

**The University of Texas at Austin  
GOV 351D; CTI 321  
Unique # 38625; 30005**

**THE THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF MODERN POLITICS**

**Spring 2021**

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Office Hours (on Zoom): Friday 9:00 – 12:00

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Office Hours: TBD

**Course Description**

This course examines the philosophic origins of modern politics and culture by looking at the works of several authors whose writings played decisive roles in the rise and development of modern political philosophy. In our study of Machiavelli's *Prince*, Hobbes's *Leviathan*, Locke's *Second Treatise of Government*, and selected political writings of Rousseau and Nietzsche, we will consider the ways in which modern political thought broke with the past and offered a new set of political visions. We will consider the differing views of Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and Nietzsche on issues such as the aims and limits of politics, the role of morality in the harsh world of political necessity, the proper place of religion and reason in political life, and the nature and basis of justice. Throughout the course, we will reflect on the impact that the revolutionary doctrines of modern political philosophy have had on the political world in which we live.

**Prerequisite**

Completion of at least thirty hours of coursework.

**Texts**

Machiavelli, *The Prince* (Chicago)

Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Hackett)

Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (Yale or Hackett)

Rousseau, *The Major Political Writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (Chicago)

Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Penguin)

Please try to purchase the particular editions of the books ordered for this course.

**Requirements**

Reading

Careful reading is the most important requirement. The reading assignments in this course are not long, but they are difficult. The best approach is to read them slowly and take notes while you read. You should try to formulate questions, comments, and interpretations.

### Attendance and Participation

Each week, I will post three asynchronous lectures of roughly 20-30 minutes. Please watch each of these lectures before our synchronous Zoom meeting on Thursday. The Thursday meeting will be the only synchronous meeting each week. The TA will keep track of attendance at the synchronous Zoom sessions. If you miss more than three sessions, your grade for attendance and participation will drop by 10% for each additional absence. If you cannot make a session for a compelling reason (sickness, a religious holiday, a family emergency, etc.), please let me know so that the absence can be excused. Please keep your cameras on during our Zoom sessions!

The attendance and participation portion of your grade is for attendance *and* participation. The participation aspect will be based on your participation in the Thursday discussions and your contributions on the Canvas discussion board. Regarding the latter, I will post questions from time to time. You can earn credit by commenting on these questions, building on or responding to other students' posts, or raising questions or points of your own. Please keep all discussion on Canvas thoughtful and civil, but don't hold back! You do not have to participate in every discussion or write extremely long comments. But you should show your consistent engagement with the issues under discussion.

Here is a rough sketch of how participation will be graded over the course of the semester:

1-5 substantive comments over the course of the semester: C range  
6-10 substantive comments over the course of the semester: B range  
11-15 substantive comments over the course of the semester: A range

Since there are fifteen weeks in the semester, a good approach would be to make a comment or two each week.

Comments will be read, considered, and credited only if they are posted before 7:00 in the evening on Wednesday of the relevant week. That will also give me a chance to look them over before our Thursday meetings, which I intend to divide between general Q&A and discussion of your comments.

### Paper

You will write a paper this semester. It will be an analytical essay on a theme in one or two of the readings. I will hand out paper topics, with staggered due dates, several times during the semester. You can choose when you would like to write your paper, but you

would be wise not to wait until the last set of topics, since the end of the semester is a busy time and you might find one of the earlier topics more interesting. Late papers will be marked down 10% for each day of lateness.

### **Exams**

There will be two exams, one in the middle of the term (on Machiavelli and Hobbes) and the other during the exam period at the end of the term (on all of the authors, but with greater weight given to Locke, Rousseau, and Nietzsche). The exams will be take-home essay exams, which you will be given at least 48 hours to write.

### **Grades**

Your grade will be calculated by the following method. Plus/minus grades will be used in the final grades.

Paper: 25%

First exam: 25%

Final exam: 35%

Attendance and participation: 15%

### **Note on EL Flag**

This course carries the Ethics and Leadership flag. Ethics and Leadership courses are designed to equip you with skills that are necessary for making ethical decisions in your adult and professional life.

### **Students with Disabilities**

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

### **Sharing of Course Materials**

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

## **Class Recordings**

Class recordings are reserved only for students in this class for educational purposes and are protected under FERPA. The recordings should not be shared outside the class in any form. Violation of this restriction by a student could lead to Student Misconduct proceedings.

## **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's honor code.

## **Course Plan**

I will give the specific assignments for each class as we go along, but this is a rough schedule:

Jan. 19–21	Introduction; Machiavelli, Letter to Vettori, <i>The Prince</i> , Dedicatory Letter, Chapters 1-4
Jan. 26–28	Machiavelli, <i>The Prince</i> , Chapters 5-9
Feb. 2–4	Machiavelli, <i>The Prince</i> , Chapters 10-15
Feb. 9–11	Machiavelli, <i>The Prince</i> , Chapters 16-21
Feb. 16–18	Machiavelli, <i>The Prince</i> , Chapters 22-26; start Hobbes?
Feb. 23–25	Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , Dedicatory Letter, Author's Introduction, Part I, Chapters 1-6, Part 4, Chapter 46.
Mar. 2–4	Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , Part I, Chapters 7-16
Mar. 9–11	Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , Chapters 17-21 and other selections

## FIRST EXAM

## **SPRING BREAK**

Mar. 23–25	Locke, <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> , Chapters 1-4
Mar. 30–Apr. 1	Locke, <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> , Chapters 5-9
Apr. 6–8	Locke, <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> , Chapters 10-19; Rousseau,

*First Discourse*

Apr. 13–15	Rousseau, <i>First Discourse</i> ; Rousseau, <i>Second Discourse</i> , Part I
Apr. 20–22	Rousseau, <i>Second Discourse</i> , Parts I-II.
Apr. 27–29	Nietzsche, Preface and other selections from <i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i>
May 4–6	Nietzsche, selections from <i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i>
Exam week:	FINAL EXAM