

Political Theory 4054: Modern Political Thought

Florida Atlantic University, Spring 2024

Course Credits: 3.000

Prerequisites/Corequisites: None

TR 11:00AM – 12:20PM, General Classroom South Boca 101

Instructor: Dr. Rebecca LeMoine

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Office Location: Social Science 384C

Office Hours: Wed. 10:30AM – 12:30PM,
Wed. 1:15 – 3:15PM, or by appt.

Course Description

Whereas ancient political philosophers sought to discover the precepts and practices that would allow the *polis* or political community to flourish as an exemplar of the good or morally excellent life, modern political thought is marked by a rejection of the intersection between morality and politics. Beginning with Niccolò Machiavelli in the 15th century, political philosophy turned away from the pursuit of justice and towards the goal of establishing order. This shift brought with it new, more scientific methods of study and a focus on man as he is and not as he ought to be, as seen in the work of thinkers like Thomas Hobbes and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. By breaking away from the ancients (albeit not entirely), early modern political theorists and their successors—such as Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill—raised many important and enduring questions about the purpose of government, its proper scope, and human nature. The goal of this course is to think with the moderns about these questions. We will also venture into contemporary political thought, which raises its own set of concerns about truth, power, and technology in the modern age. Our ultimate goal is to gain a sympathetic understanding of modern political thought while also beginning to contemplate the good and the bad of the departure from ancient political thought.

Course Delivery Mode

This class is designated as an “**In-Person**” course. Attendance on campus is required.

Objectives

- 1) Become familiar with major questions, themes, and approaches in modern political thought.
- 2) Learn to read and interpret political theory texts.
- 3) Improve ability to construct persuasive arguments, both verbal and written.
- 4) Practice a more contemplative and self-aware form of citizenship, and consider its effects on political life and personal fulfillment.

Classroom Expectations

To be successful in this course (i.e., to meet the course objectives and to receive a passing grade), you should:

1. Regularly attend class.

Regular attendance is vital for success in this course. Therefore, attendance will be taken promptly at the start of every class meeting. Arriving late, leaving early, or repeatedly leaving and re-entering the room is disruptive both to me and your peers; if you cannot regularly be present for the duration of the class, then you should reconsider your enrollment. Please note that if you are being too disruptive, you may be asked to leave.

2. Actively and respectfully participate in class discussions.

This class aims to bring to life the art of Socratic conversation. Though I may stop at points to clarify some fundamental concepts with the help of a few PowerPoint slides, a video clip, etc., most of our class time will be spent working through the material *together*. You should therefore endeavor to contribute regularly to class discussions, whether by offering thoughtful reflections on the assigned readings, pointing us to relevant passages, or asking questions. For a Socratic discussion to work, everyone must be present—not just physically, but psychologically. You cannot be present if you are checking email, texting, watching ESPN, etc. Accordingly, **electronic devices are strongly discouraged. If you choose to use an electronic device, be prepared for me to call on you.**

Please note that I expect you to treat your peers and me with respect. We may disagree, but we will do so cordially. That means being an attentive listener, raising your hand and waiting to be called on, and critiquing the argument rather than the person who made it.

3. Complete all assigned readings prior to the start of class.

For this class to be successful, it is essential for everyone to show up having carefully read the assigned material. Throughout each session, I will ask questions to help you all uncover the meaning of the text for yourselves. This questioning can take many forms. I may ask you to turn to a specific passage, read it aloud, and then explain what you think the author means. I may ask a more open-ended question (e.g., “What does the author say about x?”) and expect you to provide the textual evidence. I may break you up into small groups to discuss whether the argument is persuasive. As should be evident from these examples, if no one has done the readings, or only a few students have done the readings, then the class will not go very far. Such is the nature of Socratic inquiry: it depends heavily on student engagement. The purpose of this is to help you become a better reader and thinker. You and your classmates will get out of the class what you put in. Aim to be a good classroom citizen.

4. Practice “close” reading.

As you will discover, political theory readings tend to be dense, requiring focused attention. There are no “abstracts” at the top, nor is it possible to skim these readings and retain much understanding. Rather, the readings are often similar to what you would expect from a philosophy course: a series of arguments you must closely follow. This means you should set aside ample time *before* class to read the material listed on the syllabus for that day, as you will likely find that you need to *re-read* parts of the text. You should also be an active reader. As you read, write a few words summarizing each paragraph in the margins, underline/highlight any phrases or passages that stand out to you, look up the definitions of unfamiliar words, write down any questions or reactions you have in response to the arguments the author is making, etc.

5. Practice “sympathetic” reading.

While “critical thinking” is valuable, before we can think “critically” we need to ensure that we have understood the text properly and given the arguments fair consideration. The practice of “sympathetic” reading, which entails approaching each text as though it were a friend, will therefore be encouraged throughout the term. Each class session, I will push

you to think “sympathetically” about the text by taking on the voice of the author in defense of the arguments. This means at times I will appear to adopt some unsavory positions. If you are uncomfortable with teachers who play “devil’s advocate,” or don’t like it when teachers sometimes withhold their own opinions in an effort to get you to think for yourself, then you probably will not enjoy this class.

6. **Be pro-active with your education.**

With many students and limited class time, not every question will be satisfactorily addressed for every student. If you find yourself confused about anything, first try re-reading the syllabus or assigned reading. If you are still lost, please don’t hesitate to reach out to me during office hours or via email.

Required Texts

The following books are available for purchase at the FAU Bookstore. **I highly recommend that you purchase hard 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. That said, the choice is yours. **If you choose to use an electronic device, be prepared for me to call on you.**

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. 2nd ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1977. ISBN: 9780679752554.

Hobbes, Thomas. *The Leviathan*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996. ISBN: 9780521567978.

Mill, John Stuart. *On Liberty*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1978. ISBN: 9780915144433.

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

Smith, Adam. *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1976. ISBN: 9780865970120.

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 10:30AM – 12:30PM and 1:15 – 3:15PM*, I will hold open office hours in my office, SO 384C. No appointment is necessary.

Course Requirements

Participation:	20%	
Quizzes:	20%	
Discussion Leadership:	10%	
Term paper:	50%	(Paper Proposals: 5%; Peer Drafts & Edits: 10%; Paper #1: 15%; Paper #2: 20%)

Participation (20%)

Your participation grade will be comprised of two, equally weighted components: attendance and participation in class discussions/activities.

- Attendance: I will take attendance each time we meet. Everyone is permitted *one unexcused absence* and *two excused absences*. **Excused absences require make up work, which is due within a week of the absence.** For an absence to be excused, you must clear it with me in advance or, in cases of illness or emergency, as soon as possible. The following generally count as *unexcused* absences: slept through alarm; need to study/work; need to finish an assignment; leaving early/arriving back late from vacation; bad hangover.

If you think you will miss more than three classes 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.”

- Participation: Attendance makes up only half of your overall participation grade; the other half is based on your participation in class discussions/activities. This means **you cannot earn above a 50% for your participation grade if you never speak in class, even if you have perfect attendance.** Students who struggle with classroom participation should therefore schedule a meeting with me during the first week of class to discuss strategies for increasing classroom participation. It is also possible to supplement one’s participation grade with office hour visits, emails demonstrating engagement with the material, posts on the Canvas discussion board, etc. If, on the other hand, you do not struggle with public speaking, note that speaking frequently does not guarantee you a good participation grade. **I value quality of contributions over quantity.** You must reference details from the readings and point the class to specific passages to earn a good participation grade.

Quizzes (20%)

A short quiz will be administered promptly at the beginning of class at least once per week. These quizzes will test how closely you read the text(s) assigned for that day. Please note: **if you do not do the reading, you will not pass the quiz.** As you will discover, the quizzes will ask about details not found on Sparknotes, Wikipedia, etc. It is therefore essential to do the readings in full. During the quiz, you may use notes you have handwritten on a separate sheet of paper or in a notebook created for this class. To ensure your grade is not adversely affected by a particularly difficult quiz, I will drop your lowest three quiz scores. There are no make-up quizzes. If you walk into class after the quiz has already been collected, you will not be able to take it.

Discussion Leadership (10%)

There is no better way to learn something than to try to teach it. Therefore, once during the semester you will lead the class discussion for anywhere from 10-20 minutes. To lead the discussion effectively, you must come prepared with questions to ask the class, passages to point us to, and a movie/TV show clip, song, or other activity to help illustrate the relevance of an important idea from the readings. This assignment won't be easy for many, but it will help you learn the material and become more comfortable asking questions and speaking about it. Further instructions will be posted on Canvas and discussed in class.

Term Paper (50%)

The major requirement of the course is an 8-10 page (double-spaced) term paper. Don't let the length fool you. This paper is designed to help you become a better thinker and more persuasive writer, whether you consider yourself to be a "good" writer or not. This class will stress the link between clear, compelling writing and sound thinking. It will advance the view that writing *is* thinking and that one way to develop your thinking is to work on your writing (which is why relying on AI generated writing might not be the best idea...). As such, we will write, re-write, and re-write some more. The process will be grueling and, if done right, will throw you into existential perplexity (a rarely experienced feeling in our modern age of instantaneous "answers"). However, by breaking it down into smaller pieces and teaching writing as a process at which anyone can excel, I hope you will find the assignment manageable and rewarding.

The term paper will be completed in two cycles. Each cycle will involve writing a paper proposal, a peer draft, and a final paper. You will also edit a peer's paper for each cycle. For the first cycle, you will work on crafting a 4-5 page paper (hereafter, Paper #1) that analyzes either Hobbes' or Rousseau's approach to a political question of your choice. After writing and receiving feedback from me on a 1-page paper proposal, you will write an initial draft of Paper #1, which you will exchange with an assigned peer editor. Based on your peer editor's feedback, you will craft the final version of Paper #1. I will then give you extensive comments on this paper, which you will use to revise the paper as you build on it to create the full, 8-10 page paper (Paper #2). Like Paper #1, Paper #2 will involve writing a 1-page paper proposal, a peer draft, and a final version. Paper #2 will consist of your analysis of Hobbes'/Rousseau's approach to the political question of your choice (i.e., a revised Paper #1) plus an analysis of either Smith's or Mill's approach to the same question. Yet, it will go beyond analysis, as you will be asked to craft your paper around your stance on which author's approach to the question is most compelling. By the end of the semester, you will have re-conceptualized and revised your paper numerous times, as well as received feedback from various sources. This is a paper you won't forget! Further instructions will be posted on Canvas and discussed in class.

Term Paper Due Dates

Paper Proposal #1	Feb. 15 th
Peer Draft #1	Feb. 27 th
Peer Edit #1	Feb. 29 th
Paper #1	Mar. 12 th
Paper Proposal #2	Mar. 28 th
Peer Draft #2	Apr. 16 th
Peer Edit #2	Apr. 18 th
Paper #2	Apr. 30 th

Grading Policies

- *Quizzes*: There are no make up quizzes. If you miss a quiz for an unexcused absence, that quiz will count as one of your 3 dropped scores. If you miss a quiz for an excused absence, then the number of points for that quiz will be subtracted from the total number of quiz points when calculating your quiz grade. In other words, if you miss a quiz for an excused absence, then the quiz simply won't count for or against you.
- *Discussion Leadership*: Unless you have a serious emergency for which I grant you an excused absence, you must lead discussion on the assigned day. If you miss class that day due to an unexcused absence, you will receive a 0 for the assignment.
- *Papers*: Papers are due to the relevant Canvas folder at the beginning of class on the date listed. 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. 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. Participation will be assessed by the beginning of section II.
- *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.
- *Extra Credit*: There will be an extra credit question on every quiz, allowing you to accumulate extra credit points throughout the semester. In addition, you can receive a 1% bump to your final course grade (which can mean the difference between an "A" and an "A-") by visiting me during office hours. To receive the extra credit, you must: (1) prepare a few questions or passages from the readings you want to discuss and (2) complete the visit **by the end of the final exam period (by 1:00PM on Tues., April 30th)**. You can only receive the extra credit points once, though additional office hour visits can help to supplement your participation grade.

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.

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 an assignment, 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/>.

Policy on the Recording of Lectures

Students enrolled in this course may record video or audio of class lectures for their own personal educational use. A class lecture is defined as a formal or methodical oral presentation as part of a university course intended to present information or teach students about a particular subject. Recording class activities other than class lectures, including but not limited to student presentations (whether individually or as part of a group), class discussion (except when incidental to and incorporated within a class lecture), labs, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving student participation, test or examination administrations, field trips, and private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the lecturer, is prohibited. Recordings may not be used as a substitute for class participation or class attendance and may not be published or shared without the written consent of the faculty member. Failure to adhere to these requirements may constitute a violation of the University’s Student Code of Conduct and/or the Code of Academic Integrity.

It should also be noted that one of the objectives of this course is to facilitate critical thinking and debate around topics, theories, and concepts where disagreement is not only anticipated, but encouraged. The ability to think critically, express your ideas clearly, and respond to the professor and other students civilly are the keystones of the academic experience. In this course, the professor will provide instruction in an objective manner and will remain open to a wide variety of viewpoints, so long as those viewpoints are evidence-based and presented in a respectful way. During class, the professor may take positions and make statements for the sole purpose of accomplishing an academic objective or enhancing the learning environment. Additionally, the adoption of class materials for this course does not imply an endorsement of the full content of those materials or the positions of the authors of those materials. Often the professor will provide materials as a point of departure for critical thinking and debate. Students should keep in mind that the ideas presented or discussed during class may not necessarily reflect the professor’s personal beliefs or opinions on the subject matter.

Course Schedule

(CV) = reading on Canvas

Section I: Early Modern Political Thought

Date	Topic	Readings	Deadlines
09-Jan	Introduction		
11-Jan	A New Political Art: Power, Not Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Machiavelli, <i>The Prince</i>, excerpts (CV) 	
16-Jan	Human Nature and Social Contract	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i>, Hobbes’ Introduction (pp. 9-11); Part I, Ch. XIII-XIV 	

18-Jan	Purpose of Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i>, Part I, Ch. XV-XVI; Part II, Ch. XVII 	
23-Jan	Sovereign Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i>, Part II, Ch. XVIII-XX 	
25-Jan	Liberty of Subjects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i>, Part II, Ch. XXI, XXIX 	
30-Jan	State of Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rousseau, <i>Second Discourse</i>, pp. 91-117 	
01-Feb	On Civilization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rousseau, <i>Second Discourse</i>, pp. 117-141 	
06-Feb	Property: Root of Inequality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rousseau, <i>Second Discourse</i>, pp. 141-160 	
08-Feb	The Body Politic and Despotism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rousseau, <i>Second Discourse</i>, pp. 160-181 	
13-Feb	Writing Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paper #1 writing exercise 	

Section II: Modern Political Thought

Date	Topic	Readings	Deadlines
15-Feb	Origin of Judgments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smith, <i>Moral Sentiments</i>, Part I, Sec. I 	Proposal #1
20-Feb	Influences on Judgment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smith, <i>Moral Sentiments</i>, Part I, Sec. II 	
22-Feb	Influences on Judgment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smith, <i>Moral Sentiments</i>, Part I, Sec. III 	
27-Feb	Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smith, <i>Moral Sentiments</i>, Part II, Sec. I & II 	Peer Draft #1
29-Feb	Self-Judgment and Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smith, <i>Moral Sentiments</i>, Part III, Ch. I; Part IV; Part V 	Peer Edit #1
05-Mar	<i>No Classes</i>	<i>Spring Break</i>	
07-Mar	<i>No Classes</i>	<i>Spring Break</i>	
12-Mar	Liberty vs. Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mill, <i>On Liberty</i>, Ch. 1 	Paper #1
14-Mar	Discussion & Thought	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mill, <i>On Liberty</i>, Ch. 2 	
19-Mar	Individuality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mill, <i>On Liberty</i>, Ch. 3 & 4 	
21-Mar	Applications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mill, <i>On Liberty</i>, Ch. 5 	
26-Mar	Writing Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paper #2 writing exercise 	

Section III: Contemporary Political Thought

Date	Topic	Readings	Deadlines
28-Mar	Capitalism & Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marx, "Capitalism and the Modern Labor Process" excerpts from <i>Philosophy of Technology</i> (CV) 	Proposal #2

02-Apr	Technology & Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology” (CV) 	
04-Apr	Technology & Punishment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch <i>Black Mirror</i> episode in class (Professor at MPSA conference) 	
09-Apr	Body of the Condemned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foucault, <i>Discipline and Punish</i>, Part I, Ch. 1 	
11-Apr	Gentle Punishment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foucault, <i>Discipline and Punish</i>, Part II, Ch. 2 	
16-Apr	Docile Bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foucault, <i>Discipline and Punish</i>, Part III, Ch. 1 	Peer Draft #2
18-Apr	Panopticism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foucault, <i>Discipline and Punish</i>, Part III, Ch. 3 	Peer Edit #2
30-Apr, 10:30AM- 1:00PM	Concluding Remarks	Paper #2 Due	Paper #2