

Classics of Social and Political Thought (Spring 2024)
T/Th 9:30am–10:45am (GAR 2.218)
CTI 302 (Unique #29230)/GOV 314E (Unique #37285)

My name: Mr. Derek S. Foret
My office hours: Monday 9:30–11 and Friday 3–4:30pm (MEZ 3.212)
My email: derekforet@utexas.edu (do not use Canvas messenger)

Course Description:

This course is an introduction to political philosophy, with a special emphasis on the foundations of what we today call political or social science. The following will serve as our **key questions**:

1. What is political philosophy? What is political science? If they are different, how are they different? If they are the same, how are they the same?
2. Is philosophy or science able or unable to judge political communities as just or unjust, good or bad, noble or base? What about the ways in which we live our lives?
3. What are the ends of philosophy or science and of politics? Are they the same, or are they not the same? If they are not the same, are they in harmony or tension with one another?

After posing these questions to ourselves, we will attempt to better our answers by posing them, as students, to a selection of the classics/great books of our tradition. We will be taught by at least one thinker from each of the three or four main historical epochs of our philosophic tradition: (1) classical/ancient; (2) medieval; (3/4) modern, both early and late.

Primary Learning Objectives:

As your teacher, my deepest concern is to spark and nurture in you a passionate desire to pursue political philosophy. But my primary concern is to improve your ability to reason about politics and thus be a good citizen or good person. To that end, in addition to lecturing, I will assign frequent short writing assignments and lead in-class discussions meant to sharpen your ability to read carefully and express clearly the arguments found in these texts. Practice, practice, practice!

Required Texts:

1. Plato (tr. West/West). *Four Texts on Socrates*. Cornell. ISBN: 9780801485749
2. Hobbes (ed. Curley). *Leviathan*. Hackett. ISBN: 9780872201774
3. Rousseau (tr. Scott). *The Major Political Writings...* Chicago. ISBN: 9780226151311
4. Weber (ed. Owen/Strong). *The Vocation Lectures*. Hackett. ISBN: 9780872206656
5. Plato (tr. Bloom). *The Republic of Plato*. Basic Books. ISBN: 9780465094080

These editions/translations are required. Almost all of the assigned readings will come from these texts; the rest will be posted on Canvas. I will post PDFs of *all* the assigned readings if I am legally able (TBA). That said, you are required to bring physical copies of all reading assignments to class, barring documented accommodations.

Course Schedule:

	Tuesday	Thursday
W1: Jan. 16, 18	icebreakers and opening activity	syllabus and Plato's cave (<i>Republic</i> VII, beginning)
W2: Jan. 23, 25	Plato's <i>Apology of Socrates</i>	
W3: Jan. 30, Feb. 1	finish <i>Apology</i> and passage day I	review <i>Apology</i> ; Hobbes passages (Canvas), start <i>Leviathan</i>
W4: Feb. 6, 8	Hobbes' <i>Leviathan</i> , Part I: Of Man	
W5: Feb. 13, 15	passage day II (+review)	Finish Hobbes' <i>Lev.</i> Part I
W6: Feb. 20, 22	Rousseau passages (Canvas), start <i>Second Discourse</i>	Rousseau's <i>Second Discourse</i>
W7: Feb. 27, 29	Rousseau's <i>Second Discourse</i>	
W8: Mar. 5, 7	midterm review	midterm exam (in class)
Spring Break (<i>enjoy!</i>)		
W9: Mar. 19, 21	Weber's <i>Science as Vocation</i>	
W10: Mar. 26, 28	passage day III (+review)	Maimonides' <i>Logic</i> XIV (Canvas)
W11: Apr. 2, 4	Start Plato's <i>Republic</i> , Book I	<i>Republic</i> I: Polemarchus
W12: Apr. 9, 11	<i>Republic</i> I: Thrasymachus	
W13: April 16, 18	passage day IV (+review)	<i>Republic</i> II: Brothers (to 368d)
W14: April 23, 25	review	review and closing activity
W15: Finals (No Class)	final exam: Thursday, May 2, 1pm–3pm (location TBA) <u>or</u> final paper: due Friday, May 3, 5pm (Canvas)	

Overview of assignment due dates/procedures:

- All assignments (except tests) are to be turned in on Canvas by **5pm** of their due date
- More specific **reading assignments** will be given out on the class handouts
- **Reading quizzes** will be given on **Thursdays**, starting on 1/25 (W2)
 - Focus on the **readings questions** given out on the class handouts
- **Reading responses** are due on **Mondays**, starting on 1/22 (W2)
 - *Not* assigned when we have a **passage day** (1/29, 2/12, 3/25, and 4/15)
- **Outlines and summaries** are due on **Mondays** before **passage days**
 - Assigned *only* when we have a **passage day** (see above)
- If you plan to turn in a **passage clarification**, you must do so on the **Thursday** the week after the relevant **passage day**:
 - 2/9 (*Apology*), 2/22 (Hobbes), 4/4 (Weber), and 4/25 (*Republic*)
 - If you would like to write on Rousseau, come talk to me

Requirements and Grading Breakdown:

Careful reading is the most important requirement. The reading assignments in this course are not long, but they are difficult; make sure you read them slowly and take notes while you read. You should try to come to every class with questions, comments, and interpretations.

I also encourage you to keep a **reading notebook** (*separate* from the notebook you use for class notes) for the notes that you take as you read. Notebooks may be turned in at the end of the semester for possible extra credit, depending on the thoroughness of your notes.

Weekly reading reflections and outline and summaries (10%): Starting in week two, you will submit, every **Monday**, either a paragraph reflection on the reading, or a single-page outline and summary of the passage on which we will focus. Both will be graded for completion.

- These assignments may be excused but not made up
- Questions to think about for the reading reflections: What are you confused about? What would you like to discuss further? What reminded you of a previous reading? What passages make you want to fight their author? What passages do you find to be beautiful?
- More details about the outline and summary will be given and discussed in class

Weekly reading quizzes (10%): Starting in week two, you will complete a five-minute reading quiz at the beginning of class each **Thursday**. These quizzes will be easy if you've done the reading, and they will tie to the reading questions I give out.

- These assignments may be excused but not made up
- Each quiz question will be worth two points. I will at times offer extra credit questions, worth one point, and I will drop any questions that end up being too hard
- Canvas will automatically drop your lowest quiz grade

Attendance (10%): You are expected to be ready in your seat by 9:30am. Starting in week two, I will pass around a sign-in sheet every class. This is the one case in which you *do* start with 100% (10/10): I will give you **two unexcused absences** for free; after that, you will lose one point per unexcused absence.

- Please do not hesitate to email me asking to excuse an absence. Please do not apologize for asking for one. That said, you must do so before class, barring emergencies.
- Even if you are planning on taking an unexcused absence, please email me saying so, so that I know not to expect to see you in class.
- I do not need to see a note from your doctor, your parents, or your priest (etc.).

Participation (10%): Frequent participation in **discussion** is vital in order to improve your ability to articulate your own arguments and listen to those of others; accordingly, there will be ample opportunity to do so during class. Keep in mind that good participation does not mean simply talking as much as possible: it means asking questions, listening, responding, and being comfortable with silence: *silence gives us time to think*. You will be given a letter grade at the end of class; feel free to come talk to me about your participation any time during the semester.

- Another way to participate is to come to **office hours**. The same advice applies here. Like class, you should try to come with questions, comments, and interpretations.

Passage Clarification (15%): Four times during the semester, we will have a **passage day**, in which we look at and discuss a particular passage from the current reading closely. At least once, you will write a **two- to three-page paper** clarifying the argument of the passage. If you would like, you may write a second one, on another passage. If you receive a better grade on your second one, I will replace your first grade with that one, when calculating final grades. Passage clarifications have three main parts:

1. An **introduction** in which you explain the place the passage has, as well as the purpose of that place, in the text as a whole
2. A middle that comprises **a clear account of the argument of the passage**, staying as close to the surface of the text as possible, and citing the text frequently
3. A **conclusion** that raises a substantial question about the passage as a whole

Midterm Exam (15%): The class before spring break, you will take an in-class midterm exam. The exam will be technical, as opposed to analytical: you will answer shorter response questions similar to reading quiz questions, and longer response questions in which you clarify, with as much detail as you can, the arguments from key passages of the readings (of which at least some, but not all, will be covered on passage days).

Final Exam or Final Paper (30%): For your final, you will choose either to take a final exam or to write a final paper. The final exam will be cumulative and similar to the midterm exam. The final paper will be a five- to eight-page analytical essay in which you answer variations of our key questions, according to the teaching of one or two of the authors we study. These variations, as well as further instructions, will be handed out after Spring Break.

My Policies:

Grading Policy: I use plus/minus grading with cut-offs as follows: 92.5 (A), 89.5 (A-), 86.5 (B+), 82.5 (B), etc. Grade appeals (and the reasoning behind them) must be communicated to me in writing within a week after I have handed back an assignment.

Technology Policy: No computers, phones, or tablets are allowed in class, barring documented accommodations. Please silence all such devices before class begins, and if an emergency requires you to check your phone, please step into the hallway to do so.

Extensions Policy: In general, I am happy to grant extensions in situations relating to illness/injury, emergencies, family matters, or religious/spiritual observance. That said, in such cases, you must communicate your request to me as soon as you know that one may be necessary and are able to do so. In all other cases, feel free to email me or come talk to me, and I will see what I can do. The earlier you ask for one, the better.

Niceness Policy: If at least 80% of the class comes to office hours and asks about the niceness policy, something nice will happen. Before then, do not mention the niceness policy in class.

School Policies:

University Requirements: This course counts toward the Certificate Program in Core Texts and Ideas, a six-course sequence in the great books, ideas, and controversies that have shaped Western civilization. The program is open to students in all majors and colleges. For more information, visit <http://www.utexas.edu/cola/centers/coretexts/> or email the academic director, Professor Lorraine Pangle, at lorrainepangle@austin.utexas.edu.

This course may also be used to fulfill the social and behavioral sciences component of the university core curriculum and addresses the following four core objectives established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board: communication skills, (critical) thinking skills, empirical and quantitative skills, and social responsibility.

Students With Disabilities: Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 512-471-6259, <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd>.

Notification of a need for disability accommodations must be given to me at least fourteen days prior to a paper due date or exam.

Accommodations for Religious Holidays: By university policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Academic Honesty: In all of your work for this course, you are expected to know and to adhere to University of Texas policies regarding academic honesty and integrity. Plagiarism, cheating, or any other form of academic dishonesty will result in a grade of F for the course. Please familiarize yourself with the University honor code.

Sharing of Course Materials is Prohibited: No materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, lecture hand-outs, videos, assessments (quizzes, exams, papers, projects, homework assignments), in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets, may be shared online or with anyone outside of the class unless you have my explicit, written permission. Unauthorized sharing of materials promotes cheating. It is a violation of the University's Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty. I am well aware of the sites used for sharing materials, and any materials found online that are associated with you, or any suspected unauthorized sharing of materials, will be reported to Student Conduct and Academic Integrity in the Office of the Dean of Students. These reports can result in sanctions, including failure in the course.

Title IX Reporting: Beginning January 1, 2020, Texas Senate Bill 212 requires all employees of Texas universities, including faculty, to report any information to the Title IX Office regarding sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking that is disclosed to them. Texas law requires that all employees who witness or receive any information of this type (including, but not limited to, writing assignments, class discussions, or one-on-one conversations) must be reported. **I am a Responsible Employee and must report any Title IX-related incidents** that are disclosed in writing, discussion, or one-on-one. Before talking with me, or with any faculty or staff member about a Title IX-related incident, be sure to ask whether they are a responsible employee. If you would like to speak with someone who can provide support or remedies without making an official report to the university, please email advocate@austin.utexas.edu. For more information about reporting options and resources, visit <http://www.titleix.utexas.edu/>, contact the Title IX Office via email at titleix@austin.utexas.edu, or call 512-471-0419.