

**University of Toronto
Department of Political Science**

**POL 381 Y1Y “Topics in Political Theory: Realist Political Theory”
Syllabus September 2018-April 2019 (Fall and Winter terms)**

**[Initial syllabus, 6 September 2018:
a more detailed and specific list of reading passages will follow.]**

Meets: Thursdays, 2-4 p.m., Sidney Smith 2127

INSTRUCTOR:

Andrew Sabl Department of Political Science
(rhymes with “bauble”) Sidney Smith Hall (100 St. George St.), Room 3030.
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Phone: (416) 978-2381 (office); But email is the best way to reach me.
Office Hours: Thursdays 4:15-6 p.m., or by appointment.

THEMES:

This course will explore the “realist” tradition of political thinking. Realism can mean many things (and this course will explore what it might mean). It is perhaps best understood in contrast to its opposite, so-called “ideal” theory (think of Plato, Rousseau, and in our age Rawls, Dworkin, and Nozick).

Ideal theorists seek to construct systematic, more or less universally valid theories of a just—or equal, or legitimate, or free—society, so as to be able to criticize existing institutions and practices for falling short of the ideal. Their methods and assumptions include:

- utopianism* (imagining perfect orders so as to attack existing ones);
- moralism* (a belief that justice and other moral principles should always trump nonmoral considerations, e.g. self- or group interest, self-preservation, and custom);
- *rationalism* (a belief that people’s reason can and should govern their “base” passions);
- universalism* (a search for principles independent of time, place, and circumstance);
- harmonism* (a neologism: the conviction that much, perhaps all, political conflict is regrettable, a sign of bias or partiality, and that we should aspire to have much less of it).

Realism adopts the opposite assumptions. It begins from political and social experience, current and historical. While respecting the force of moral appeals, it does not treat them as sovereign as a matter of either fact or right: in politics, morality is typically one consideration among many. It doubts that most people most of the time are ruled by reason, much less the philosophically soundest reasons. It accepts the possibility that many political standards may differ according to time, place, circumstances (the level of wealth, the distribution of power, etc.), and regime type. It assumes that conflict is permanent and must be managed through non-rational means (including institutional design, rhetorical persuasion, the channeling of passions and interests towards more rather than less benign ends, and the deployment of one set of power to avoid another). It focuses not on idealized systems but on the perspective of agents and the requirements of real-world political action. And it insists that good political theory must always be based on a knowledge of, and respect for, real politics.

Will consist of identification questions (20%) and two essays (80%).

QUERCUS AND EMAIL: Course assignments and guidelines will be posted on Quercus. You MUST have a valid UTOR email and are expected to consult Quercus regularly as well as enabling prompt (same-day) Quercus announcements to allow communication of urgent matters.

The professor and TA will respond to emails within 24 hours whenever possible. In the rare case that a substantive question is not answered within that time, you should feel free to send it again, and will never be marked down for doing so (politely). *Please consult the syllabus or Quercus before asking questions that are answered there.* Those asking complex questions may be encouraged to attend office hours in lieu of being given a very lengthy response.

WRITING ESSAYS:

This course assumes that you are prepared to work on improving your prose style and argumentative skill. Moreover, it regards clear, well-structured and forceful writing as the hallmark of strong analytic and synthetic thought. That is: passive, indirect constructions let a writer get away with not stating and defending—that is, possibly not having—a definite position. The Writing at U of T website (<http://writing.utoronto.ca/>) contains a variety of online resources, links to writing centers and other forms of support. Writing assistance is also available through every college. *You are strongly encouraged to take extensive advantage of all these resources.* Not only the worst but also the best writers are constantly trying to improve.

Other resources for improving your writing will be posted on Quercus.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense and will be dealt with accordingly. Students must read “Tips for Avoiding Academic Misconduct” <http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai/students/avoid-misconduct/tips-for-avoiding-academic-misconduct> and the University’s “How not to Plagiarize” document, <http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize/> and are encouraged to discuss with the instructors if they are unsure of what constitutes plagiarism or academic dishonesty. Plagiarism applies not only to essays, but also to more informal forms of writing.

SUBMITTING PAPERS AND OTHER ASSIGNMENTS: TURNITIN.COM

Normally, students will be required to submit their course assignments and essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their work to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference 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 web site.

It is the instructor’s understanding that Quercus contains resources for submitting papers via TurnItIn. **Please do not turn in hard copies at the Political Science desk: they will not be received.**

You should ensure that you have a hard copy and an electronic copy of all work submitted, and you are strongly advised to retain the rough work, notes, and draft material that went into the essay or assignment.

Students have the right to refuse to use Turnitin.com. In this case, students will be expected to submit an electronic copy of their essay to the professor by email, accompanied by their outline, thesis statement and annotated bibliography, as well all their notes and rough drafts, **by the time each paper would normally be due on TurnItIn.**

LATE WORK POLICY:

Late papers and other assignments will be penalized four points on the 100-point U of T grading scale per day late or part thereof. Rare exceptions may be granted to students who have faced serious medical or other emergencies, and who have substantial and convincing documentation fully accounting for the length of delay. If you are facing such a situation, inform the instructor as soon as possible—and, whenever possible, *before* the assignment is due.

CLASS ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION:

Students are expected to read the readings listed for each class section *before* coming to class. The lectures will not summarize the reading; on the contrary, they will assume that you have covered the reading material and will therefore analyze or explain the reading, or place it in a larger context. The papers as well as the fall and end-of-year exams will be based on material covered in both the readings and the class lectures and discussion.

At the end of every lecture, and on Quercus, students will be told of one or more specific passages that will serve as the basis for class discussion in the next lecture. Students should come to class prepared to ask questions about, and express opinions on, these passages in particular.

TEXTS:

All the readings marked on the syllabus are required, unless otherwise stated. Readings may be modified at the Instructor's discretion – you must consult Quercus regularly for new, revised or updated assignments.

Materials drawn from academic journals and books in electronic format are available through the U of T library site by finding the “electronic resource” listing under the journal or book title. However, most of the material discussed in the course will be taken from books that are available at the U of T bookstore, and will also be on reserve in the library.

Though some of these books are very large, reading will typically consist of less than 80 pages a week—often much less if the material is dense and/or difficult. Only portions of the big books will be assigned. Winter term's texts will be much shorter and less expensive than Fall's. Although you are encouraged to refer to used copies, **please use the editions assigned, so that we are all literally on the same page and using the same translation.** That said, the instructor will refer to universal indicators (e.g. section and paragraph number) whenever possible and available, to allow for cross-referencing.

Assigned books (in alphabetical order; the numbers at the end are ISBN-13 numbers for easier used book shopping; Fall books in **bold**).

Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, trans. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998). ISBN: 9780521468435.

Raymond Geuss, *Philosophy and Real Politics* (Princeton Univ. Press, 2008). ISBN: 9780691137889.

Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist* (selections, available online: details to be announced.)

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Edwin Curley (Hackett Publishing Co., 1994). ISBN: 9780872201774

David Hume, *The History of England* (Liberty Fund), volumes 5 and 6; probably online versions will be assigned instead of some or all of the printed text. Details to be announced.

Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield (2d. ed., Univ. of Chicago Press, 1998). ISBN: 9780226500447

Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 2011). ISBN: 9780226584003

Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, in the following edition: Robert B. Strassler, ed., *The Landmark Thucydides*, rev. ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1998). ISBN: 9780684827902.

Max Weber, *The Vocation Lectures*, trans. Rodney Livingstone, ed. David Owen and Tracy B. Strong (Hackett Publishing Co., 2004). ISBN: 9780872206656

CLASS SCHEDULE: FALL TERM

Sept. 6 – Course Overview

Sept. 13 – Thucydides Wk 1

The Peloponnesian War (in *The Landmark Thucydides*): Book 1: paragraphs 6-9, 11, 18, 20-23, 31-44, 68-88, 96-99, 118-125, 135-146.

Themes: the complexities of interest and power, and how appeals to justice interact with appeals to interest and power.

Sept. 20 – Thucydides Wk 2 [specific readings to be announced]

Themes: democratic morale (how to sustain the confidence of democratic publics under adversity); credibility and confidence (how to convince potential allies and adversaries that one's intentions are durable and will not change)

Sept. 27-Thucydides Wk 3

Themes: Political ethics. Promise-keeping and treaty-breaking; truth and lying; treason and the breakinf of faith (and their costs); ruthlessness and mercy; the ethics of unequal power and

status; the question of whether honesty is the best policy—and the circumstances under which it might or might not be.

Oct. 4- Thucydides Wk 4

A focus on (a) leadership and personality in Thucydides: how he assesses the different political figures he treats and evaluates their moral and nonmoral virtues and vices; (b) the role of accident and unexpected circumstances in Thucydides' politics, and the implications of accident for a realist view of politics and political strategy.

Oct. 11 – Augustine 1 [paper due Friday Oct 12 based on material up to October 4]

Theme: Augustine's view of human nature and political life

Oct. 18 – Augustine 2

Theme: Augustine's political ethics and how it follows (or doesn't) from his deeper foundational assumptions about human nature and political life.

Oct. 25 – Machiavelli 1

Nov. 1-Machiavelli 2

Nov. 8 – READING WEEK: NO CLASS.

Nov. 15 – Hobbes 1 [second paper due Friday Nov. 16 based on material up to Nov. 1]

Nov. 22 – Hobbes 2

Nov 29: IN-CLASS FALL TEST. TWO HOURS LONG; CLOSED-BOOK, CLOSED-NOTES; WILL BEGIN PROMPTLY AT 2 P.M.

WINTER TERM

Jan. 10 – Hume part 1

Jan. 17- Hume part 2

Jan. 24 –*The Federalist*

Jan. 31 – Weber part 1

Feb. 7- Weber part 2

Feb. 14 – Niebuhr

Feb. 21 – READING WEEK: NO CLASS

Feb. 28 – Judith N. Shklar, "The Liberalism of Fear" (book chapter), and selections from *Legalism*. details to be announced.

Mar. 7- Raymond Geuss, selections from *Outside Ethics* and *Philosophy and Real Politics* (Pt. 1)

Mar. 14- Geuss, *Philosophy and Real Politics*, Pt. 2

Mar. 21 – Bernard Williams, selections to be announced.

Paper outline due Mar. 21 in class

Mar. 28 -

Contemporary discussions of realist political theory: authors to include some of the following:
William A. Galston, Marc Stears, Enzo Rossi and Matt Sleat,

Apr. 4-Course Conclusion

Selections of work by Andrew Sabl.

APRIL 5- FINAL PAPER DUE 10 p.m. via TurnItIn.

FINAL EXAMINATION: DATE AND TIME TO BE SCHEDULED.

Three hours long, closed-book, closed-notes, covering material from the whole course (but material from the Winter term will be stressed).