

PO 104-51

Introduction to Political Thought

Mindy Peden, Ph.D.

MWF 9-9:50am

SB 106

Office Hours: MWF 9:50-11:50 and by appointment

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Dying for the "truth."—We should not let ourselves be burnt for our opinions: we are not that sure of them. But perhaps for this: that we may have and change our opinions.

--Nietzsche (1880)

In this course we will critically examine a diversity of ideas concerning politics. The first portion of the course will be devoted to argument-based writing by Niccolò Machiavelli, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Immanuel Kant. These thinkers are among the foundational thinkers in the western approach to political theory. During this portion of the course we will consider morality and virtue as political values, the role of power and contingency in political life, the idea of a social contract and the various approaches to property that inform the scope of this contract, the ethics of revolution, approaches to human nature and the centrality of property to theories of government. The second portion of the course will examine less conventional modes of political thought; those that seem either outside the scope of political theory traditionally understood or outside of its most popular medium, the argumentative/philosophical essay. Here we will examine the film *The Battle of Algiers*, as well as some essays by Frantz Fanon on race and colonialism. We will also read a critique of Kant's anthropology that argues that his concept of Reason is based on a Eurocentric conception of man, as well as read an iconoclastic essay by the distinctive French theorist Simone Weil. The themes for this portion of the course will be violence and revolution, the political meaning of objectification, the role of slavery in theory and practice, and individuals as embedded rather than autonomous. In all, we will be exposed to a broad range of approaches to political thought and students will be asked to evaluate them on their own merits and to interpret them individually and in a group.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students will have an understanding of different ways to approach thinking about politics. They should also be able to read primary texts critically, both by reading them for and against the assumptions of the text. They will be able to orally reconstruct and critique theoretical material. Finally, students will also be able to explicate a complicated theoretical argument in a short paper and compare one argument to another.

Required Reading

The following books are available at the campus store:

1. Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press, 1963. (Translated by Richard Philcox, ISBN 0-8021-4132-3)
2. Kant, Immanuel. *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983. (Translated by Ted Humphrey, ISBN 0-915145-47-2)
3. Locke, John. *Second Treatise of Government*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980. (ISBN 0-915144-86-7)
4. Machiavelli, Niccolo. *The Prince*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. (Translated by Peter Bondanella and Mark Musa, ISBN 019280426X)
5. Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987. (Translated by Donald A. Cress, ISBN 0-87220-150-3)
6. Weil, Simone. *The Iliad or the Poem of Force*. Wallingford, Pennsylvania: Pendle Hill, 2001. (Translated by Mary McCarthy, ISBN 087574091X)

Requirements for the Course

****If you do not complete all assignments or miss more than 10 classes, you will automatically fail [F/FA] this class, regardless of your other grades****

Paper 1	15%
Paper 2	20%
Final	30%
Participation	15%
Discussion Questions	20%

How assignments are evaluated

Papers will be evaluated on how well they show an understanding of the texts, their interpretive rigor, and their originality and depth of thought.

On topic: How well does this paper address the question asked? 20 pts

Sophistication: How well does the paper reflect an understanding of the text or texts it is asked to comment on? 30 pts

Originality: How well does this paper present an argument based on interpreting the text and major themes? 30 pts

Style: How well does the paper integrate textual citation and ideas into a fluid essay? 10 pts

Mechanics: How well edited is this paper? Are there spelling errors, grammatical mistakes, or general mechanical errors? 10 pts

Participation will be evaluated on thoughtfulness and consistency of contributions (quality not quantity!); what counts as a contribution is flexible and will vary by student.

When it is your turn, you should come to class with **3-5 discussion questions**. These questions should attempt to make links between various ideas in the text and course,

deepen our understanding, or point out anomalies in the argument or style of the author. Under no condition should discussions questions be easily answered with “yes” or “no” unequivocally. The best questions will provoke disagreement around interpretation or challenge the class to think beyond the framework of the text. Questions may be distributed by handout, written on the board, or simply asked.

Discussion groups are as follows:

Group A

Virostko, Duncan A.
Phillips, Bret D.
Lukehart, Victoria E.
May, Daniel P.
Bencivenni, Elizabeth K.

Group B

Stupecki, Marissa N.
Paskert, Morgan A.
Kasunic, Austin S.
Lewis, Mercedes C.
DeFranco, Nicholas J.

Group C

Sadowski, Carleen M.
O'Brien, Elizabeth R.
Hirzel, Nicholas C.
Iacobacci, Taylor M.
Ciferno, Alec C.

Group D

Rafoth, Ellie C.
McNeill, Luke A.
Francis, Matthew D.
Glaab, Peter J.
Byrnes, Rachel N.

Group E

Pooler, James A.
McCarthy, Raymond P.
Dempsey, Lauren M.
Fazio, Rose S.
Biddle, Kirsten M.

Academic Honesty

Please refer to JCU’s policy on academic honesty, found in the bulletin. It is my policy to fail any work that is not the student’s own, or which contains unacknowledged citation. It is also my policy to report such abuse directly to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences for disciplinary action. It is the student’s responsibility to contact me personally if questions about how to use the work of other’s in an original assignment come up, and email or office hours can be used for this purpose. If a student is found to have been academically dishonest in an assignment, they will not only fail the assignment and be reported to the Dean, they will under no conditions be allowed to re-do the assignment.

Lateness in assignments

All assignments need to be turned in when they are due. Any missed discussion questions will be counted as failure, because it is crucial that such questions are turned in on the day we will discuss them. Papers may be turned in late with no penalty ONLY if the student contacts me by email more than 24 hours before the due date and has a legitimate reason for lateness. Unless I give explicit approval, any late paper will be penalized 3.3 points (on a scale of 100) for each day it is late.

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend all classes. Because this is a discussion-based course, participation in class discussions are crucial. Therefore, the attendance policy of this course is that after 2 absences for any reason, the student's participation grade will be reduced automatically. For each absence over 2, the participation grade will be reduced by 3.3 points (on a scale of 100). If a student misses 10 or more classes for any reason, they will automatically fail the course.

Confidentiality and Safe Space

Because it is so important for students to actively participate in this course, the instructor asks that students consider the classroom to be a safe space. What this means is that we all agree to hear each other out, especially if we disagree. It will be helpful to question each other, and perhaps our long-held beliefs. Because of this it is important that students feel comfortable bringing up whatever issues they think relate, without fear of being ostracized. Please feel free to question the instructor and other students in constructive and thoughtful ways.

*At John Carroll University, we are committed to fostering a respectful and inclusive campus community. Incidents of bias which are intentional or unintentional actions against someone on the basis of an actual or perceived aspect of their identity, including actions that occur in classrooms, can and should be reported on the Bias Incident Reporting Form, accessible at <http://sites.jcu.edu/bias/>. Questions about bias can be directed to members of the Bias Response Team: Lauren Bowen, Associate Academic Vice President (bowen@jcu.edu), Bud Stuppy, Director of Human Resources (cstuppy@jcu.edu) or Danielle Carter, Director of the Center for Student Diversity and Inclusion (dcarter@jcu.edu).

*In accordance with federal law, if you have a documented disability (Learning, Psychological, Sensory, Physical, or Medical) you may be eligible to request accommodations from the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). Please contact the Director, Allison West at (216) 397-4967 or come to the office located in room 7A, in the Garden Level of the Administration Building. Please keep in mind that accommodations are not retroactive so it is best to register at the beginning of each semester. Only accommodations approved by SSD will be recognized in the classroom. Please contact SSD if you have further questions.

Course timeline

1/13 (Mon.) First Day of Class
1/15 (Wed.) Read: Leslie Paul Thiele, "Chapter 1: Theory and Vision" from Thinking Politics: Perspectives in ancient, modern, and postmodern political theory (New York: Chatham House Publishers, 2004) 1-11 [blackboard] (A)
1/17 (Fri.) Read: Leslie Paul Thiele, "Chapter 1: Theory and Vision" from Thinking Politics: Perspectives in ancient, modern, and postmodern political theory (New York: Chatham House Publishers, 2004) 11-25 [blackboard] (B)
1/20 (Mon.) MLK Day: No Class
1/22 (Wed.) Machiavelli's The Prince: Dedicatory Letter and Chapters I- X (C)
1/24 (Fri.) Machiavelli's The Prince: X-XIV (D)
1/27 (Mon.) Machiavelli's The Prince: XV-XVIII (E)
1/29 (Wed.) Machiavelli's The Prince: XIX-XXIV (B)
2/31 (Fri.) Machiavelli's The Prince: XXV-XXVI (C)
2/3 (Mon.) Read: Locke's Second Treatise: Preface and Chapters I-II (D)
2/5 (Wed.) Read: Locke's Second Treatise: Chapters III-V (E)
2/7 (Fri.) TBA
2/10 (Mon.) Paper 1 Due
2/12 (Wed.) Read: Locke's Second Treatise: Chapters VI-VIII (A)
2/14 (Fri.) Read: Locke's Second Treatise: Chapters IX-XI (C)
2/17 (Mon.) Read: Locke's Second Treatise: XII-XIV (D)
2/19 (Wed.) Read: Locke's Second Treatise: XV-XIX (E)
2/21 (Fri.) Read: Rousseau's Discourse on the Origin of Inequality: Preface (A)
2/24 (Mon.) Read: Rousseau's Discourse on the Origin of Inequality: Letter to the Republic of Geneva (B)
2/26 (Wed.) Read: Rousseau's Discourse on the Origin of Inequality: 16-29 (D)
2/28 (Fri.) Read: Rousseau's Discourse on the Origin of Inequality: 30-54 (E)
Spring Break
3/10 (Mon.) Read: Edmund Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France [blackboard] (A)
3/12 (Wed.) Read: Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: Introduction & Chapter V sec. 1 (7-11, 77-92) [blackboard] (B)
3/14 (Fri.) Read: Kant's Perpetual Peace: First and Second Section, First and Second Definitive Articles (C)
3/17 (Mon.) Read: Kant's Perpetual Peace: Third Definitive Article and First and Second Supplement, Appendix (E)
3/19 (Wed.) Read: Emmanuel Eze's "The Color of Reason: The Idea of "Race" in Kant's Anthropology" from Postcolonial African Philosophy (103-131) [blackboard] (A)
3/21 (Fri.) Read: Emmanuel Eze's "The Color of Reason: The Idea of "Race" in Kant's Anthropology" from Postcolonial African Philosophy (103-131) [blackboard] (B)
3/24 (Mon.) Paper 2 Due
3/26 (Wed.) Read: Fanon's The Wretched of The Earth: Preface (C)
3/28 (Fri.) TBA
3/31 (Mon.) Watch: The Battle of Algiers
4/2 (Wed.) Watch: The Battle of Algiers
4/4 (Fri.) Watch: The Battle of Algiers
4/7 (Mon.) Read: Fanon's The Wretched of The Earth: On Violence (D)
4/9 (Wed.) Read: Fanon's The Wretched of The Earth: On Violence (A)
4/11 (Fri.) Read: Fanon's The Wretched of The Earth: On Violence (B)

4/14 (Mon.) Read: Fanon's The Wretched of The Earth: Colonial War and Mental Disorder (C)

4/16 (Wed.) Read: Fanon's The Wretched of The Earth: Colonial War and Mental Disorder (D)

Easter Break

4/23 (Wed.) Read: Weil's The Iliad or the Poem of Force (E)

4/25 (Fri.) Read: Weil's The Iliad or the Poem of Force

4/28 (Mon.) Read: Arendt's "Understanding and Politics (The Difficulties of Understanding)" [blackboard]

4/30 (Wed.) Last Day of Class