

POL200Y1 Y - LEC5101**Political Theory: Visions of the Just/Good Society**

Wednesday 5 - 7 PM

Faculty of Arts and Science, Department of Political Science, Fall/Winter 2024-25

Instructor:*Rachael Desborough (she/her)*Email: rachael.desborough@mail.utoronto.ca

Office hours: Wednesday 3-4 PM or online by appointment

Teaching Assistants:*Head TA:* Hazim Mohamed (hazim.mohamed@mail.utoronto.ca)Mark Ariba (mark.ariba@mail.utoronto.ca)Ranfateh Chattha (ranfateh.chattha@mail.utoronto.ca)Daniel Luna (erich.lunajacobs@mail.utoronto.ca)Callum Shepard (callum.shepard@mail.utoronto.ca)Piper Sterling (piper.sterling@mail.utoronto.ca)Aye Thein (aye.thein@mail.utoronto.ca)**Tutorials**

TUT5101 - Wednesday 7 - 8 PM (Aye Thein)

TUT5102 - Wednesday 7 - 8 PM (Ranfateh)

TUT5103 - Wednesday 7 - 8 PM (Callum)

TUT0101 - Thursday 12 - 1 PM (Daniel)

TUT0102 - Thursday 12 - 1 PM (Hazim)

TUT0201 - Thursday 1 - 2 PM (Hazim)

TUT0202 - Thursday 1 - 2 PM (Callum)

TUT0301 - Thursday 2 - 3 PM (Ranfateh)

TUT0302 - Thursday 2 - 3 PM (Mark)

TUT0401 - Thursday 3 - 4 PM (Mark)

TUT0402 - Thursday 3 - 4 PM (Piper)

TUT0501 - Thursday 4 - 5 PM (Piper)

Online communication policy

When emailing your instructors or TAs please include the course code in the subject line. We will typically respond within 48 hours, and not typically on weekends. Please use your University of Toronto email, ending in @mail.utoronto.ca. Please note that all communication with anyone in the course – the instructor, your TAs, other students – should be respectful.

Course Description

In this political theory survey course, we will read, interpret, and evaluate some of the best-known texts in ancient, medieval, and early modern political thought. To bring some focus to our broad inquiry, we will concentrate primarily on common ethical and political concepts, questions, and problems across our texts. Particular attention will be paid to questions of justice, freedom, equality, and political authority, and how various articulations of these concepts serve as the foundations of liberalism.

In the first term, we will concentrate primarily on politics as a site of debate and conflict over the meaning of justice. What *is* justice, and who or what determines it? How is it best achieved politically? What role does equality play in just social and political relationships? What makes a citizen? We then move on to questions about the political community, membership, and equality. How are communities formed, preserved, and dissolved? Who gets to participate in decision making and on what grounds? Finally, we turn to questions of sovereignty, considering the scope of just authority and power.

This course is meant to offer an interpretation of these texts as politically and philosophically interesting in their own right and in their historical context. But another major aim of this course is to encourage you to judge for yourself which ethical and political perspectives and arguments are persuasive or compelling to you *now*, and which aren't.

Learning Outcomes

In POL200, you will learn:

- The skills to comfortably read and critically engage (in writing and discussion) some of the best-known texts in the history of political thought;
- How to interpret these primary texts and then use them as evidence in writing;
- To identify major ethical and political questions and concepts that are important to the tradition of political theory;
- Critically evaluate, further develop, and discuss your own political values and commitments, including reflecting on contemporary political institutions; and
- To write argumentative essays that analyze, interpret, or compare relevant texts.

Course Delivery

In person lectures one a week and a tutorial once a week. Participation grades are based on attendance and *active* participation in tutorial.

The course [Quercus page](#) will be the primary source of information for students, outside of this syllabus. It will be used to communicate course updates from the Instructor and TAs, submit assignments, and will have modules detailing weekly readings and any supplementary materials.

Required Texts

The following texts are required reading and can be acquired through the U of T Bookstore, [listed here](#). The books are also all available online through the library, which is accessible through the “Library Reading List” tab on the course Quercus page. Further, e-Book versions are available for these editions and the details will be shared on Quercus.

Note: There are many editions of these texts. It is strongly encouraged for you to acquire and use these specific editions as class discussion will run much more smoothly if everyone is using the same translations of the texts with the same pagination. Moreover, you will need to use these editions in order for your TA to accurately evaluate your use of the texts in your essays. If you need help with acquiring course materials, let the Instructor or your TA know as soon as possible.

- Plato. *Republic*. Translated by C.D.C. Reeve. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2004. ISBN 9780872207363 (<https://www.vitalsource.com/referral?term=9781603840132>)
- Aristotle. *Politics*. Translated by C.D.C. Reeve. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2017. ISBN 9781624665578 (<https://www.vitalsource.com/referral?term=9781624665592>)
- Christine de Pizan. *The Book of the City of Ladies and Other Writings*. Edited by Rebecca Kingston & Sophie Bourgault. Translated by Ineke Hardy. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2018. ISBN 9781624667299 (<https://www.vitalsource.com/referral?term=9781624667312>)
- Niccolò Machiavelli. *Selected Political Writings*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994. ISBN 9780872202474 (<https://www.vitalsource.com/referral?term=9781603846943>)
- Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan*. Edited by Edwin Curley. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994. ISBN 9780872201774 (<https://www.vitalsource.com/referral?term=9781603844864>)
- John Locke. *Second Treatise of Government*. Edited by C.B. Macpherson. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980. ISBN 9780915144860 (<https://www.vitalsource.com/referral?term=9781603844574>)

Course Requirements and Grade Distribution

The course has five major graded components. All written assignments are due by 11:59 PM on the specified deadline and are to be submitted through the associated assignment tab on Quercus. Please make sure to submit your assignments in advance of the deadline as we are unable to accommodate extensions due to technological issues.

- Tutorial Participation: 15%
- Passage Interpretation Assignment: 15% (Due October 11th, 11:59 PM)
- Take-Home Midterm Exam: 15% (week of November 25th)
- Essay: 25% (Due March 7th, 11:59 PM)
- Final exam: 30% (During final exam period, between April 9 - April 30th)

Description of course requirements

Lectures, Tutorials & Participation

This course is a combination of lectures and tutorials. You must attend both to succeed in this course.

Lectures

Lectures will predominantly be a discussion of the relevant readings. To get the most out of the lectures, you should come to class having done the relevant readings. There will be a minimal use of slides, and they will mostly have quotes from the text that we will discuss as a class. Given that most of the writing assignments in this course require you to draw on the text as evidence, lectures will emphasize how to go about interpreting the passages and how they could be used as evidence in your writing. There will be opportunity for clarifying concepts and questions will be asked of the class.

Please note:

- Slides **will not** be posted online
- Disruptions to class will not be tolerated. Please be respectful to your peers, the instructor, and TAs at all times in this course

Tutorials

Tutorial will be the setting in which you, your TA, and your peers can discuss the readings in greater depth and detail. Tutorial attendance is mandatory and a component of your final grade. To prepare for each tutorial meeting, you should do the relevant readings and come prepared with questions or comments to discuss. Your final tutorial grade will rest on four factors: (1) attendance; (2) preparation - bring your readings and notes to every meeting; (3) quality of contributions to the discussion and tutorial activities; and (4) respectful engagement with your peers and tutorial leader. You do not need to have perfect understanding to contribute to the discussion, indeed participation can be asking questions about things you need clarified.

Each student may miss two tutorials over the entire course without documentation. For any other absences to be excused, you must provide valid documentation as outlined by the [Faculty of Arts and Science](#) and communicate with your TA.

Use of technology

Laptops may be used for notetaking during lectures, however cellphones should not be used during class, especially during group discussions, except for emergencies. Please contact the instructor for any exceptions (e.g. disability accommodations).

Assignment details and policies

Writing Assignments:

You will have **two writing assignments** this year. All assignments are submitted electronically through the course Quercus site. In the first term, you will have a short textual interpretation paper on a passage from Plato. In the winter term, you will write a more substantial essay that will draw on more than one thinker from the course. Each of these assignments will be clearly explained in class and posted on Quercus well in advance of your deadlines.

It is *strongly* advised that you keep rough and draft work and back-up copies of your essays and assignments before submitting on Quercus. Make sure you are saving along the way and for the midterm, consider preparing your answers in a separate document that you can save so that you don't lose any work before submitting. Additionally, you should keep a copy of all essays/assignments until the marked assignments have been returned to you.

Late work and extension policy:

All assignments that are submitted after the deadline will immediately incur a penalty of 5%. Each additional day after that will increase the penalty by 3% of the assignment weight. After 1 week, no late assignments will be accepted. **Please send all extension requests directly to the course instructors** (and not your TA) at least *one week* before the course deadline.

Grade appeal policy:

Full instructions for grade appeals will be posted on Quercus.

Should you disagree with an assigned grade, you may submit a request for reassessment. The request must (a) be submitted **no sooner** than 24 hours after the assignments have been returned - that is, you *should not* reach out immediately upon receiving your grade. Take a minimum 24 hours to review the comments thoroughly. Requests must also (b) **use the appeal form found on Quercus**, following the instructions and answering each of the sections with direct reference to the assignment and grader's comments. You will submit this form to the Head TA and your assignment will then be re-evaluated by the grading TA. If you still disagree with the outcome, you can appeal to the instructor. Please note that a grade appeal results in a "new" grade for the assignment (which could be higher, lower, or remain the same) and you do not have the option to revert back to the original grade. **All appeals MUST be submitted within two weeks after you received your grade for the assignment.**

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism is a serious academic offence and will be dealt with accordingly. For further clarification and information on plagiarism please see Writing at the University of Toronto <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources>.

Please also note that this class MAY NOT be recorded nor should any of the course materials be captured or reproduced. It is an issue of copyright.

Turnitin

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University's plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>).

Required Reading and Lecture/Tutorial Schedule

Lecture 1 (September 4) - Introductions

Why study political theory?

No required readings.

Lecture 2 (September 11) - Introduction to Ancient Athens, Plato, and Socrates

Required readings:

- Plato, *Apology* (Available on Quercus)

Suggested materials:

- Listen: *Good in Theory*, 5-part series on Plato's *Apology* (Available on Quercus)

Tutorial begins this week

Lecture 3 (September 18) - Plato *Republic* I: Conventional justice

Required readings:

- Plato, *Republic*:
 - Book I (all), pp. 1-35
 - Book II (357a-367e), pp. 36-45

Lecture 4 (September 25) - Plato II: Justice in the city and the soul

Required readings:

- Plato, *Republic*:
 - Book II (368a-379a), pp. end of 45-59
 - Book III (412c-end) pp. 96-102
 - Book IV (419a-424c, 427a-434e, 441c-444b), pp. 103-108, 111-121, 129-133

Lecture 5 (October 2) - Plato III: Philosophy and politics

Required readings:

- Plato, *Republic*:
 - Book V (449a-464d, 471c-475e), pp. 136-155, 164-169
 - Book VI (484a-48b, 496a-499c), pp. 176-179, 190-193
 - Book VII (514a-521a, 540a-541b), pp. 208-214, 236-237

Suggested materials:

- Listen: *Philosophy Bites*, “Simon Blackburn on Plato’s Cave” (Available on Quercus)

Lecture 6 (October 9) - Plato IV: Imperfect constitutions

Required readings:

- Plato, *Republic*
 - Book VIII (543a-564c), pp. 238-262
 - Book IX (all), pp. 270-296

****First Term Passage Interpretation Assignment due October 11, 11:59 PM****

Lecture 7 (October 16) – Plato’s influence

Required reading:

- Alexander I. Orwin, “Democracy under the Caliphs: Alfarabi’s Unusual Understanding of Popular Rule.” *The Review of Politics*, 77, 2 (2015) 171–90. (Available on Quercus)
- David William Lay, “[Here’s what Plato had to say about someone like Donald Trump,](#)” *Washington Post*, October 15, 2016. (Available on Quercus)

Lecture 8 (October 23) - Aristotle I: Political community

Require readings:

- Aristotle, *Politics*: Book I (all, pp. 1-25)

Fall Reading Week , October 28 - November 1, 2024 – No classes meet

Lecture 9 (November 6) - Aristotle II: Citizenship

Required readings:

- Aristotle, *Politics*: Book II.1-5 & Book III.1-13 (pp. 26-35, 65-90)

Lecture 10 (November 13) - Aristotle III: Political regimes

Required readings:

- Aristotle, *Politics*: Book IV.1-12; Book V.11; & Book VII.1-4, 13-17 (pp. 101-122, 166-170, 191-199, 212-226)

Lecture 11 (November 20) – Who counts in Aristotle’s *Politics*?

Required readings:

- Jill Frank, “Citizens, Slaves, and Foreigners: Aristotle on Human Nature,” *American Political Science Review*, 98, 1 (2004) 91-104. (Available on Quercus)
- Sara Brill, “Self-Sacrifice as Wifely Virtue in Aristotle’s Political Theory” in *The Wives of Western Philosophy*, eds. J Forestal and M Philips, Routledge, 2020. (Available on Quercus)

Lecture 12 (November 27) – No class – take-home midterm exam

****Take-home midterm exam this week****

****Winter break (December 24, 2024 - January 3, 2025)****

Lecture 13 (January 8) - Christine I: Challenging stereotypes

Required readings:

- Christine, *The Book of the City of Ladies*: Book I.1-19, I.27, I.33-37, & I. 43 (pp. 21-59, 70-71, 77-81, 88-90)

Lecture 14 (January 15) - Christine II: Medieval “feminism”

Required readings:

- Christine, *The Book of the City of Ladies*: Book II.7-18, II.28-9, II.37-46, II.53, II.64, II.66 & Book III.1, III.19 (pp. 106-119, 127-131, 141-149, 164-166, 181-182, 183-184; 189-190, 219- 221)

Lecture 15 (January 22) - Machiavelli I: A new political science

Required readings:

- Machiavelli, “*The Prince*” in *Selected Political Writings*: Ch. 1-14 (pp. 5-46)

Lecture 16 (January 29) - Machiavelli II: From what is best to what is necessary

Required readings:

- Machiavelli, “*The Prince*” in *Selected Political Writings*: Ch. 15-26 (pp. 47-80)

Lecture 17 (February 5) - Machiavelli III: Origins of republicanism

Required readings:

- Machiavelli, “*The Discourses*” in *Selected Political Writings*: Dedicatory Letter and Book I.1-6, 11-13, 16-18, 55, 58 & Book II.2 (pp. 81-101, 113-129, 150-158, 165-171)

Lecture 18 (February 12) - Reading Machiavelli critically: Machiavelli’s *Virtu*

Required reading:

- Mary Dietz, “Trapping the Prince: Machiavelli and the Politics of Deception,” *American Political Science Review*, 80, 3 (1986): 777-799.

Winter Reading Week , February 17 – 21st, 2025 – No classes meet

Lecture 19 (February 26) - Hobbes I: The state of nature

Required readings:

- Hobbes, *Leviathan*: Dedicatory Letter, Introduction, and Ch. 4-6 (pp. 1-5, 15-34, 50-57)

Lecture 20 (March 5) - Hobbes II: Sovereignty and the social contract

Required readings:

- Hobbes, *Leviathan*: Ch. 13-16 (pp. 74-105)

Winter-term Essay due March 7, 11:59 PM

Lecture 21 (March 12) - Hobbes III: Authority

Required readings:

- Hobbes, *Leviathan*: Ch. 17-18, 21, 26-29 (pp. 106-118, 136-145, 172-219)

Lecture 22 (March 19) - Hobbes and Liberalism?

- Noel Malcolm, “Thomas Hobbes: Liberal illiberal.” *Master-Mind Lecture*, October 15, 2014 (available on Quercus)

Lecture 23 (March 26) - Locke I: Natural rights

Required readings:

- Locke, *Second Treatise*: Ch. 1-9 (pp. 7-67)

Lecture 24 (April 2) - Locke II: Representative government

Required readings:

- Locke, *Second Treatise*: Ch. 10-19 (pp. 65-124)

Additional Information, University Resources, and Term Dates

Accommodations and AccessibilityAccessibility

The University provides academic accommodations for students with disabilities in accordance with the terms of the Ontario Human Rights Code. This occurs through a collaborative process that acknowledges a collective obligation to develop an accessible learning environment that both meets the needs of students and preserves the essential academic requirements of the University’s courses and programs. Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you have a disability that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach us and/or the Accessibility Services office:

<https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/departments/accessibility-services/>

Religious observances

The University provides reasonable accommodation for the needs of students who observe religious holy days other than those already accommodated by ordinary scheduling and statutory holidays. Students have a responsibility to alert members of the teaching staff in a timely fashion to upcoming religious observances and anticipated absences and instructors will make every

reasonable effort to avoid scheduling tests, examinations or other compulsory activities at these times. Please reach out to us as early as possible to communicate any anticipated absences related to religious observances, and to discuss any possible related implications for course work.

Family care responsibilities:

The University of Toronto strives to provide a family-friendly environment. You may wish to inform me if you are a student with family responsibilities. If you are a student parent or have family responsibilities, you also may wish to visit the Family Care Office website at <https://familycare.utoronto.ca>

Additional Supports

**Look on Quercus for various links

Writing Centres

The fourteen or so writing centres at U of T provide individual consultations with trained writing instructors, along with group teaching in workshops and courses. There's no charge for any of this instruction—it's part of your academic program. The mandate of writing centres is to help you develop writing skills as you progress through your studies. For more information or to book an appointment, visit: <https://writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres/arts-and-science/>

Academic Success Supports

U of T offers a number of resources to help you succeed in your studies. These include helping you develop a healthy approach to learning, find confidence and motivation to study, take better notes that actually help, better prepare for tests and exams, and manage your tasks more efficiently. You can find more information here:

<https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/academic-success/>

Health & Wellness Centre

The Health & Wellness Centre offers information on health insurance, appointments, mental health resources, and emergency support for both domestic and international students. Please visit: https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/task_levels/health-and-wellness/

Acknowledgment of traditional land

U of T official land acknowledgement: “I wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.”

To me, giving a land acknowledgment entails action. An acknowledgment is not merely stating that I am aware of the history of this land, but that I will do something with that knowledge. At

the very least, every time I give or hear a land acknowledgment, I try to learn something new about where I am. That can mean finding out the details of the treaties that are in place, what are the political issues the communities are engaged in, or how I can support or respect the community. I encourage you to do the same or to engage in learning with me and others.

Term Dates (full schedule available [here](#))

Fall

September 16, 2024 - Last day to enrol in F and Y courses

September 17, 2024 - First day to select a Credit/No-Credit (CR/NCR) option for F and Y courses

October 14, 2024 - No classes (Thanksgiving holiday)

October 28 - November 1, 2024 - No classes (Fall Reading Week)

December 2, 2024 - Last day for most regularly scheduled classes in F and Y courses (for Fall term)

December 6 - 21, 2024 - Final exams in F courses, Term tests in Y courses

December 24, 2024 - January 3, 2025 - University closed for Winter Holidays from December 24, 2024 to January 3, 2025 inclusive

Winter

January 6, 2025 - Classes in S & Y

February 14, 2025 - Last day to drop Y courses

- Note that some courses cannot be dropped using ACORN and students must contact their College or Department to do so; refer to the [Course Enrolment Instructions](#)

February 17 - 21, 2025 - Reading Week

April 4, 2025 - Classes end in S and Y courses

April 7–8, 2025 - Study days

April 9–30, 2025 - Final exams in S and Y courses

April 18, 2025 - Good Friday (University closed; no classes or final exams)