

Las Positas College
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Course Outline for POLI 25

INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL THEORY

Effective: Fall 2018

I. CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

POLI 25 — INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL THEORY — 3.00 units

Various theoretical approaches to politics including selected aspects of political thought from ancient times to the present with application of current political thought.

3.00 Units Lecture

Strongly Recommended

- Eligibility for ENG 1A -

POLI 7 - Introduction to American Government
with a minimum grade of C

Grading Methods:

Letter or P/NP

Discipline:

- Political Science

	MIN
Lecture Hours:	54.00
Expected Outside of Class Hours:	108.00
Total Hours:	162.00

II. NUMBER OF TIMES COURSE MAY BE TAKEN FOR CREDIT: 1

III. PREREQUISITE AND/OR ADVISORY SKILLS:

Before entering this course, it is strongly recommended that the student should be able to:

A. -Eligibility for ENG 1A

1. Use strategies to assess a text's difficulty, purpose, and main idea prior to the act of reading
2. Annotate a text during the act of reading
3. Employ strategies that enable a critical evaluation of a text
4. Respond critically to a text through class discussions and writing
5. Use concepts of paragraph and essay structure and development to analyze his/her own and others' essays
6. Write effective summaries of texts that avoid wording and sentence structure of the original
7. Organize coherent essays around a central idea or a position
8. Apply structural elements in writing that are appropriate to the audience and purpose
9. Provide appropriate and accurate evidence to support positions and conclusions
10. Produce written work that reflects academic integrity and responsibility, particularly when integrating the exact language and ideas of an outside text into one's own writing
11. Utilize effective grammar recall to check sentences for correct grammar and mechanics
12. Proofread his/her own and others' prose

B. POLI 7

1. Explain the founding and development of the U.S. Constitution
2. Discuss and analyze contemporary political issues and operations in the United States and California
3. Explain the civil liberties and civil rights of individuals as articulated in the U.S. Constitution and federal court decisions
4. Analyze the role of culture, diversity and ideology in shaping public opinion and public policy in the United States and California
5. Analyze how to effectively participate in politics at the national, state, county and/or city levels

IV. MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to:

- A. Evaluate the study of political theory, based on original texts and other sources, as a means for understanding important political phenomena.
- B. Analyze political theory and theoretical texts and explain how they are relevant to contemporary issues.

- C. Assess the historical and social context surrounding the generation of political theories.
- D. Compare and contrast the defining elements of each political theory.
- E. Analyze the different assumptions and values about "human nature" and "reality" embedded in each political theory and examine the way these starting premises shape the questions asked and conclusions reached.
- F. Evaluate the contribution of each political theory towards a comprehensive understanding of political life and political institutions.

V. CONTENT:

- A. The nature and tradition of political inquiry
 - 1. Study of political theory
 - 2. Important political phenomena
 - 3. Political constructs
 - 4. "Cognitive map" -- political theory through the ages
 - 5. Thoughts and ideas
 - a. Governments and institutions
 - b. Social and economic
 - c. Daily lives
 - 6. Political, social, and economic environment
 - a. Determining the whys, and hows.
 - 7. Power, norms, and values
 - a. decision making process, collectively and individually.
- B. Classical theorists
 - 1. Plato
 - 2. Aristotle
 - 3. Edmund Burke
- C. Modern theorists
 - 1. John Locke
 - 2. Thomas Hobbes
 - 3. Niccolo Machiavelli
- D. Contemporary theorists
 - 1. Karl Marx
 - 2. Ayn Rand
 - 3. Friedrich Nietzsche
- E. Basic theoretical debates such as, but not limited to, justice, equality, best government
 - 1. Equality, liberty, authority, justice, courage, virtue, piety, etc of selected political theorists and theories
- F. Application of theoretical debates to the contemporary world
 - 1. Political theory and theorist to society
 - a. Relevance to contemporary issues.
 - 2. Theoretical frameworks
 - a. political history and current affairs
 - b. understood, acted upon, and critiqued.

VI. METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

- A. **Written exercises and case studies** - Per instructor
- B. **Audio-visual Activity** - Political interviews, newsworthy items, current events that complement class discussions.
- C. **Student Presentations** - Presentations of research papers with questions and answers segment regarding their research paper.
- D. Innovation in method is recommended
- E. **Lecture** - Informal seminar/lecture method of presentation
- F. **Discussion** - Heavy reliance on student discussion
- G. Exams/test/quizzes per instructor.

VII. TYPICAL ASSIGNMENTS:

- A. Reading assignments:
 - 1. Building a Foundation: Socrates
 - a. Questions of Virtue, Morality, and Rationality
 - b. Six Questions of Socrates: What is Virtue?
 - c. Is Morality Nature
 - d. Stephen Colbert & Philosophy
 - 1. Is Stephen Colbert America's Socrates?
 - 2. South Part & Philosophy
 - a. You Know, I Learned Something Today
 - 3. Women Philosophers
 - a. Harry Potter & Philosophy: Feminism, Hermione & the Women of Hogwarts
 - b. Twilight & Philosophy: Vampire Love: The Second Sex Negotiates the 21st Century
 - c. Seinfeld & Philosophy: Elaine Benes: Feminist Icon or Just One of the Boys
- B. Writing Assignment
 - 1. Reflection papers: Wollstonecraft & Elaine, Bella, or Hermione
 - a. What would Wollstonecraft think about these women?
 - b. What would Elaine, Ella or Hermione think about Wollstonecraft?
 - c. What would feminists today think about all of them?
 - 2. Reflection paper: Virtue
- C. Creative, critical reasoning, short essays critiques to support positions, from
 - 1. readings
 - 2. class discussion.
- D. Research Papers: 8-10 pg paper (three options):
 - 1. Independent research/critique on a philosopher of choice and analytically assess his/her contribution to the field, using original source materials, text, lectures.
 - 2. Second option: research a Founding Father's contribution to American philosophy and our governmental structure, norms, values, society tracing their ideas on "American Exceptionalism" into the current political atmosphere.
 - 3. Third option: from assigned readings, and independent research, determine whether or not excellence is still possible for America. Using supportive materials, discuss what you would like America to look like, politically, socially, economically. All options are to provide bibliographic information, discuss/critique/analyze philosophical contributions.

VIII. EVALUATION:

A. **Methods**

- 1. Exams/Tests
- 2. Quizzes
- 3. Research Projects
- 4. Papers

5. Oral Presentation
6. Class Participation
7. Class Work
8. Home Work

B. Frequency

1. Exams/Tests/Quizzes per instructor.
2. Minimum of one research project/paper
3. Weekly home work reading assignments
4. Written analytical critique assignments per instructor.
5. Class participation: every class meeting
6. Oral presentations and/or student-led discussions per instructor

IX. TYPICAL TEXTS:

1. Tannenbaum, Donald (2012). *Inventors of Ideas: Introduction to Western Political Philosophy* (3rd ed.). Belmont: Wadsworth.
2. Phillips, Christopher (2004). *Six Questions of Socrates*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton .
3. Irwin, William, ed (2012). *Inception and Philosophy*. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.
4. Schiller, Aaron Allen (2009). *Steven Colbert & Philosophy: I Am Philosophy (and So Can You)*. Chicago: Open Court Publishing.
5. Ball, T., Dagger, R., & O'Neil, D. (2016). *Ideals and Ideologies: A Reader* (10th ed.). Florence, Kentucky: Routledge.
6. Cahn, S. (2014). *Political Philosophy* (3rd ed.). New York, New York: Oxford University Press.
7. Plato, . (2014). *The Republic* (Rev Ed. ed.). North Charleston, South Carolina: CreateSpace Independent .
8. Locke, J. (1988). *Two Treatises on Government* (3rd ed.). New York, New York: Cambridge University Press.
9. Heywood, A. (2015). *Political Theory an Introduction* (4th ed.). London, England: Palgrave.
10. Course Reader

X. OTHER MATERIALS REQUIRED OF STUDENTS:

- A. Course reader created by the instructor