

# GREAT POLITICAL THINKERS

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## SYLLABUS



WELCOME TO POLS 2510

### CONTACTING YOUR INSTRUCTOR

For information on contacting your instructor as well as other important information from your instructor see the Instructor Letter under the Lessons tab.

### COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OVERVIEW

The University of Manitoba Undergraduate Calendar describes this course as follows:

A survey and evaluation of major political theorists from ancient to modern times.

Such a survey and evaluation could be carried out in a variety of different ways and using a host of different tools. In this course, however, we will focus on *primary texts*. That is, rather than relying exclusively on textbooks, commentaries, and articles written by leading scholars of the major political theorists (hence, “secondary”), we will read those theorists themselves (hence, “primary”), and use the secondary literature to introduce the texts, contextualize them in their historical and political settings, and help to clarify key points, controversies, and connections among the major thinkers. But why do this? After all, would it not be easier to rely altogether on the secondary literature and avoid primary texts—some of which are over 2000 years old, and originally written in languages other than English? There *are* very good reasons to adopt the approach taken in this course.

To see why, consider the following analogy. Imagine that I asked each of you to explain and then evaluate a movie that you have not yet seen. Before reviewing it, you could do one of two things: first, you could go see the movie, and then write up your review; second, you could simply read *other people’s reviews*, then draft your own. Now, put yourself in the position of someone trying to decide which movie (of the many possible options) to go see. Would you trust a review by someone who had adopted the second strategy? That is, would you rely on the advice of someone who had not actually seen the movie?

Surely, something analogous is true of texts. It is often helpful to rely on textbooks, commentaries, critiques, discussions, and analyses, but we are only in a position to fairly judge these if we can set them alongside the original texts that they purport to interpret. Do they seem to embody accurate or distorted readings? Do they clarify or

obscure the central ideas? Do they do justice to the complexity of the author's intentions or oversimplify? And so on... This course exposes you to some of the greatest works of Western political theory (the primary texts), but it also guides you through those works via carefully selected secondary readings—for example, the introductions to each thinker in the Steven Cahn (ed.) anthology, and the study notes for each unit. As such, it actually adopts *both* strategies outlined above. We watch the movie, as it were, and also survey reviews by leading commentators.

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### COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of the course, you should be able to:

1. describe some of the most important ideas, arguments, and theories produced in the history of political theory in the West;
2. analyze arguments in primary texts;
3. defend clear positions on potentially controversial issues, such as the nature of justice, the legitimacy of democracy, and the obligation to obey the law;
4. identify continuities, discontinuities, and modifications between political ideas and arguments articulated by different political theorists at various times;
5. invoke real-world practical/political examples that both illustrate or undermine (as the case may be) the claims being advanced in the primary texts; and
6. articulate *your own* reasoned and text-based conclusions about the important theoretical and practical problems addressed by the major theorists of Western political theory.

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### COURSE MATERIALS

The following required materials are available for purchase from the [University of Manitoba Bookstore](#). Please order your materials immediately, if you have not already done so. See your [Distance and Online Education Student Handbook](#) for instructions on how to order your materials. There is also a variety of other online booksellers (e.g., Amazon.ca). *Political Philosophy: The Essential Texts (2nd Edition)* Steven M. Cahn (ed). Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2011).

### DISTANT AND ONLINE EDUCATION (DE) STUDENT RESOURCES

In your course website there are links for the following:

- Contacting Distance and Online Education Staff
- Distance and Online Student Handbook
- Distance and Online Education Website

### CONTENT SUMMARY

In this course, we study seven great political thinkers. There are four units on Plato, four units on Machiavelli, four units on Hobbes, four units on Locke, one unit on Rousseau, two units on Mill, and one unit on Marx (24 units in total; 12 per term). There are six assignments (3 per term), plus the final exam. Please see the Course at a Glance for a detailed outline of content, including key themes for each unit.

<b>PART I</b>			
<b>PLATO</b>			
<b>UNIT 1</b> Defence of Socrates and Crito	<b>UNIT 2</b> <i>Republic</i> , Books I and II	<b>UNIT 3</b> <i>Republic</i> , Books III and IV	<b>UNIT 4</b> <i>Republic</i> , Books VI and VII
<b>ARISTOTLE</b>			
<b>UNIT 5</b> Nichomachean Ethics, Books I, II, and IV	<b>UNIT 6</b> Nichomachean Ethics, Books VI and X	<b>UNIT 7</b> <i>Politics</i> , Books I and II	<b>UNIT 8</b> <i>Politics</i> , Books III and IV
<b>MACHIAVELLI</b>			
<b>UNIT 9</b> <i>The Prince</i> , chapters V, VI, VII, and VIII	<b>UNIT 10</b> <i>The Prince</i> , chapters IX, XII, XV, and XVI	<b>UNIT 11</b> <i>The Prince</i> , chapters XVII, XVIII, XXI, XXV	<b>UNIT 12</b> Discourses, Books I and III
<b>PART II</b>			

<b>HOBBS</b>			
<b>UNIT 13</b> <i>Leviathan</i> , Part I, chapters 1, 6, and 10	<b>UNIT 14</b> <i>Leviathan</i> , chapters 11, 12, and 13	<b>UNIT 15</b> <i>Leviathan</i> , chapters 14, 15, and (from Part II) 17	<b>UNIT 16</b> <i>Leviathan</i> , chapters 18, 21, and 29
<b>LOCKE</b>			
<b>UNIT 17</b> Second Treatise of Government, chapters I, II, III, IV, and V	<b>UNIT 18</b> Second Treatise of Government, chapters VII, VIII, IX, X, and IX	<b>UNIT 19</b> Second Treatise of Government, chapters XII, XIII, XVI, XVII, XVIII, and XIX	<b>UNIT 20</b> Letter Concerning Toleration
<b>ROUSSEAU</b>			
<b>UNIT 21</b> Discourse on the Origin of Inequality			
<b>MILL</b>			
<b>UNIT 22</b> <i>On Liberty</i> , chapters I and II		<b>UNIT 23</b> The Subjection of Women, part I	
<b>MARX</b>			
<b>UNIT 24</b> The Manifesto of the Communist Party, parts I, II, and IV			

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### LEARNING ACTIVITIES

The study notes that accompany each of the units are designed as introductions and guides to the primary texts. You are responsible for reading *all* of the materials listed in the units; the study notes will help you to identify and understand the most important points. Read them very carefully, and listen to the accompanying audio/video/power-point guides, as the case may be.

For each unit, proceed as follows:

1. Watch the introductory video that identifies the content for that unit and anticipate its central ideas.
2. Read the "Introduction" from the Cahn anthology that pertains to the relevant thinker for that unit. These introductory essays are written by leading academics and usefully contextualize the philosophers' ideas in their social, historical, legal, economic, and political settings.
3. Read the selected passages in the primary texts, as these are indicated in the table of contents.
4. Read the study notes for each unit, and watch/listen to the audio power-points, which identify central themes, explain key concepts, and establish both links and discontinuities among the major thinkers of the Western philosophical tradition.
5. Try to answer the self-test questions at the end of each unit, which test your knowledge and also anticipate the kinds of questions that you can expect on the final examination.

Together, these learning activities are linked to the readings and assignments, and they are designed to expose you to some of the leading political philosophers in the Western tradition; help you develop your interpretive skills; teach you how to construct a reasoned argument about controversial issues; improve your analytical abilities so that your assessments of other people's claims are informed and plausible.

For an illustration of these skills in action, see the sample Critical Outline answer on Aristotle's *Politics* (Book III, Chapter 2) in connection with the wisdom of collective judgments.

### EVALUATION AND GRADING

Your grade for this course is based on four pieces: two written critical outlines, two term papers, participation in two online discussion forums, and a final examination. An explanation of each is provided below. Detailed information about each of the assignments can be found in the Assignments folder.

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### DISTRIBUTION OF MARKS

Evaluation	Percentage
<b>Part I:</b>	
Critical outline 1	10%
Term paper 1	20%

Online discussion forum	5%
<b>Part II:</b>	
Critical outline 2	10%
Term paper 2	20%
Online discussion forum	5%
Final exam	30%
Total	100%

### GRADING SCALE

Letter Grade	Percentage Range	Description
A+	90-100	Exceptional
A	80-89	Excellent
B+	75-79	Very good
B	70-74	Good
C+	65-69	Satisfactory
C	60-64	Adequate
D	50-59	Marginal
F	0-49	Failure

**Note:** All final grades are subject to departmental review.

#### Plagiarism, cheating, and examination impersonation

You should acquaint yourself with the University's policy on plagiarism, cheating, and examination impersonation as detailed in the General Academic Regulations and Policy section of the University of Manitoba *Undergraduate Calendar*.

Note: These policies are also located in your *Distance and Online Education Student Handbook* or you may refer to Student Affairs at <http://www.umanitoba.ca/student>.

#### ASSIGNMENTS

There are three forms of evaluation in this course: critical outlines, term papers, and online discussion forums.

#### CRITICAL OUTLINES

You will be required to write two critical outlines, one each term (each worth 10%). Critical outlines are short written responses to brief selected passages from the course materials. These assignments have been designed to prompt you to engage with the primary texts and to allow you to describe, interpret, and analyze the writing of great thinkers using a persuasive and succinct style.

#### TERM PAPERS

You will write two term papers for this course (each worth 20%). The essays are designed to enable you to show that you can clearly organize a set of arguments in a complex text *and* defend your interpretations and opinions by appealing to reasons and arguments derived from (i) the primary text; i.e., Plato's *Republic*, (ii) secondary sources, and (iii) *your own thinking about these issues*.

#### ONLINE DISCUSSION FORUMS

There will be two online discussion forums in the course that will serve as a type of seminar (each worth 5%). The online discussion forum is designed to ensure and to demonstrate that: you are keeping up with the readings; you understand the readings; you participate in a constructive dialogue with others about the ideas presented therein; you develop the ability to defend plausible arguments about some of the controversial material covered in the course; you are prepared to answer critical outline, essay, and exam questions.

#### ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES

Please refer to the course calendar for all assignment due dates. Your instructor will post these in the first week of classes.

#### EXAMINATION

The final exam will be written at the University of Manitoba (UM), Fort Garry campus or at an approved off-campus location. Students needing to write at an off-campus location must declare a location by the specified deadline date (see off-campus declaration and policy under Student Resources on course homepage). Students writing at the UM Fort Garry campus do not need to declare an exam location.

The Registrar's Office is responsible for the [final exam schedule](#) which is available approximately one month after the start of the course.

There will be a three hour final examination in this course. The examination will take place during the examination period. The examination format will consist of very short essay-style questions, similar to the critical outline questions, but they will also focus more on general themes that require you to demonstrate your understanding of how many of the ideas and thinkers covered in the course both differ from, and are related to, one another. You are not required to know sections of the textbook that are not covered in the course material.

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