

Political Theory: Visions of the Good/Just Society
POL200Y1-Y (LEC0201)
Fall 2021-Winter 2022

Professor: Matthew J Walton
Sidney Smith Hall Rm. 3107
Email: matthew.walton@utoronto.ca
Office hours: Wednesdays, 2-4pm, online (platform TBD)
NOTE: If circumstances permit, I will try to schedule occasional in-person office hours.

TAs: Kelsey Gordon, Head TA (kelsey.gordon@mail.utoronto.ca)
Talia Amatulli (talia.amatulli@mail.utoronto.ca)
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Class Meetings: Thursdays, 2-4pm
NOTE: All lectures will be held online, platform TBD. Tutorials will be a mixture of online and in-person, as circumstances allow.

Course Description:

This course will introduce you to the field of political theory, through an examination of some classic, canonical works of the Western tradition as well as a range of works from other traditions. While our inquiry will certainly not be exhaustive, we will aim to cover some of the central themes, concepts, and debates within the field, even as we push to expand its boundaries. You can expect to be challenged, enthralled, confused, repulsed and stimulated by your engagement with these thinkers and their ideas. We only ask that you cultivate an openness to evaluating them on their own terms, in addition to considering their relevance for political inquiry today and their capacity to reshape your own political commitments.

Under the broad heading of the “good/just society,” we will explore contrasting visions of human nature, of legitimate and ideal political authority, of the roles of virtue and morality in political leadership and citizenship, and of the purposes of political community as well as its boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. Throughout, while we will attend closely to the ideas and arguments of these thinkers in their own contexts, we will also consider the validity or value of their ideas more generally: what do they have to teach us about the nature of political interaction and political inquiry?

The approach taken in this course is broadly interpretive, meaning that we will consider multiple understandings of these works and their ideas; after all, political theorists continue to argue over many aspects of these texts and thinkers. Our readings will be informed by secondary scholarship but you will also develop your own perspectives on them. This requires that you read the texts diligently and participate in discussions with your peers to help develop and challenge your understandings. While training in the close and attentive reading and analysis of texts will be a primary goal of the course, we will also investigate political thought that emerges from oral traditions, from practice, and from non-textual material objects, further pushing the boundaries of what “counts” as political theory.

Course Readings:

The following required texts are available at the U of T Bookstore, in electronic versions (through the hyperlinks below), or through your preferred online or brick & mortar used bookstore:

- Plato. 2004. [*Republic*](#). Trans. C.D.C. Reeve. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett.
Aristotle. 1998. [*Politics*](#). Trans. C.D.C. Reeve. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett.
Christine de Pizan. 2018. [*The Book of the City of Ladies*](#). Ed. Sophie Bourgault and Rebecca Kingston. Trans. Ineke Hardy. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett.
Machiavelli, Niccolò. 1994. [*Selected Political Writings*](#). Trans. David Wootton. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett.
Hobbes, Thomas. 1994. [*Leviathan*](#). Ed. Edwin Curley. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett.
Locke, John. 1980. [*Second Treatise*](#). Indianapolis, IN: Hackett.

There are many different editions and translations of these texts. It is *very important* that you get these editions so that we can refer to them in lecture and tutorials and so that you can cite them in your essays. Every effort has been made to minimize the cost, but if you are experiencing financial impediments to purchasing books for the course, please talk with your TA.

All additional course readings (marked below with a +) are available online, as copyright-compliant postings on the course Quercus site, as links to the University of Toronto Libraries electronic collection or as external links. *You are responsible for completing all readings by the dates indicated on the syllabus.*

Course Requirements:

Participation (15%): Your participation grade will primarily reflect your attendance and participation in tutorials. You should ensure that you have read the texts, attended or watched the lecture, and come prepared to participate in discussion. Substantive participation in tutorial discussions, email exchanges or conversations in office hours with your TA are the main ways of registering your participation. 2% of the 15% of your participation grade will come from completing three short online surveys about course materials and practices throughout the year.

Essay 1 (20%): A 1500 word interpretive essay comparing two or more of the thinkers or texts from the first part of the course. A full prompt and additional directions will be provided. The first part of the assignment (an intro, thesis statement and outline) will count for 5% of the grade; the final submission will count for the remaining 15%.

Intro, thesis statement and outline due **November 4, 2021** by 5pm, submitted on Quercus

Final draft due **November 25, 2021** by 5pm, submitted on Quercus

Essay 2 (35%): A 2500 word interpretive essay, with the topic to be chosen from a list provided.

Final draft due **March 17, 2022** by 5pm, submitted on Quercus

Final Exam (30%): The date and format of the final exam will be determined later in the year, but it will be held online.

Course Policies:

Late Work/Make-up Exams

Please plan to submit your work on time and do your best to meet the set deadlines. Cultivating strong time-management skills is an important part of your university education. At the same time, we know that life can intervene, and the coming year promises to be just as uncertain as the last. Our goal is to help you

learn the materials and complete the assignments to the best of your ability, even if this takes a few extra days. If you find yourself needing an extension, please reach out to your TA. We ask that you include:

1. The reason for your request (but please note that you are not required to disclose medical or other personal information in detail).
2. A proposal for a new deadline.
3. Additional documentation (like a doctor's note) is helpful but not required.

All late work that is not excused in advance will be penalized at a rate of **2% per day of lateness**. Your TA will make the final decision on granting an extension, but we guarantee that we will give it serious consideration. Your success in this course and your personal well-being are both important to us.

Accessibility Policy

We do our best to welcome students with diverse learning styles and needs in this course. In particular, if you have a disability or health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach your TA and/or the Accessibility Services Office as soon as possible. The Accessibility Services staff are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations. We know that this formal process can be slow, so please talk with your TA *in advance* about any accommodations you might need or challenges you might be facing. We are also open to hearing about ways in which the course environment or structure might unintentionally exclude or disadvantage certain people and will work to respond to any such concerns.

We will do our best to work with **any** student to help facilitate participation and success in this course, whether you have a formal accommodation granted or not. There are many other circumstances that might affect your ability to engage fully with course expectations. Please feel free to discuss any difficulties you are experiencing with your TA and we can work together to address them.

Grading Policy

Your TAs will be open to discussing any grades given on assignments. We will do our best to communicate the grading criteria in advance but please ask questions if you are confused. If you feel that a grader has made an error, you can take it up with them through the following procedure (Please note that, unless otherwise approved, TAs will only discuss issues with grading during the 7 days after the assignment has been handed back):

1. Wait a minimum of 24 hours after receiving your grade to contact your TA.
2. Put in writing the reasons why you are dissatisfied with the grade.
3. Bring the assignment/exam and your written statement to a meeting to discuss it, if your TA requests this.

If you are still dissatisfied with the resolution, you may contact the Head TA, providing the previous communication with the TA and a further explanation of why you think the assigned grade was not appropriate. If you still believe the issue has not been resolved, you can bring your appeal to the professor, following the same steps. Please note that initiating a challenge to a grade means that the grade could go up, stay the same *or go down*.

Academic Integrity

Cheating and plagiarism are offenses against academic integrity and are subject to disciplinary action by the university. Plagiarism is copying someone else's work and presenting it as your own (by not attributing it to its true source). If you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism, please ask your TA or the professor. We take this matter very seriously and will **NOT** tolerate plagiarism. We will provide a detailed citation style guide and TAs will go over proper citation in tutorials, but if you are still unsure about how to properly cite an idea, please ask. Your Essays will all be submitted using an online plagiarism detection tool; if you would like to request an alternate method of submission, please let us know in advance and we can arrange this. Please know that TAs are skilled at catching plagiarism even without this software.

Course Schedule:

FALL TERM

Week 1 (Sept 9): Anishinaabe Creation Stories

+Doug Williams. 2018. *Michi Saagig Nishnaabeg: This is Our Territory*. Winnipeg: ARP Books. [**“Michi Saagig Nishnaabeg Creation Story”] (pp.13-16)

+Watch: [“The Ojibway Creation Story”](#)

+Leanne Betasamosake Simpson with Edna Manitowabi. 2013. "Theorizing Resurgence from within Nishnaabeg Thought." in *Centering Anishinaabeg studies: understanding the world through stories*. (Ed. Jill Doerfler, Niigaanwewidam James Sinclair, and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark) East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press. (pp.279-293)

Week 2 (Sept 16): Anishinaabe Mino-mnaamodzawin

+Doug Williams. 2018. *Michi Saagig Nishnaabeg: This is Our Territory*. Winnipeg: ARP Books. [**“The Right Size for a Garden” and “Wiigwamin”] (pp.98-107)

+McGregor, D. 2018. “Mino-Mnaamodzawin”. *Environment and Society*. 9(1), 7–24.

Week 3 (Sept 23): Theravāda Buddhist Concepts and a “Creation” Story

+Rāhula, W. 1974. *What the Buddha taught*. Grove Press. [**Chapters 2-6] (pp.27-72)

+*Aggañña Sutta, Digha Nikaya* (pp.407-415)

Week 4 (Sept 30): Theravāda Views on Moral Rule

+*Cakkavatti-Sihanāda Sutta, Digha Nikaya* (pp.395-405)

+Ven. S. Dhammika (trans). [Asokan rock edicts](#). [**All except Preface and Introduction]

Week 5 (Oct 7): Plato: Conventional Views of Justice and Plato’s Response

Republic, Book I (all); Book II (357a-376d); Book III (412b-417b) (pp.1-52; 88-93)

Week 6 (Oct 14): Plato: Virtue and the Rule of the Philosopher

Republic, Book IV (all); Book V (449a-466d; 471c-480a) (pp.94-141; 146-156)

Week 7 (Oct 21): Plato: Philosophical Knowledge and Political Decline

Republic, Book VII (514a-521c); Book VIII (all); Book IX (all) (pp.186-193; 213-263)

Week 8 (Oct 28): Aristotle: Political Communities

Politics, Book I (all); Book II (Chapters 1-5) (pp.1-36)

Week 9 (Nov 4): Aristotle: Citizens, Constitutions, Laws

Politics, Book III (all) (pp.65-100)

****Essay 1: Intro, thesis statement and outline due****

****Please Note: No class on Nov 11 for Reading Week****

Week 10 (Nov 18): Aristotle: Political Regimes and Political Ideals

Politics, Book IV (Chapters 1-12); Book VII (Chapters 1-3; 13-15) (pp.101-123; 191-197; 212-219)

Week 11 (Nov 25): Alfarabi: Constructing an Islamic Political Science

+Alfarabi, & Butterworth, C. E. 2001. *The Political Writings: "Selected Aphorisms" and Other Texts*. Cornell University Press.
"Book of Religion" (pp. 93-113)
"Selected Aphorisms" (pp. 11-22 *only*; first two groupings)

****Essay 1: Final draft due****

Week 12 (Dec 2): Alfarabi: Virtue and Happiness in the Polity

+Alfarabi & Butterworth, C. E. 2015. *The Political Writings, Volume II: Political Regime and Summary of Plato's Laws*. Cornell University Press.
"Political Regime" (pp. 58-94 *only*)

WINTER TERM

Week 1 (Jan 13): Christine de Pizan: Rejecting Gendered Stereotypes

The Book of the City of Ladies, Book I (Chapters 1-20; 27; 33-38; 43) (pp.21-61; 68-69; 74-83; 88-90)

Week 2 (Jan 20): Christine de Pizan: Virtues, Gender and the Polity

The Book of the City of Ladies, Book II (Chapters 7-13; 28-30; 36-49; 53-54; 64-69); Book III (Chapters 1; 10-11; 18-19) (pp.106-114; 127-132; 139-154; 164-167; 181-190; 203-209; 217-221)

Week 3 (Jan 27): Machiavelli: Political Theory from Empirics

The Prince (Dedication, Chapters 1-14) (pp.5-47)

Week 4 (Feb 3): Machiavelli: Pragmatism and Amoral Political Rule

The Prince (Chapters 15-26) (pp.47-80)

Week 5 (Feb 10): Hobbes: Human Nature and the State of Nature

Leviathan, Introduction, Chapters 4-6; 10-13 (pp.3-5; 15-35; 50-78)

Week 6 (Feb 17): Hobbes: Constructing the Sovereign

Leviathan, Chapters 14-18 (pp.79-118)

****Please Note: No class on Feb 24 for Reading Week****

Week 7 (March 3): Hobbes: Strong and Weak Commonwealths

Leviathan, Chapters 19-21; 29-30 (pp.118-145; 210-233)

Week 8 (March 10): Locke: The State of Nature and Property Rights

Second Treatise, Preface, Chapters 1-4 (pp.5-18)

+James, CLR. 1963. *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*. New York: Random House. [****Chapter I: "The Property"**] (pp.6-26)

****TRIGGER WARNING: Graphic depictions of the violence of enslavement****
Second Treatise, Chapter 5 (pp.18-30)

Week 9 (March 17): Locke: Forming Civil Society

Second Treatise, Chapters 6-12 (pp.30-77)

****Essay 2: Final draft due****

Week 10 (March 24): Locke: The Right to Rebel

Second Treatise, Chapters 13-19 (pp.77-124)

Week 11 (March 31): Resistance to Enslavement: Marronage

+Price, R. 1996. *Maroon societies: rebel slave communities in the Americas* (3rd ed.). The Johns Hopkins University Press. [**Introduction and Preface] (pp.1-30; xi-xxvii)

TRIGGER WARNING: Graphic depictions of the violence of enslavement

Week 12 (April 7): Conclusions and Review