinking of these authors and **why this is significant and meaningful to you**. You should engage in a careful textual analysis and cite appropriate, short textual passages (full footnotes or endnotes). You may show me *one* draft of your paper before the deadline. *Don’t write “book reviews” or plot summaries. No rewrites, no extensions. Late papers will not be accepted (exceptions only in cases of documented illness).*

A Note on Grading

You must complete all assigned written and oral work in order to pass the course. Any student found guilty of plagiarism will fail the course. Your in-class presentation will count for 15%; your three interpretive essays 75% (25% each); and your attendance/participation 10%. More than **one** absence per semester will result in a 5% penalty per missed class up to 10%. In order to be considered “legitimate,” absences must be documented and they must clearly reflect cases of health emergency. It is not acceptable to simply cite “other commitments.” Thus, your course

grade will reflect your presentation, your willingness to participate in discussions, class attendance, and the overall quality of your written work. Students who distinguish themselves during our class discussions will receive *extra credit*—meaning that if you find yourself between two grades at the end of the semester, you will receive the *higher grade*.

Please be advised that *overparticipation* and the monopolization of class discussion at the expense of your peers is not welcome, especially if such actions consistently derail the course agenda. I reserve the right to cut off discussion at any point in order keep us on track and help *all* students to understand the relevant material. A significant element in the study of political theory is the ability to learn to listen to other voices. For the purposes of this course, you should interpret the grades you receive in the following terms:

1) In-Class Presentations:

An “A” will only be given to presentations that are clearly superior in form as well as content. Typically, such presentations are coherent, well organized, and adhere to the given time frame. “A” students show their thorough and careful reading of the text(s), bring in outside and/or online materials for reference, and generate genuine interest and excitement for their presented strengths and weaknesses. They lead discussions effortlessly, distribute speaking time fairly, and stay focused on their theme.

2) Interpretive Essays:

Much of the above pertains to interpretive essays as well. In addition to treating the subject in a sophisticated and creative manner, “A” papers exhibit elegant and clear prose. Such papers draw comparisons and connections between selected themes; they are well organized and furnish adequate citations of primary and secondary sources without losing their own unique and distinct voice and perspective. If this grade is to mean something, just doing a “good job” is not good enough for an “A.” You must demonstrate your ability to go *beyond* the expected.

Course and Classroom Protocols

Our goal is learning, through the sharing of ideas about a complex and rich subject of great intellectual and aesthetic value. The classroom is for comments, questions, and clarifications about the assigned reading. To help us achieve that goal:

- Reading assignments are to be completed in advance of the class meeting when they are scheduled to be discussed; you are expected to bring the book, and your insights as well as puzzlements to share with the rest of the class;
- Be on time; do not go out and come back during class (except for real emergencies); do not leave early;
- No eating during class (drinking is allowed);
- Turn off and put away your cellphones;

- No private conversations;
- Laptops are permitted for occasional note taking use only; you may not withdraw from the group into your laptop;
- Participation in class discussions is a required component of the grade for classwork;
- To sum up: we want to keep the heat in the system for 150 minutes and maximize our learning experience.

Academic Dishonesty

The Political Science Department holds its students to the highest standards of academic integrity. Examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to:

- Using the same paper for more than one class without explicit permission from the instructors
- Cutting and pasting directly from a website or other source without attribution.
- Using sources or referring to sources without directly referencing the materials.
- Passing off work done by other students as your own.
- Cheating on tests.

No forms of academic dishonesty will be tolerated. If a student is found to have engaged in a form of academic dishonesty, consequences will range from failure in the course to suspension from the program. Evidence of academic dishonesty within a course will be forwarded first to the graduate chair and then, following the procedures for the University of Hawaii system, to the Office of Judicial Affairs. A record of charges will be kept in the student's file. More information regarding this subject can be found on the Office of Student Affairs' website in the student conduct code.

Office Hours

Wednesday, 2:00 – 3:00pm; and by appointment.

Students are encouraged to see me during office hours on a regular basis. Please clarify difficult passages in your readings or other course-related problems with me as soon as possible; *don't wait until the last few weeks of the semester.*

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1 (Aug 24): INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

Readings for week 2 & 4: Machiavelli, *The Prince*.

WEEK 2 (Aug 31): MACHIAVELLI, *THE PRINCE*

WEEK 3 (Sept 7): NO CLASS (Labor Day)

**WEEK 4 (Sept 14): MACHIAVELLI, *THE PRINCE* & STUDENT PRESENTATION #1:
TEAM MACHIAVELLI**

Readings for week 5 & 6: Locke, *Second Treatise*.

WEEK 5 (Sept 21): LOCKE, *SECOND TREATISE OF GOVERNMENT*

**WEEK 6 (Sept 28): LOCKE, *SECOND TREATISE OF GOVERNMENT* & STUDENT
PRESENTATION #2: TEAM LOCKE**

Readings for week 7: Jefferson, *Declaration of Independence*, and *French
Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*.

PAPER #1 due.

**WEEK 7 (Oct 5): JEFFERSON, *DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE* & *FRENCH
DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF MAN AND THE CITIZEN***

Readings for weeks 8 & 9: Rousseau, *Discourse on the Arts & Sciences*

WEEK 8 (Oct 12): ROUSSEAU, *DISCOURSE ON THE ARTS AND SCIENCES*

**WEEK 9 (Oct 19): ROUSSEAU, *DISCOURSE ON THE ARTS AND SCIENCES* &
STUDENT PRESENTATION #3: TEAM ROUSSEAU**

Readings for week 10, 11 & 12: Marx, *Estranged Labor*; and Marx & Engels, *The
Communist Manifesto*.

**WEEK 10 (Oct 26): MARX & ENGELS, *ALIENATED LABOR, WAGE LABOR &
CAPITAL***

WEEK 11 (Nov 2): MARX & ENGELS, *THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO*

**WEEK 12 (Nov 9): MARX & ENGELS, *THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO* & STUDENT
PRESENTATION #4: TEAM MARX & ENGELS**

Readings for week 13 & 14: Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*

WEEK 13 (Nov 16): GANDHI, *HIND SWARAJ*

PAPER #2 due.

**WEEK 14 (Nov 23): GANDHI, *HIND SWARAJ* & STUDENT PRESENTATION #5:
TEAM GANDHI**

Readings for week 15: Hooks, *Feminist Theory*.

WEEK 15 (Nov 30): HOOKS, *FEMINIST THEORY: FROM MARGIN TO CENTER*

**WEEK 16 (Dec 7): HOOKS, *FEMINIST THEORY: FROM MARGIN TO CENTER* &
STUDENT PRESENTATION # 6: TEAM HOOKS**

PAPER #3 due: MONDAY, DEC 14, Noon.