**PS 2403 INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL THEORY**

Fall 2015 |Monday, Wednesday, Friday 10.00-10.50am | McCain 100

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

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Office hours: Wednesday 2-3pm, Friday 2-3pm or by appointment

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Political theory grapples with some of the most fundamental and enduring questions that we face as human beings. In this class we explore one such question: ‘What is the good life?’ Although you may want to let individuals decide the meaning of ‘the good life’ for themselves, how they choose to pursue it will inevitably impact and rely on others. Competing visions of the good life therefore underlie many of our political debates and projects. The purpose of this course, then, is to further your understanding and broaden your imagination of how to answer key political questions by exposing you to some of the classic works in the Western tradition of political theory.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

* Become familiar with how some of the classic works in the Western tradition of political theory have approached the question of the good life
* Understand and be able to identify the characteristic features of Socratic, liberal, republican, Marxian, feminist, and human rights perspectives
* Improve speaking and listening skills through thoughtful and respectful classroom discussion
* Strengthen your command of English prose through careful reading and writing.

**METHODS OF EVALUATION**

* 4 in-class Tests: 10% each, total 40%. Dates: Fri. 9/4, Wed. 9/30, Wed. 10/28, Mon. 11/16
* Paper 1: 20% Due Mon. 9/28
* Paper 2: 20% Due Fri. 11/13
* Final Exam: 20% Fri. 12/4

**CLASS ASSIGNMENTS**

* In-class tests: these will consist of multiple choice, true/false, and quote identification questions. In addition, the tests will include short answers in which you will be asked to reflect on and analyze readings and issues discussed in class
* Papers: these will be 3-4 pages in length, with a choice of essay prompts provided at least two weeks before the due date. In general, the prompts will ask you to compare and contrast two or more authors we have read in class and do not require the use of outside sources.
* Final exam: this will take a similar form to the in-class tests, but will be cumulative, longer, and also include some short essay questions.

**STANDARDS OF ACHIEVEMENT**

I will grade your papers and all test and exam questions that do not have a simple right or wrong answer according to the following scale. More detailed guidelines will be included with the paper prompts.

**A (100-90%):** Very good to excellent work, with few, if any, missteps.

**B (89-80%):** Good to very good work, with some missteps but also flashes of excellence.

**C (79-70%):** Satisfactory work that sincerely attempts to analyze the readings and issues at hand, but with serious flaws.

**D (69-60%):** Work attempting to engage the readings and issues at hand, but without the execution befitting an MSU student.

**F (59% or less):** Work that does not meet the minimum requirements of the assignment.

**TITLE IX**

MSU is committed to complying with Title IX, a federal law that prohibits discrimination, including violence and harassment, based on sex. This means that MSU’s educational programs and activities must be free from sex discrimination, sexual harassment, and other forms of sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know has experienced sex discrimination, sexual violence and/or harassment by any member of the University community, you are encouraged to report the conduct to MSU’s Director of Title IX/EEO Programs at 325-8124 or by e-mail to

titleix@msstate.edu. Additional resources are available at http://www.msstate.edu/web/security,

or at http://students.msstate.edu/sexualmisconduct/ .

**ACADEMIC HONESTY**

Mississippi State has an approved Honor Code that applies to all students. The code is as follows: “As a Mississippi State University student, I will conduct myself with honor and integrity at all times. I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I accept the actions of those who do.” Upon accepting admission to Mississippi State University, a student immediately assumes a commitment to uphold the Honor Code, to accept responsibility for learning, and to follow the philosophy and rules of the Honor Code. Student will be required to state their commitment on examinations, research papers, and other academic work. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the MSU community from the requirements or the processes of the Honor Code. For additional information, please visit: http://honorcode.msstate.edu/policy.

**SUPPORT SERVICES**

Students who need academic accommodations based on disability should visit the Office of Student Support Services, 01 Montgomery Hall, call 662-325-3335, or visit the website at [www.sss.msstate.edu](http://www.sss.msstate.edu)

**LATE WORK POLICY**

Please contact me as soon as you have any concerns about meeting a deadline to discuss the possibility of an extension. Papers submitted after the relevant deadline will be penalized five percentage points per day (or any part thereof), unless you are able to provide evidence of a medical or family emergency.

**ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Attendance for the entire duration of each and every class is mandatory. You are allowed three unexcused absences during the semester. After that, I will deduct 0.5% for each class that you miss. On the other hand, if you have no unexcused absences for the whole semester you will receive 5% extra credit to your overall grade.

**COURSE MATERIALS**

The following are available at the MSU bookstore:

Plato, *Trial and Death of Socrates* (Hackett)

Thomas More, *Utopia* (Penguin Classics)

John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* (Hackett)

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, (Everyman)

Marx and Engels, *Communist Manifesto* (Pathfinder)

In addition, we will read a number of texts which I will either email you or which you will download from the website indicated below.

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan –* email

Declaration of Independence <http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration_transcript.html>

Selected writings by Alexandra Kollontai: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/kollonta/>

Emma Goldman, “Anarchism: What it Really Stands For” – email

Petyr Kropotkin, “Mutual Aid” – email

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

<http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

Audre Lorde: “Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFHwg6aNKy0>

**In addition to reading the assigned text in advance of the relevant class meeting you must also bring the reading for that day to class.**

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| **WEEK** | **DAY** | **ASSIGNMENT** |
| 1 | Mon. 8/17  Wed. 8/19  Fri. 8/21 | Introduction to the Course  Plato, *Trial and Death of Socrates*, “Apology”  Plato, “Crito” and “Phaedo” |
| 2 | Mon. 8/24  Wed. 8/26  Fri. 8/28 | More, *Utopia* pp. 1-32  More, *Utopia* pp. 33-55  More, *Utopia* pp. 57-79 |
| 3 | Mon. 8/31  Wed. 9/2  Fri. 9/4 | More, *Utopia* pp. 79-98  More, *Utopia* pp. 98-129  **In-Class Test** |
| 4 | Mon. 9/7  Wed. 9/9  Fri. 9/11 | **Class cancelled: Labor Day**  Hobbes, *Leviathan* – Chapters 13 and 17  Hobbes, *Leviathan* – Chapters 18 and 21 |
| 5 | Mon. 9/14  Wed. 9/16  Fri. 9/18 | Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* Preface and Chapters 1-4  Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* Chapters 5 and 6  Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* Chapters 7 and 8 |
| 6 | Mon. 9/22  Wed. 9/24  Fri. 9/26 | Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* Chapters 9-14  Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* Chapters 15-18  Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* Chapter 19 |
| 7 | Mon. 9/28  Wed. 9/30  Fri. 10/2 | **First Paper Due Today.** Declaration of Independence  **In-Class Test**  Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* pp. 31-51 |
| 8 | Mon. 10/5  Wed. 10/7  Fri. 10/9 | **Class Cancelled: Fall Break**  Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* pp. 52-71  Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* pp. 71-92 |
| 9 | Mon. 10/12  Wed. 10/14  Fri. 10/16 | Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* pp. 92-117  Rousseau, *On the Social Contract* pp. 181-199  Rousseau, *On the Social Contract* pp. 200-221 |
| 10 | Mon. 10/19  Wed. 10/21  Fri. 10/23 | Rousseau, *On the Social Contract* pp. 222 - 243  Rousseau, *On the Social Contract* pp. 243-262  Rousseau, *On the Social Contract* pp. 262-281 |
| 11 | Mon. 10/26  Wed. 10/28  Fri. 10/30 | Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, pp. 281-309  **In-Class Test**  Marx and Engels, *Communist Manifesto* pp. 21- 46 |
| 12 | Mon. 11/2  Wed. 11/4  Fri. 11/6 | Marx and Engels, *Communist Manifesto* pp. 46-74  Alexandra Kollontai, “The Social Basis of the Woman Question,” “Theses on Communist Morality in the Sphere of Martial Relations.”  Kollontai, “Soon (In 48 Years’ Time),” “Sexual Relations and the Class Struggle,” “Communism and the Family.” |
| 13 | Mon. 11/9  Wed. 11/11  Fri. 11/13 | Emma Goldman, “Anarchism: What it Really Stands For.”  Petyr Kropotkin, “Mutual Aid”  **Second Paper Due Today.** Universal Declaration of Human Rights |
| 14 | Mon. 11/16  Wed. 11/18  Fri. 11/20 | **In-Class Test**  Audre Lorde: “Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power”  Catch-up day |
| 15 | Mon. 11/23. Wed. 11/25  Fri. 11/27 | Catch-up day  **Class Cancelled: Thanksgiving Holiday**  **Class Cancelled: Thanksgiving Holiday** |
| 16 | Mon. 11/30  Wed. 12/2  Fri. 12/4 | Last day of class  **Class Cancelled: Reading Day**  **Final Exam:** 8-11 am |
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