

Political Theory

PLSC 100 – Spring 2024

Instructor: Dr. Alessandro Ferrara

Tuesdays (2 ½ hrs), 10-12:30

Office hours Tu 12:30-13:30 (by appointment)

E-Mail: aferrara1@luc.edu

SUMMARY

Short Description: This course will first explore key questions in reflecting upon politics: What is politics? What is justice? What is freedom? What is equality? What are power and authority? Then the course will focus on democracy: What are democracy and political liberalism? How should democratic legitimacy, the sovereignty of the people and the constitution be understood?

Outcome Statement: Students will be able to demonstrate understanding of the various approaches to political justice and legitimacy.

THIS COURSE AND THE UNIVERSITY CORE CURRICULUM

Knowledge Area(s) satisfied: Skill(s) Developed: Values Requirement(s) satisfied:

Philosophical Knowledge
Critical Thinking Skills and Dispositions None

CORE LEARNING OUTCOMES Knowledge Area (Philosophical Knowledge):

In addition to the general competencies associated with the Philosophical Knowledge area, students in this course will:

1. Learn how the nature of politics as a philosophical question has been examined by major philosophers in western philosophy. They will be able to contrast and compare the understanding of politics articulated by major historical figures such as Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Rawls. Students will be tested on their grasp of these concepts and their diverse inflection within these historical paradigms in oral and written exercises.
2. Learn about the way philosophers have analyzed freedom, justice, democracy, power, the people, legitimacy. Students will examine political notions as foci of paradigmatic contestation within philosophical inquiry. They will be asked to write essays or to answer questions (in the midterm) on various aspects of the concepts discussed in class.
3. Examine the theoretical underpinnings and philosophical-anthropological assumptions that undergird major approaches to politics.
4. Evaluate philosophical arguments on politics, freedom, justice, democracy, legitimacy, authority, rights and the sovereignty of the people by comparing the philosophers' views (with each other and

with the student's view). Students will be asked to challenge commonsense, simplistic and naïve viewpoints, by analyzing the arguments of others and providing their own arguments.

Skills (Critical Thinking Skills and Dispositions):

Students will develop the skills necessary to:

1. Comprehend and summarize the meaning of various forms of communication
2. Analyze relationships among statements, questions, and concepts
3. Evaluate various points of view
4. Generate new ideas and proposals.

These competencies will be developed by reading primary philosophical texts on politics, applying philosophical concepts to politics, comparing various approaches to politics, and developing and critiquing each other's political-philosophical views. Students will develop their critical thinking skills through essays and oral presentations.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Full Course Description: This course will explore one or more of the following philosophical questions in the area of politics:

- What are the main philosophical approaches to politics?
- What is justice and what place does it have in politics?
- What is democracy?
- What is authority and how to understand its legitimacy?
- How to make sense of the sovereignty of the people?
- What is constituent power and what, if anything, binds it?

More specifically, the course focuses on fundamental philosophical writings on politics. Crucial and contested concepts such as justice, freedom, power, democracy, authority, legitimacy, constituent power and the sovereignty of the people will be analyzed from a plurality of political philosophical perspectives – classical and contemporary.

Required Texts:

- **Plato, *The Republic***. Translated by D.Lee, introduction M.Lane, Penguin, 2007: **Book 1**, 336b-352d [pp. 15-36]; **Book 2**, 357a-360d, 369a-376c (pp. 40-44, 55-66); **Book 4**, 427d-434d, 441c-444e (pp. 130-139, 149-154); **Book 7**, 514a-520d (pp. 241-247). A different translation is available on line for free, at <http://160592857366.free.fr/joe/ebooks/ShareData/The%20Republic%20by%20Plato.pdf> =
- **Aristotle, *Politics***. Translated by T.A.Sinclair, revision by J.Saunders Books, Penguin 1992: **Book 1**, 1252a1-1255b30 (pp. 54-75), **Book 3**, 1274b32-1279b4 [pp. 168-190], **Book 4**, 1288b21-1292a31 [pp. 236-251]. A different translation is available on line for free at <https://historyofeconomicthought.mcmaster.ca/aristotle/Politics.pdf>
- **Hobbes, *Leviathan***. Edited and with an introduction by C.B.MacPherson, Penguin 1985: **Chs. 13, 17-18, 21**. The text is available on line for free at https://files.libertyfund.org/files/869/0161_Bk.pdf
- **Locke, *Two Treatises on Government***, critical edition by P.Laslett, Mentor, 1965: **Book II, Chs 1-3** (§§ 1-21), **7-8** (§§ 77-90, 95-107, 111-120), 19 (§§ 211-231, 240-243). The text is available on line for free at <https://english.hku.hk/staff/kjohnson/PDF/LockeJohnSECONDTREATISE1690.pdf>

- **Rousseau, *The Social Contract*.** Translation by Chr.Betts, Oxford University Press, 1999. **Books I and II.** A different translation is available on line for free at https://oll-resources.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/oll3/store/titles/638/0132_Bk.pdf
- **J.Rawls, *Political Liberalism*. Expanded Edition.** New York: Columbia University Press, 2005, pp. xxxv-58, 133-172, 212-254.
- **Additional materials for the last two sessions may be made available**

Assessment Components:

Student's final grade will be based on:

- One in-class test (Midterm): 40% of the final grade.
- One take-home paper (Final): 40% of the final grade.
- In-class presentations and participation: 20% of the final grade. Students will be requested to make presentations (15 min) for one of the scheduled readings assigned.

Grading Policy:

The following grading scale will be applied for determining the final grade:

Presentation: A=20; A-=18; B+=17; B=16; B-=15; C+=14; C=13; C-=12; D+=12; D=11; F=10

Midterm and Final (each): A=40; A-=37; B+=36; B=34; B-=33; C+=32; C=30; C-=29; D+=27; D=26; F=24

Final Grade: A = 94-100; A- = 90-93; B+ = 87-89; B = 84-86; B- = 80-83; C+ = 77-79; C = 74- 76; C- = 70-73; D+ = 67-69; D = 60-66; F = 59 and below

Attendance Policy:

Students should plan to regularly attend the class, since we will often broaden the topics contained in the texts to contemporary issues, and since this class is mainly intended to the rousing of students' personal thoughts and ideas.

In accordance with the JFRC mission to promote a higher level of academic rigor, all courses adhere to the following absence policy:

This course meets once a week, thus a total of one unexcused absence will be permitted. Unexcused absences beyond these will result in 1% lowering of the final course grade, for every absence after the "approved limit". **DO NOT ATTEND CLASS IF YOU ARE ILL.**

Class Conduct:

One important aspect of a Jesuit education is learning to respect the rights and opinions of others. Please respect others by (1) allowing all classmates the right to voice their opinions without fear of ridicule, and (2) not using profanity or making objectionable (including gendered, racial or ethnic) comments, especially comments directed at a classmate.

Sakai:

All course materials will be located on Sakai which can be accessed at <https://sakai.luc.edu> Sakai is a web based learning management system. You will be able to access it from any computer

connected to the internet. Instructional guides and video tutorials for using Sakai are available at: <http://www.luc.edu/itrs/sakai/sakai-student-tutorials.shtml>

Course content, including syllabi, reading material etc. will be available online. Students should check Sakai often for announcements, assignments, and other course content.

Student Support Resources:

- ITS Service Desk: helpdesk@luc.edu 773-508-4487
- Library Subject Specialists: <http://libraries.luc.edu/specialists> • Student Accessibility Center: sac@luc.edu
- Writing Center: <http://www.luc.edu/writing/>
- Ethics Hotline: <http://luc.edu/sglc/aboutus/> 855.603.6988

Email Messages:

All email messages sent to students about this course will be sent to their Loyola email address. Students are expected to check their Loyola email address on a regular basis. You can access your web based LUC email account at <https://outlook.luc.edu>

Special Circumstances--Receiving Assistance:

Students are urged to contact their instructors should they have questions concerning course materials and procedures. If you have any special circumstance that may have some impact on your course work, please let your instructors know so they can establish a plan for assignment completion. If you require assignment accommodations, please contact your instructors early in the semester so that arrangements can be made with Student Accessibility Center (SAC) (<http://www.luc.edu/sac/>).

Copyright:

Copyright law was designed to give rights to the creators of written work, artistic work, computer programs and other creative materials. The Copyright Act requires that people who use or reference the work of others must follow a set of guidelines designed to protect authors' rights. Unfortunately, copyright law is complex and too often incomprehensible; that does not, however, excuse users from following the rules. The safest practice is to remember (1) to refrain from distributing works used in class (whether distributed by the professor or used for research); they are likely copyright protected and (2) that any research or creative work should be cited. For LUC's copyright resources check online: <http://www.luc.edu/copyright>

Intellectual Property:

All lectures, notes and other instructional materials in this course are the intellectual property of the professor. As a result, they may not be distributed or shared in any manner, either on paper or virtually without my written permission. Lectures may not be recorded without my written consent; when consent is given, those recordings may be used for review only and may not be distributed. Recognizing that your work, too, is your intellectual property, I will not share or distribute your work in any form without your written permission.

Privacy Statement

Assuring privacy among faculty and students engaged in online and face-to-face instructional activities helps promote open and robust conversations and mitigates concerns that comments made within the context of the class will be shared beyond the classroom. As such, recordings of instructional activities occurring in online or face-to-face classes may be used solely for internal class purposes by the faculty member and students registered for the course, and only during the period in which the course is offered. Students will be informed of such recordings by a statement in the syllabus for the course in which they will be recorded. Instructors who wish to make subsequent use of recordings that include student activity may do so only with informed written consent of the students involved or if all student activity is removed from the recording. Recordings including student activity that have been initiated by the instructor may be retained by the instructor only for individual use.

Accessibility Accommodations

Students registered with the Student Accessibility Center requiring academic accommodations should contact the Office of the Dean at the John Felice Rome Center, the first week of classes.

Harassment (Bias Reporting):

It is unacceptable and a violation of university policy to harass, discriminate against or abuse any person because of his or her race, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, age or any other characteristic protected by applicable law. Such behavior threatens to destroy the environment of tolerance and mutual respect that must prevail for this university to fulfill its educational and health care mission. For this reason, every incident of harassment, discrimination or abuse undermines the aspirations and attacks the ideals of our community. The university qualifies these incidents as incidents of bias.

In order to uphold our mission of being Chicago's Jesuit Catholic University -- a diverse community working to expand knowledge in the service of humanity through learning, justice and faith, any incident(s) of bias must be reported and appropriately addressed. Therefore, the Bias Response (BR) Team was created to assist members of the Loyola University Chicago community in bringing incidents of bias to the attention of the university. If you believe you are subject to such bias, you should notify the Bias Response Team at this link: <http://webapps.luc.edu/biasreporting/>

Technology:

Students are expected to know how to use Sakai and its features, be able to navigate the internet to explore resources, and to use the electronic resources available through LUC's library homepage.

Workload Expectations:

As an average, students should expect to dedicate about 8 hours per week to fulfill course activities, including readings/review of materials, assignments, lessons, etc.

Academic Integrity:

Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest, and responsible manner. Academic integrity is a guiding principle for all academic activity at Loyola University Chicago, and all members of the University community are expected to act in accordance with this principle.

Failing to meet the following academic integrity standards is a serious violation of personal honesty and the academic ideals that bind the University into a learning community. These standards apply to both individual and group assignments. Individuals working in a group may be held responsible if one of the group members has violated one or more of these standards:

1. Students may not plagiarize.
2. Students may not submit the same work for credit for more than one assignment (known as self-plagiarism).
3. Students may not fabricate data.
4. Students may not collude.
5. Students may not cheat.
6. Student may not facilitate academic misconduct.

Follow this link for more details about these standards, sanctions, and academic misconduct procedures: (https://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml)

Late or Missed Assignments

Late or missed assignments will not be accepted for grading without the authorization of the instructor.

Course Schedule:

- 1st Week (16 January, 2024): Introduction: what is politics? Charting the main approaches to politics: normative paradigms, political realism, individualism and holism
- 2nd Week (23 January, 2024): Political justice: consequentialist v. deontological conceptions; final state v. historical conceptions
- 3rd Week: (30 January, 2024) Justice in the polis: Plato
- 4th Week: (6 February, 2024) Justice in the polis: Aristotle
- 5th Week: (13 February, 2024) Justice in the Commonwealth: justice as stability (Hobbes)
- 6th Week: (20 February, 2024) Justice in the Commonwealth: justice as rule of law (Locke)
- 7th Week: (27 February, 2024) Mid-term
- Break
- 8th Week: (12 March, 2024) Justice in the Republic: justice as self-rule (Rousseau)
- 9th Week: (19 March, 2024) Rawls's "justice as fairness", a *political* conception of justice
- 10th Week: (26 March, 2024) Legitimation as distinct from justice
- 11th Week: (2 April, 2024) The just constitution and dualist constitutional democracy
- 12th Week: (9 April, 2024) Who is "the people" and what is constituent power?
- 13th Week: (16 April, 2024) Forms of constituent power and their normative limits

April 22-25: Finals