

POLS 0016 - INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL THEORY

Catalog Description

Hours: 54 lecture

Description: Survey of major political theorists and their analyses of political concepts, such as state of nature, natural law, natural rights, and civil and political society. Examination of various theoretical approaches to politics, exploration of proposed solutions to basic political problems, and analysis of selected political theories and the relevance of theory to contemporary issues, such as environmentalism, feminism, and justice. (C-ID POLS 120) (CSU, UC)

Course Student Learning Outcomes

- CSLO #1: Evaluate the study of political theory, based on original texts and other sources, as a means for understanding important political phenomena and analyzing relevant contemporary issues in the U.S. and globally.
- CSLO #2: Analyze the different assumptions and values about "human nature" and "reality" embedded in each political theory and examine the way these starting premises shape our understanding of institutions in government and political life.
- CSLO #3: Assess the historical and social contexts in shaping political theories.
- CSLO #4: Compare and contrast defining elements of each political theory, such as purpose of government, the relationship between government and the people, and political change, and compose strategies for bridging gaps in political theories.

Effective Term

Fall 2024

Course Type

Credit - Degree-applicable

Contact Hours

54

Outside of Class Hours

108

Total Student Learning Hours

162

Course Objectives

1. Evaluate the study of political theory, based on original texts and other sources, as a means for understanding important political phenomena.
2. Analyze political theory and theoretical texts and explain how they are relevant to contemporary issues.
3. Analyze the different assumptions and values about "human nature" and "reality" embedded in each political theory and examine the way these starting premises shape the questions asked and conclusions reached.

4. Evaluate the contribution of each political theory towards a comprehensive understanding of political life and political institutions.
5. Compare and contrast the defining elements of each political theory.
6. Evaluate the importance of historical and social contexts in shaping political theories.
7. Compose strategies for bridging gaps in political theories.
8. Compare and contrast theories concerning the purpose of government, the relationship between government and people, and political change.

General Education Information

- Approved College Associate Degree GE Applicability
 - AA/AS - Social Sciences
- CSU GE Applicability (Recommended-requires CSU approval)
 - CSUGE - D Social Sciences
 - CSUGE - D8 Pol Sci/Govt/Lgl In
- Cal-GETC Applicability (Recommended - Requires External Approval)
- IGETC Applicability (Recommended-requires CSU/UC approval)
 - IGETC - 4 Soc./Behav Sciences
 - IGETC - 4H Pol Sci/Govt/Lgl In

Articulation Information

- CSU Transferable
- UC Transferable

Methods of Evaluation

- Classroom Discussions
 - Example: Discussion board forum requiring students to compare the relevance and applicability of Machiavelli to contemporary politics. Assessed using a rubric prepared by the instructor and shared with students.
- Essay Examinations
 - Example: Take home essay requiring students to describe what a "social contract" is for both Hobbes and Locke. Assessment based upon students' ability to highlight major similarities and differences of Hobbes' and Locke's "social contracts" and judge the relative success of each thinker's use of the idea of a "social contract."
- Objective Examinations
 - Example: Multiple choice questions on Greek philosophers with a key provided to students.
- Reports
 - Example: A research and reporting assignment requiring students to find a recent op-ed piece and show the relevance of a political theorist's insights to understanding or critiquing it. Evaluated based on rubric.

Repeatable

No

Methods of Instruction

- Lecture/Discussion
- Distance Learning

Lecture:

1. After providing a lecture on the concept of anarchism and why it is largely "misunderstood" in the U.S., focusing on the ideas of William Godwin and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. Students will be divided into

small groups to prepare for a debate on anarchism, arguing which political thinker is more compelling. Instructor will then moderate a debate between class groups.

Distance Learning

1. Instructor will provide students with text and audio-visual learning materials (e.g., videos, PowerPoint, lecture notes) supported by textbook chapters on social contract theory. Students will need to use this material to effectively participate in discussions that the instructor will monitor to provide clarification and correction when needed.

Typical Out of Class Assignments Reading Assignments

1. Read excerpts from Hobbes's *Leviathan* and from Locke's *Second Treatise of Civil Government* and consider their contributions to Democratic Theory.
2. Read Robert Putnam's "Bowling Alone" and consider its contributions to Liberal Democratic Process.

Writing, Problem Solving or Performance

1. Take-home essay assignment: Compare and contrast the Hobbesian and Lockean positions on the following: a) the purpose of government; b) the origins of governmental authority; c) the best form of government; d) our obligation to government; and e) government's obligation to us. How might civil disobedience in a democratic society be justified?
2. Research paper: In your opinion, what problems should be the focus of a political theory? If you were constructing a political theory designed to analyze and solve these problems, what concepts from Plato, Marx, and Locke would be useful?
3. Write a response paper after reading John Stuart Mill selection. Can his criteria be applied to such contemporary dilemmas as drug use and abortion?
4. Students will compose a short reaction paper answering the question: Machiavelli argues that it is better for a prince to be feared than loved. Do you agree? Why or why not?
5. In-class formal debate by groups of students representing different theorists, followed by a reaction essay.
6. Use any two political theories covered in this class to analyze a current event of your choosing (current event must be covered in news this semester), incorporating information from both of our texts. I am primarily interested in how you apply the ideas of the two theories from our texts to your current event and your ability to discuss the strengths and/or limitations of each theory. Thus, your current event compliments your understanding of the two theories.

Other (Term projects, research papers, portfolios, etc.)

Research projects that would allow students to illustrate the relevance of political theories to politics.

Required Materials

- Political Thinking, Political Theory, and Civil Society
 - Author: Steven DeLue
 - Publisher: Pearson Education
 - Publication Date: 2021
 - Text Edition: 5th
 - Classic Textbook?:
 - OER Link:
 - OER:
- Introduction to Political Theory
 - Author: John Hoffman and Paul Graham
 - Publisher: Pearson
 - Publication Date: 2015
 - Text Edition: 3rd
 - Classic Textbook?:
 - OER Link:
 - OER:
- The Human Condition
 - Author: Hannah Arendt
 - Publisher: University of Chicago
 - Publication Date: 1998
 - Text Edition: 2nd
 - Classic Textbook?:
 - OER Link:
 - OER:
- *Inventors of Ideas: An Introduction to Western Political Philosophy*
 - Author: Donald Tannenbaum
 - Publisher: Wadsworth
 - Publication Date: 2012
 - Text Edition: 3rd
 - Classic Textbook?:
 - OER Link:
 - OER:
- *An Introduction to Political Philosophy*
 - Author: Jonathan Wolff
 - Publisher: Oxford
 - Publication Date: 2023
 - Text Edition: 4th
 - Classic Textbook?:
 - OER Link:
 - OER:
- *Great Political Theories V.1: A Comprehensive Selection of the Crucial Ideas in Political Philosophy from the Greeks to the Enlightenment*
 - Author: Curtis, Michael
 - Publisher: Harper Perennial Modern Classics
 - Publication Date: 2008
 - Text Edition:
 - Classic Textbook?: Yes
 - OER Link:
 - OER:
- *Great Political Theories V.2: A Comprehensive Selection of the Crucial Ideas in Political Philosophy from the French Revolution to Modern Times*
 - Author: Curtis, Michael
 - Publisher: Harper Perennial Modern Classics
 - Publication Date: 2008
 - Text Edition:
 - Classic Textbook?: Yes
 - OER Link:
 - OER:
- *A Theory of Justice*
 - Author: Rawls, John
 - Publisher: Oxford Paperbacks
 - Publication Date: 2005

- Text Edition: 1st
- Classic Textbook?: Yes
- OER Link:
- OER:
- Author: Locke, John; Hobbes, Thomas; Plato; Aristotle; Machiavelli; Jean-Jacques Rousseau; etc.
- Publisher:
- Publication Date:
- Text Edition:
- Classic Textbook?: Yes
- OER Link:
- OER: Gutenberg.org

Other materials and-or supplies required of students that contribute to the cost of the course.