

**POL200Y. Political Theory: visions of the good society
2013-2014**



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This course is designed to give you a general introduction to major thinkers and important themes in the history of political thought from ancient times to the 17th century. It will highlight the continuities and clashes among classical political thinkers in both Eastern and Western traditions and key political theorists of the 17th century in Europe whose thought has become associated with modern liberalism.

The course will place special emphasis on three questions explored in sequence:

- 1) Athens vs. Sparta. What makes for a good political community? The beginning of the course will highlight the contrast between Athens and Sparta as competing models of good political community in the ancient world. We will explore how the thought of both Plato and Aristotle can be seen to emerge from the tension between the models of Athens vs. Sparta. We will also explore the thought of Confucius as an alternative from the East to some of the issues raised by Plato and Aristotle.
- 2) How are communities formed? What grounds and sustains them? A conception of what is most fundamental to the development and preservation of political community can have an effect on how we think of that community (who is included and who is excluded, who are essential players and who are given secondary status) and how power is distributed. In the beginning of the second term we will compare and contrast the thought of Pizan and Machiavelli on the issues of the foundations of civilization and the fashioning of political

community.

- 3) What is state sovereignty and how might it best be organized? Through a study of the political theory of Hobbes and Locke we will explore competing early-modern accounts of the contours and nature of sovereignty. Is it possible (or desirable) to conceptualise politics without an idea of sovereignty?

Course requirements (further details on each assignment are noted below):

First Term Take Home Assignment (5-6 pp. due Dec. 4 th)	25%
Essay (second term):	
Passages Assignment (c. 3-4 pp.) due March 5 th -on a pass/fail basis	5%
Reflection Assignment (c. 2 pp.) due March 12 th -on a pass/fail basis	5%
Ordering Assignment (c. 2 pp.) due March 19 th – on a pass/fail basis	5%
Paper 8-10 pp. due March 26 th	20%
Final Exam (to be scheduled in the final examination period in April)	30%
Attendance and Participation in Tutorials	10%

First Term Take Home Assignment:

Your take home assignment will involve explaining and analyzing a passage taken from one of the texts studied in the first term. You are asked to do three things in the assignment. First, you are required to identify the context from which the passage is taken in the text showing where in the argument and in the flow of the work the quote appears (c. 1 page). Secondly you are required to provide an analysis of the quote which involves identifying the logic (or any possible ambiguities in the logic) of the passage as well as discussing of the meaning of key terms in the passage in the context of how those terms are used and/or defined in other parts of the text (c. 2 pages).

Most important in this assignment is a discussion of the significance of this passage (2-3 pages). This involves a discussion and analysis of how this passage contributes to deepening the meaning, or to providing puzzles to the meaning, (or both deepening and problematizing at the same time) of the text from which it is drawn and of the general concept or ideas it is generating reflection on. How does this passage advance the argument (if at all) of the text? What new light does it shed on the questions and issues presented in the text?

To help prepare you for this assignment T.A.'s will provide you with exercises and advice in your tutorial groups in view of providing you with strategies to complete this assignment successfully.

The assignment will be made available to all students through Blackboard at 5 pm on December 2nd. The completed assignment will be due December 4th at 5 pm. A late penalty of 2% an hour will be applied to any late assignments.

Essay (second term):

The work on the essay is divided into four separate but interrelated stages, and these stages will be supported by discussion and activities in your tutorial groups. The reason for the four stage set of assignments is to provide some training for students in the art of writing a paper

in political theory. While many students have the skills to write a general essay, many find themselves stumped when it comes to drafting an essay in political theory. While there is no clear methodology for writing a paper in this field that can be fully articulated, the steps provided here identified as the PROP process for short, are meant to provide you the student with some guidance in the process and to give you the tools to be more successful in your writing of political theory papers.

Once you have chosen the question you wish to work on from the selection to be distributed in the second term, you should (re)read the relevant texts from the course with close attention to the passages that have some bearing or relevance to the concept or topic of the question. You may wish to work collectively on identifying the relevant passages and in the context of your tutorials. Your first **Passages Assignment** will be a printout of all the quotes, taken word for word from the text with proper page and chapter references, quotes that will be helpful and possibly used in your final paper. The point of this assignment is to demonstrate that the action of identifying relevant passages and actively reproducing them through either writing or typing is an important part of the scholarly process. While you reproduce those passages (as opposed to merely highlighting words on a page) you are forced to spend more time with the words and this often helps you to think more deeply about the passages. So your work in merely noting the relevant passages of the text and transcribing them word for word may be helpful for the next stage as well. You can hand in these passages as transcribed in chronological order from the text, or you may choose to rearrange those passages in a way that reflects some logical or analytical reordering. You will only be graded on a pass/fail basis for this assignment. As you transcribe the quotes, note down your reflections on the chosen passages. The **Reflection Assignment** involves a two to three page list of reflections and brainstorming, not necessarily in sentence form, on both the quotes (comparing and contrasting the logic or implications among the quotes identified in the first assignment) and on the concept/topic of the paper more generally (ask yourself what is the nature of the concept you chose to analyse and what you would expect a good analysis of that idea to involve). The point of the **Reflection Assignment** is to help you think both narrowly and broadly about the concept and passages and to note your thoughts so that you are able to organize them into a more logical order as you plan your paper. Again, this will be graded on a pass/fail basis, not for the substance of your reflections but for your commitment to the process of reflection on the citations which you had gathered, some of which may also be developed in the course of tutorial meetings. The third stage and assignment is the **Ordering Assignment** in which you place your points in a more logical order in order to build an argument for your paper. This may also involve identifying and addressing competing understandings or interpretations of the text if you think that there is more than one way that the passages you have identified in your Passages Assignment might be understood. Indeed, it is helpful to identify potentially competing understandings and interpretations of the passages you have singled out as it is evidence of your critical analysis of the text. Again, the Ordering Assignment can be presented in point form. The purpose of this exercise is to begin to reflect at least a week in advance of the submission of your essay on the broad structure of your paper. The full and final **Paper** (8-10 pages double-spaced) written in sentence form and with proper citations and references with a consistent and recognized bibliography and footnote format will be due March 26th.

All your preparatory work should be kept and as instructors we will have the right to ask

you to hand in that work if we have any suspicion of plagiarism (for information regarding university policy on plagiarism please see below).

Tutorials:

Students should attend tutorials starting at the beginning of October. You will be asked to sign up for your tutorial on the Blackboard site for the class. Details about this will be announced in class before the end of September.

Reminders and regulations:

Links to information about writing resources on campus are available for students online through the Blackboard website for this course

Please consult with your T.A. if you require extensions on your assignments. Without prior permission from your T.A., assignments handed in late will be deducted 2% of the assignment grade per day (including weekends). For late essays electronic submissions are permitted, as long as they are followed up by a paper copy.

Students are also required to keep their rough and draft work and copies of their assignments until the end of the course when grades are posted on ROSI. University policy regarding plagiarism will be strictly enforced. Please see the University of Toronto's policy on plagiarism on the Blackboard site or at <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize> .

Normally students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism and this can now be done through the Blackboard site for the course (details to follow later). In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com website. If, as a student, you object to using turnitin.com, please see the course instructor to establish appropriate alternative arrangements for submission of your written assignments.

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible: accessibility.services@utoronto.ca or <http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca/> .

REQUIRED READINGS:

The books listed below can be purchased at the Bob Miller Bookroom, 180 Bloor Street West, Lower Concourse (just across from the ROM crystal), 416-922-3557. (The bookstore is normally open weekdays until 6, but the owner has made special arrangements to be open until 9:00 p.m. on Sept. 11th, the first day of class.) Please be sure that you select the texts for the Kingston section of POL200Y.

Plato. *The Republic*. Ed. R. Allen. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007.

Aristotle. *Politics*. 2nd edition, Ed. C. Lord. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2013.

Confucius. *The Analects*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Christine de Pizan. *The Book of the City of Ladies*. New York: Persea Books, 1982.
Machiavelli. *Selected Political Writings*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994.
Hobbes. *Leviathan*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994.
Locke. *Second Treatise of Government*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980.

Readings for the first week of the course from Plutarch's *Lives* will be provided by hyperlink on the Blackboard site.

It is **strongly** recommended that you consult **the editions listed above** as otherwise you will run into differences in translation which could lead to certain confusion in class and group discussion.

Course outline (subject to modification):

1st term

Week 1- Introduction to the course

Week 2 – Athens v. Sparta (via Plutarch)

Weeks 3 to 7- Plato *The Republic*: from Athens to Sparta?

Weeks 8 to 11- Aristotle *The Politics*: from Sparta to Athens?

Weeks 12 and 13- Confucius *The Analects*: flourishing despite the state?

2nd term

Weeks 1 to 2- Christine de Pizan *The Book of the City of Ladies*: the roots of civilization and the place of women

Weeks 3 to 6- Machiavelli *The Prince* and *The Discourses*: political foundations and the nature of leadership

Week 7- Reading week

Weeks 8 to 10- Hobbes' *Leviathan*: sovereignty consolidated

Weeks 11 to 13- Locke's *Second Treatise*: sovereignty harnessed

Week 14- Review

Readings and assignments:

1st Term:

September 11th - Introduction

September 18th -**The Intellectual context of Plato and Aristotle: Athens vs. Sparta**
-**Read** Plutarch, *Life of Lycurgus* at http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Lives/Lycurgus*.html (this is a reproduction of vol. 1 of the Loeb Classical Library Edition of 1914 and in the public domain), Sections 7 to 25.
-**Read** Plutarch, *Life of Solon* at

http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Lives/Solon*.html (this is a reproduction of vol. 1 of the Loeb Classical Library

Edition of 1914 and in the public domain), Sections 13 to 24

-When you begin these readings, think about what conditions and activities make for a fulfilling life for human beings. How did Lycurgus and Solon differ in their view of a good human life, and how were social and political rules essential to the realization of their competing visions? Can you articulate the competing understandings of freedom that ground each of these alternatives?

September 25th

- **Read** Plato, *The Republic*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992, Books 1-3.

-Sign up for tutorials on Blackboard

-From Athens towards Sparta?: As you begin to read Plato you will see that he was not a full defender of either the Spartan or Athenian way of life. Nonetheless, his political ideas as developed in *The Republic* can be seen as starting from certain Athenian premises and subjecting them to critical assessment based on some Spartan principles and adopting a number of Spartan practices. The end result appears to be a community based on the primacy of philosophic wisdom but with certain Spartan characteristics.

October 2nd

- Read Plato, *The Republic*, Books 4-6.

- Tutorial groups will begin meeting around this time. Please be sure that you have assigned yourself to a group on the Blackboard website for the course.

October 9th

- Read Plato, *The Republic*, Books 7-8.

October 16th

- Read Plato, *The Republic*, Books 9-10.

October 23rd

- Read Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 10, chap. 9 and *The Politics*, Books 1 and 2 (in *The Politics and The Constitution of Athens* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

-From Sparta towards Athens?: Aristotle, like Plato, was too reflective to champion either one of the dominant political models of his day. Still, as a student and critic of Plato, Aristotle developed his political thinking in part by assessing and criticizing what he perceived to be a lack of a commitment to diversity in either Platonic political thought or Spartan political practice. One can understand his political thought as also arising from the clash of Athens and Sparta, but bringing it closer (though not fully) in an Athenian direction.

October 30th

- Read Aristotle, *The Politics*, Book 3.

- November 6th** - Read Aristotle, *The Politics*, Books 4 and 5.
- November 13th** - Read Aristotle, *The Politics*, Book 6.
- November 20th** -Read Confucius, *The Analects*, Books 1-10.
 - Flourishing despite the state: Confucius represents a challenge to the premises shared by Lycurgus, Solon, Plato and Aristotle, and particularly to the notion that human flourishing requires a certain type of political order and an appropriate legal structure (however characterized). For Confucius, it is the nature of one's relations within the private sphere that provide the foundation for flourishing and the questions of how we are ruled, what laws govern us or even who is in power are not central to living well.
- November 27th** - Read Confucius, *The Analects*, Books 11-20.
- December 2nd to Dec. 4th** -mid-term assignment, due Dec. 4th at 5 pm

2nd Term

- January 8th** - Read Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*. New York, Persea Books, 1982, Parts 1 and 2.
- January 15th** - Read Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, Part 3.
- January 22nd** - Read Machiavelli, "Letter to Francesco Vettori" and *The Prince* in *Selected Political Writings* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), chaps. 1 to 13.
- January 29th** - Read Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chaps. 14 to 26.
- February 5th** - Read Machiavelli, *The Discourses* (selections), Book I.
 - Selected topics and general instructions for the essay (due March 26th) will be handed out this week.
- February 12th** - Read Machiavelli, *The Discourses* (selections), Books II and III.
- February 19th** - Reading week (no class!)
- February 26th** - Read Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Part I, Introduction and chaps. 1 to 13.
- March 5th** -**Passages Assignment Due (see PROP Assignment above)**
 - Read Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Part I, chaps. 14 to 16, Part II, chaps. 17 to 20.

- March 12th** -**Reflection Assignment Due (see PROP Assignment above)**
- Read Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Part II, chaps. 21 to 31.
- March 19th** -**Ordering Assignment Due (see PROP Assignment above)**
- Read Locke. *Second Treatise*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980, chaps. 1 to 10.
- March 26th** - **Paper due (8-10 pp.)**
- Read Locke, *Second Treatise*, chaps. 11 to 14.
- April 2nd** - Read Locke, *Second Treatise*, chaps. 15-19.
- Summary and review

The final exam will be scheduled during the examination period. See your T.A. for further details.