

Political Science 6934: Political Theory

Florida Atlantic University, Spring 2021

Course Credits: 3.000

Prerequisites/Corequisites: None

R 4:00-6:50PM, Distance Learning

Professor: Dr. Rebecca LeMoine

Office Location: (561) 287-3947

Contact: rlemoine@fau.edu or (561) 287-3947

Office Hours: Wed. 1:30 – 3:30PM,
or by appt.

Course Description

What is justice? Why do governments exist? What does it mean to be a good citizen? Political theorists have explored these essential questions for ages, creating a rich dialogue that often challenges core assumptions and concepts in the study and practice of politics. Knowledge of political theory—one of the major subfields of political science—is thus indispensable to students seeking a graduate degree in political science. Whereas other political science courses emphasize data collection and empirical methods of analysis, political theory is more of an art than a science due to the normative nature of the questions it examines. As such, students will read classic works in the tradition of Western political thought, using the methods of literary analysis to interpret these thinkers' insights and the elements of persuasive argument to engage these thinkers in conversation. In Part I of the course, students will become familiar with major works including Plato's *Republic*, Machiavelli's *Prince*, Hobbes' *Leviathan*, and Rousseau's *Second Discourse*. In Part II, we will examine different "methods" of doing political theory by reading excerpts from the works of Leo Strauss, Quentin Skinner, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Friedrich Nietzsche, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Eric Voegelin, and others. By considering the texts from Part I through the lens of various interpretive traditions, we will not only gain a deeper appreciation of the complexities of these texts, but also a better sense of what political theory is.

Objectives

- 1) Become familiar with major texts and ideas in the history of Western political thought.
- 2) Develop an understanding of various approaches to political theory and what these approaches involve in terms of textual interpretation and political analysis.
- 3) Improve ability to read, evaluate, and construct arguments in political theory.
- 4) Further develop your own theories of politics through engagement with key ideas in the history of Western political thought.

Course Delivery Mode

This is a **fully online course**. That means that the course will be accessible only through FAU's learning management system, Canvas. You must log into Canvas with your FAU ID and Password to access the materials and assignments in this course. If you do not know your FAU ID or Password, contact OIT for help.

Socratic discussion is an essential component of the study of political theory (and, indeed, of most graduate-level political science courses). Therefore, we will use Zoom to hold a synchronous class discussion every **Thursday from 4:00-6:50PM** (unless otherwise notified).

Required Texts

The following books are available for purchase at the FAU Bookstore. While electronic versions are allowed, **I highly recommend that you purchase paper copies of these exact editions.** Throughout each class session, you will be asked to turn to specific pages in the book. If you do not have the same edition or cannot easily turn to a given page, you will be lost and unable to contribute as effectively. Moreover, students often find it helpful to be able to write directly in the margins of the book.

Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. Ed. Richard Tuck. 10th printing. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007. ISBN: 9780521567978

Machiavelli, Niccolò. *The Prince*. Trans. Peter Bondanella. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. ISBN: 9780199535699

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1989. ISBN: 9780679724629

Plato. *The Republic*. Trans. Allan Bloom. 3rd ed. New York: Basic Books, 2016. ISBN: 9780465094097

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *The First and Second Discourses*. Trans. Roger D. and Judith R. Masters (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1969). ISBN: 9780312694401

Instructor Availability

It is important to me to be accessible to students throughout the semester. Below are the ways you can contact me:

FAQ Discussion Board

You should ask general, course-related questions in the FAQ discussion board on Canvas, which will be active throughout the semester. If you have questions of a personal nature, you should email the instructor from your FAU email address or schedule an office hour appointment.

Email

Except for weekends and holidays, I will typically respond to email within 48 hours. **Please use your FAU email address rather than the Canvas inbox system.** Follow basic norms of professionalism (don't start an email with "hey"). If you have questions about what is appropriate, this is a helpful resource <http://www.wikihow.com/Email-a-Professor>

Office Hours

On *Wednesdays from 1:30 – 3:30PM*, I will be available for scheduled phone calls during designated time slots.

- To sign up for an appointment, simply follow these instructions: <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10580>
- At the start of your scheduled appointment time, please call me at (561) 287-3947.

Course Requirements

| | |
|-------------------|-----|
| Participation: | 20% |
| Oral Book Report: | 10% |
| Research Paper: | 50% |
| Presentation: | 20% |

Participation (20%)

This class will be conducted as a graduate-level seminar. The success of the course therefore depends on each student maintaining regular attendance and active participation. I will take attendance each class. Excessive tardiness or absenteeism (*i.e.* more than one late/missed class, except in approved cases) will result in substantial grade deductions. If you think you will miss more than one class due to University-approved activities, please see me at the start of the semester. Please note I will abide by *FAU's official attendance policy*: “Students are expected to attend all of their scheduled University classes and to satisfy all academic objectives as outlined by the instructor. The effect of absences upon grades is determined by the instructor, and the University reserves the right to deal at any time with individual cases of non-attendance. Students are responsible for arranging to make up work missed because of legitimate class absence, such as illness, family emergencies, military obligation, court-imposed legal obligations or participation in University-approved activities. Examples of University-approved reasons for absences include participating on an athletic or scholastic team, musical and theatrical performances and debate activities. It is the student’s responsibility to give the instructor notice prior to any anticipated absences and within a reasonable amount of time after an unanticipated absence, ordinarily by the next scheduled class meeting. Instructors must allow each student who is absent for a University-approved reason the opportunity to make up work missed without any reduction in the student’s final course grade as a direct result of such absence.”

In addition to attending regularly, students are expected to come to class having read the assigned material carefully and prepared to discuss it. Furthermore, for a Socratic discussion to work, everyone must be present—not just physically, but psychologically. You cannot be present if you are checking email, chatting with friends online, watching ESPN, etc. During discussion time, please close every other window on your electronic device to avoid the temptation of distraction. If you do not seem to be engaged with the discussion, your participation grade will decrease (and I will be unlikely to write you any letters of recommendation).

To facilitate discussion, you will be required to post two thoughtful discussion questions on each week’s assigned readings on the Canvas discussion board **by 11:00PM the night before class**. Your questions should not be simple reading comprehension questions (e.g., “What does Hobbes say about democracy?”). Rather, they should require an answer that *goes beyond* mere summary of the text. In other words, assume that everyone has read the text and basically understands it; ask questions that provoke us to analyze the text more deeply (e.g., a potential contradiction you’re grappling with; a concept used in the text or assumptions in the argument that you want us to examine more closely; interesting connections between parts of the text or to other political theory texts; additional support for or challenges to ideas presented in the text, etc.).

Please be aware that a working webcam is required to earn participation points for this course. If you do not have reliable access to a webcam you should reconsider your enrollment.

Oral Book Report (10%)

In the second section of the course, we will read theoretical accounts of six different “methods” of political theory: the Chicago school; the Cambridge school; hermeneutics; genealogy; deconstruction; and comparative political theory. To increase our understanding of what these

methods look like in practice, at least one student will be assigned per class session to give a brief (10-15 min.) report on a major work of secondary literature that applies that day's method of political theory to the interpretation of Plato's *Republic*. By seeing how interpretations of a single text can vary depending on which method of political theory one employs, students will gain a deeper understanding of the different approaches.

Note that though I'm calling this a "book" report, you do not need to read an entire book for this assignment—a book chapter or two, or a substantial journal article, is all that is expected. A list of suggested readings will be handed out on the first day of class; students may read a scholarly work not included on this list, but only with instructor approval. If multiple students are signed up for the same day, they should each choose a different work of secondary literature to read and report on. Your oral report should be well prepared and should make use of a handout (max. 2 pages) that you have created and submitted to the Canvas assignment page at least 2 hours prior to the start of class.

Research paper (50%)

The major assignment for this course is a journal article-length (approx. 20-25 pages, double-spaced) research paper. The goal is to develop a paper that you can present at a professional conference or submit for publication in an academic journal. Your paper should aim to make an original contribution to a substantive area of research in the field of political theory. Your topic will be developed in consultation with me. Keep in mind that the best political theory papers typically bring a major work of political theory to bear on a contemporary problem and/or address a significant gap in the scholarly literature.

As a starting point, I encourage you to focus on a specific topic (e.g., justice, war, religion, gender, political economy, etc.) within one of the texts read in the first section of the course (Plato's *Republic*, Machiavelli's *Prince*, Hobbes' *Leviathan*, or Rousseau's *Second Discourse*). A plethora of secondary literature exists on each of these major works, so if this is your first exposure to political theory, you will probably have your hands full with examining the scholarship on just one of these texts! If you are feeling ambitious, you might productively compare two of these texts, but I generally would advise against this for beginning students, and I would not advise *anyone* to try to analyze more than two major works in a short paper. Students with prior background in political theory may, in consultation with me, write on a major political theory thinker/text not studied in this course.

Your paper should include the following:

- (1) An attention-grabbing explanation of your research question and its significance.
- (2) A clear, concise statement of your argument and how it makes an original contribution to political theory scholarship.
- (3) A literature review that engages at least **fifteen MAJOR works of secondary literature** pertaining to the major political theory text(s) examined in your paper.
- (4) A well-conducted analysis of the political theory text(s) you have chosen, as related to your chosen topic.
- (5) A conclusion that ties the paper together and reminds the reader of your contribution and its importance, without repeating verbatim earlier parts of the paper.

Given the demanding nature of this assignment, you should begin thinking about this paper early in the semester and managing your time such that you can do the necessary research and writing (while still keeping up with the assigned course readings). To help you stay on track, midway through the term you will be required to submit: (1) a 1-2 page (double-spaced) paper proposal in which you explain your research question and provide a list of 10-20 scholarly books/articles related to your topic; and (2) an annotated bibliography of at least fifteen works of secondary literature pertaining to the major political theory text(s) examined in your paper. I am happy to help you navigate the secondary literature, and highly recommend that you schedule a meeting to discuss the paper with me once you have started looking into a topic that interests you.

Presentation (20%)

During the exam period, students will give short, conference-style presentations of their original research. Your presentation should be well-rehearsed and within the specified time limit (TBD based on the number of students; typically, each student has about 8-10 minutes). It is not customary in political theory to give a PowerPoint presentation or to distribute handouts. You may use notes and you may even read from prepared remarks, though you should do your best to be engaging and make eye contact with the audience. After a set number of presentations, we will take a break to open the floor to any questions or suggestions. The idea is that the presentation will provide a final opportunity for you to receive some feedback from your peers and me before submitting the final paper a few days later.

Grading Policies

- *Presentation*: Late presentations will be accepted only for university-approved absences (see attendance policy above), and in all but the most extraordinary of circumstances must be submitted within 48 hours of the original presentation time.
- *Papers*: Late papers will be penalized 5% if less than an hour late. Beyond an hour late (even by a single minute), papers will be penalized 10% per every 24-hour period late. This means that your paper will not be accepted for any credit if it is 10 or more days late. **Since you have the deadlines well ahead of time, experiencing technological difficulties will not count as a valid excuse for submitting late work.** The best way to avoid a late penalty is to make sure to submit your work well ahead of the deadline. **Note that copy-editing and revision are integral parts of the writing process. Papers that show an unacceptably high level of error or carelessness (for instance, five or more errors in a paragraph) will be returned for you to proofread before resubmitting them. You will have five business days to edit the paper and to resubmit it with an automatic penalty of 10%. After five days, the grade on the paper will automatically drop to an F.**
- *Assignment Feedback Policy*: I will provide feedback on all submitted assignments within two weeks of the submission date. If an assignment requires a longer review period, I will communicate that to you.
- *Graded Work*: I will not discuss grades on any assignments for 24 hours after they have been returned. If, after 24 hours reflection, you do not understand why you received a particular grade, send me a written memo via email and I will respond as soon as possible.

Grading Scale

| | | | |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| A = 94-100 | A- = 91-93.99 | B+ = 87-90.99 | B = 83-86.99 |
| B- = 80-82.99 | C+ = 77-79.99 | C = 73-76.99 | C- = 70-72.99 |
| D+ = 67-69.99 | D = 63-66.99 | D- = 60-62.99 | F = below 60 |

Please be aware that you can track grades for individual assignments on the Canvas 'gradebook' but do not rely on the Canvas reported grade. The percentages do not calculate correctly and many assignments cannot be inputted correctly into the interface. Throughout the semester if you have any concerns you can ask me for an update on your grade.

Netiquette

Due to the casual communication common in the online environment, students are sometimes tempted to relax their grammar, spelling, and/or professionalism. Please remember that you are adult students and professionals—your communication should be appropriate. For more in-depth information, please see the [FAU statement on netiquette](#).

Minimum Technology & Computer Requirements**HARDWARE & SOFTWARE REQUIREMENTS**Hardware

- Dependable computer
- Operating system: Windows 10 or macOS Sierra (or higher).
- Computer speakers
- Built-in microphone or headset with microphone
- Webcam

Software

- Zoom: Scroll to [“Student Zoom Guides”](#) for instructions on how to download and use the program (Important: Make sure to [sign in to Zoom](#) using your FAU account)
- Microsoft 365 Suite
- Reliable web browser (recommended [Chrome](#) or [Firefox](#))
- Canvas mobile app: Download instructions for iOS device or **ANDROID DEVICE**
- **ADOBE READER**
- **ADOBE FLASH PLAYER**

INTERNET CONNECTION

- Recommended: Broadband Internet connection with a speed of 4 Mbps or higher.
- To function properly, Canvas requires a high-speed Internet connection (cable modem, DSL, satellite broadband, T1, etc.). The minimum Internet connection speed to access Canvas is a consistent 1.5 Mbps (megabits per second) or higher.
- **CHECK YOUR INTERNET SPEED HERE.**

PERIPHERALS

- A backup option should be available to minimize the loss of work. This can be an external hard drive, a USB drive, cloud storage, or your folder on the FAU servers.

Minimum Technical Skills Requirements

The general and course-specific technical skills you must have to succeed in the course include but are not limited to:

- Accessing Internet.
- Using Canvas (including posting on discussion board, attaching documents, etc.).
- Using Zoom.
- Using email with attachments.
- Creating and submitting files in commonly used word processing program formats such as Microsoft Office Tools.
- Copying and pasting functions.
- Downloading and installing software.
- Using presentation, graphics, and other programs.
- Posting and commenting in an online discussion.
- Searching the FAU library and websites.

Technical Support

In the online environment, technical issues are always possible (e.g., lost connection, hardware or software failure). Many of these can be resolved relatively quickly, but if you wait until the last minute before due dates, the chances of these glitches affecting your success are greatly increased. Please plan appropriately. If a problem occurs, it is essential you take immediate action to document the issue so your instructor can verify and take appropriate action to resolve the problem. Most issues in Canvas can be resolved by clicking on the “Help” tab located on the menu bar.

When a problem occurs, click “Help” to:

- Report a Problem
- Live Chat with Canvas Support
- Search Canvas Guides

ADDITIONAL TECHNICAL SUPPORT

1. Contact the eLearning Success Advisor for assistance: (561) 297-3590
2. If you can, make a Print Screen of the monitor when the problem occurs. Save the Print Screen as a .jpg file. If you are unfamiliar with creating a Print Screen file, see **PRINT SCREEN INSTRUCTIONS**.
3. Complete a **HELP DESK TICKET**. Make sure you complete the form entirely and give a full description of your problem so the Help Desk staff will have the pertinent information in order to assist you properly. This includes:
 - a. Select “Canvas (Student)” for the Ticket Type.
 - b. Input the Course ID.
 - c. In the Summary/Additional Details section, include your operating system, Internet browser, and Internet service provider (ISP).
 - d. Attach the Print Screen file, if available.

4. Send an email to your instructor with all pertinent information of the incident.
5. If you do not have access to a computer, call your instructor with all pertinent information of the incident. If he/she is not available, make sure you leave a detailed message.
6. If you do not hear back from the Help Desk or your instructor within a timely manner (48 hours), it is your responsibility to follow up with the appropriate person until you obtain a resolution.

Honor Code Violations

Students at Florida Atlantic University are expected to maintain the highest ethical standards. Academic dishonesty is considered a serious breach of these ethical standards, because it interferes with the university mission to provide a high quality education in which no student enjoys an unfair advantage over any other. Academic dishonesty is also destructive of the university community, which is grounded in a system of mutual trust and places high value on personal integrity and individual responsibility. Harsh penalties are associated with academic dishonesty. For more information, see http://wise.fau.edu/regulations/chapter4/Reg_4.001_5-26-10_FINAL.pdf.

Please note that I take plagiarism very seriously. If I catch you plagiarizing on a paper, you will receive an automatic “F” in the course and will be reported to the university, which will likely result in a permanent honor violation notation on your transcript. So that we are all on the same page, here is the university’s definition of plagiarism (found in the document linked above):

- “1. The presentation of words from any other source or another person as one’s own without proper quotation and citation.*
- 2. Putting someone else’s ideas or facts into your own words (paraphrasing) without proper citation.*
- 3. Turning in someone else’s work as one’s own, including the buying and selling of term papers or assignments.” (FAU Code of Academic Integrity, 2.B)*

Disabilities

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA), students who require reasonable accommodations due to a disability to properly execute coursework must register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) and follow all SAS procedures. SAS has offices across three of FAU’s campuses – Boca Raton, Davie and Jupiter – however disability services are available for students on all campuses. For more information, please visit the SAS website at www.fau.edu/sas/. If you require a special accommodation, please make an appointment at the beginning of the semester to discuss the accommodation with me.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAP) Center

Life as a university student can be challenging physically, mentally and emotionally. Students who find stress negatively affecting their ability to achieve academic or personal goals may wish to consider utilizing FAU’s Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) Center. CAPS provides FAU students a range of services – individual counseling, support meetings, and psychiatric services, to name a few – offered to help improve and maintain emotional well-being. For more information, go to <http://www.fau.edu/counseling/>.

COVID Policy

All students in face-to-face classes are required to wear masks during class, and students must sanitize their own workstations upon entering the classroom. Taking these measures supports the safety and protection of the FAU community. Students who do not adhere to these rules will be asked to leave the classroom and/or be removed from the course. Students experiencing flu-like symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath), or students who have come in contact with an infected person should immediately contact Student Health Services (561-297-3512).

Course Schedule

(CV) = reading on Canvas

Section I: Political Theory Classics**January 14: Introduction to Course**

Plato, *The Republic*, Book I

January 21: Plato's *Republic*

Plato, *The Republic*, Books II-IV

January 28: Plato's *Republic*

Plato, *The Republic*, Books V-VII

February 4: Plato's *Republic*

Plato, *The Republic*, Books VIII-X

February 11: Machiavelli's *Prince*

Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*

February 18: Hobbes' *Leviathan*

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Epistle Dedicatory; Introduction; Part I, Ch. I-VI, XI-XVI

February 25: Hobbes' *Leviathan*

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Part II, Ch. XVII-XXI, XXIX, XXXI; Part III, Ch. XXXIX; Review and Conclusion

March 4: Rousseau's *Second Discourse*

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Second Discourse*

*****FRIDAY, MARCH 5th, 11:00PM: PAPER PROPOSAL DUE ON CANVAS*****

Section II: Methods of Political Theory**March 11: Chicago School**

- Leo Strauss, "Persecution and the Art of Writing," *Social Research* 8:1/4 (1941): 488-504. (CV)
- Leo Strauss, "What Is Political Philosophy?" in *What Is Political Philosophy? and Other Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1988 [1959]), 9-55. (CV)
- Leo Strauss, "On a Forgotten Kind of Writing," in *What Is Political Philosophy? and Other Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1988 [1959]), 221-232. (CV)

March 18: Cambridge School

- Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory* 8 (1969): 3-53. (CV)
- Quentin Skinner, "Motives, Intentions and the Interpretation of Texts," *New Literary History* 3, *On Interpretation: I* (1972): 393-408. (CV)

March 25: Hermeneutics

- Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Introduction (CV)
- Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Introduction (pp. xx-xxiv); Part II, Ch. 4 (pp. 268-306) (CV)

April 1: Genealogy

- Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Preface and First Essay
- Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), pp. 76-100. (CV)

*****FRIDAY, APRIL 2nd, 11:00PM: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE ON CANVAS*****

April 8: Deconstruction

- Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences (1966)," in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1978), pp. 351-370. (CV)
- Jacques Derrida, "The Villanova Roundtable: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida," in *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida*, ed. John D. Caputo (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), pp. 3-28. (CV)

April 15: Comparative Political Theory

- Eric Voegelin, "Equivalences of Experience and Symbolization in History," in *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, Vol. 12: *Published Essays, 1966-1985*, ed. Ellis Sandoz (University of Missouri Press, 1990), pp. 115-133. (CV)
- Farah Godrej, "Towards a Cosmopolitan Political Thought: The Hermeneutics of Interpreting the Other," *Polity* 41.2 (2009): 135-165. (CV)
- Andrew March, "What Is Comparative Political Theory?," *The Review of Politics* 71 (2009): 531-565. (CV)

*****THURSDAY, APRIL 22nd, 4:00-6:30PM: RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS*****

*****FRIDAY, APRIL 23rd, 11:00PM: RESEARCH PAPERS DUE ON CANVAS*****