

Political Science/Social Justice 355  
office hours: M 2-4; W 8-9  
or by appointment

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## Modern Political Thought

(Fall 2020; 3 credits; TTh 3-4:30 in Sage 1235)

**“We have it in our power to begin the world over again”**

-Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (1776)

**“The state ought not to be considered as nothing better than a partnership agreement in a trade of pepper and coffee, calico, or tobacco, or some other such low concern, to be taken up for a little temporary interest, and to be dissolved by the fancy of the parties...it [is] a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are [yet] to be born.”**

-Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790)



Lamartine before the Hotel du Ville, Paris, rejects the Red Flag by H. F. E. Philippoteaux

**Course Description:** This course examines the theory of how politics works and how it should work by reading and considering major political thinkers from the Renaissance forward to modernity. These thinkers make claims about humans and societies that cross time and context. Thus we consider how their arguments have been employed and their continued relevance given today's issues and challenges. A number of theorists we meet are among the most influential writers in human history and we assess how our world has been influenced by them. Alternative visions of the way things should be and explanations of how society works are considered as well. Cross-listed: Political Science 355/Social Justice 355. Students may receive credit for only one of these two courses. There is no prerequisite for this class.

**Learning Outcomes:** The proximate goal in this course is to have you encounter, understand, and react to some important, thoughtful writings about politics and human society from about the year 1500 to about 1950. In a larger sense the course is in service of developing skills—close reading and careful analysis; knowledge of historical contexts; facility in writing and speaking; an appreciation for various theories of social interaction, justice, and how humans might best organize themselves.

These outcomes map on to the department's Student Learning Goals, found here: [http://www.uwosh.edu/political\\_science/information-for-students/student-learning-goals](http://www.uwosh.edu/political_science/information-for-students/student-learning-goals)

**Format:** Because of the pandemic, we will typically only be meeting in person on Thursdays. Tuesdays are mainly for lecture, which you are expected to attend synchronously (at the time it is being delivered, i.e. class time). I will walk you through the importance and major ideas of each thinker during this time. But I want your input as well—I am eager to hear what questions you have, or if you want elaboration. Plus, you will have a short document to read that is indicative of that person's thinking. I have planned these on line lectures for Tuesdays. Through them you will get acquainted with some of the most influential and challenging ideas of the modern world.

Political Theory requires careful reading of texts that are often dense and difficult. I want you to develop this skill as best you can. Thus on Thursdays we will focus our class time on understanding what you have been assigned to read. Read the works assigned carefully before class and submit reading reactions (details on that below) by the end of the day on Wednesday. In class on Thursdays we will spend our time discussing the readings and your thoughts/questions on them.

**Course Readings:** There is just one book to buy, which is available in the bookstore, on-line, or from any decent library. I would suggest buying this specific version of the book, though, so we can all be on the same page. This book is very cheap, especially if bought used.

John Locke, *Second Treatise on Civil Government* (published by Prometheus)

There are additional readings provided through links and via Canvas and via links. The schedule of readings is listed below.

**Grading:** There are five components to your grade and each is worth 20% of your grade. Two exams, one longer analytical essay, reaction papers, and your participation. You will receive a letter grade for each component and these will be averaged to calculate your final grade (A=4.0, A-=3.7, B+=3.3, B=3.0 etc.).

**Exams:** In an exam I use a variety of means to discern how well you know the course material, whether you can discuss its implications, applicability, and importance, as well as your own considered thinking about the subjects raised. You can expect multiple-choice questions, terms/names/concept definitions, and essay. The two tests are each worth 20% of your grade. The first will be on **October 22<sup>nd</sup>** and the second on **December 17<sup>th</sup>**.

While we have to remain flexible given conditions, here is my current plan for the tests: the exams are **open note in format but not open book and will be taken in class**, with those who opt to take the class on line required to take the test simultaneously with everyone else, handing it in, via a file to Canvas (with an email backup) by the end of the class period. I may choose to have you take the test in parts as well. Stay tuned for further information.

The notes you bring in must be your own. Open note exams increase the difficulty and depth of what I can legitimately ask because it moves from what you can cram into your brain on a given day to what you can take in during the entire semester of classes. You have to study to do well; students who do not know the material are typically pressed for time and write short answers. Diligence in class, especially in taking notes, is a most important determinant of your success.

**Analytical Essay:** Your topic is the following: “What is liberalism as political theorists use the term, giving examples from the material you have read. How has it influenced the practice of politics, and what are its foremost strengths and weaknesses as you see them?” Please consult and use outside materials, but it should be noted that the answer you develop is to be your own. This is *not* an “opinion paper,” which I understand to mean that any ideas tossed out are greeted as valid because you *believe* them and they are a matter of belief. You are expected to build a persuasive case for a clearly articulated positions through your writing and the citation of reputable outside sources. Suggested length is 12-15 pages of finely polished work (but I do read any length of paper that you submit). **Due Wednesday December 2<sup>nd</sup> by the end of the day; handed in on Canvas.**

Outside sources should be reputable ones. There are many scholarly books and articles about modern political theory. Many of them are available through our library; others are available through universal borrowing or Interlibrary Loan. The topic of liberalism is frequently treated in political science (and other) journals and you should search for appropriate journal articles through the Polk Library website.

Here is our tutorial on **writing in Political Science** that you should be familiar with:

[https://uwosh.edu/politicalscience/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2016/04/Writing\\_Tips.pdf](https://uwosh.edu/politicalscience/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2016/04/Writing_Tips.pdf)

The **APSA Style Manual** is also an important reference. On pp. 37-41 it covers in-text citations and starting on page 42 it describes how to write bibliographical entries:

<https://connect.apsanet.org/stylemanual/>

**Participation:** Any class in political theory is a dialogue. Dialogue works best when it is active and involves as many people in the class as possible. I have several considerations in assessing your participation grade. Being engaged with the material is paramount—you don’t need to get all of what each thinker is saying (disputes over that have lasted centuries), but you do need to show that you are reading and trying to understand and that you want to learn. I aim to gauge the quality of observations and their frequency, but there is a limit to how far this goes—more is not necessarily better. I will call on people, but I do hope you volunteer—volunteering allows you to speak when and where you are most comfortable. If you volunteer I will also call on you less, because I know of your engagement. Asking insightful questions is valuable. Taking seriously the observations of other students and responding to them thoughtfully and respectfully is expected, though agreement with each other is not.

**Reading Responses:** On Thursdays you will have a longer reading assigned. You will produce eight reading reactions for these longer assignments (you can skip doing this for three Thursday reading assignments during the semester).

The reaction should be three paragraphs in length. The first paragraph should be a short summary of the reading; the second should feature a comment on the reading with an explanation of your comment; the third should ask a question prompted by the reading, one that you are genuinely curious about—not something you know the answer to, along with an explanation of why you are asking it. Each of these paragraphs should make it clear that you have read the assignment. The clearer that is, the better your grades will be. When you refer to something in the text, please cite the page number.

Papers will be graded either ++, +, 0, or – A = 14-16+ total; A- = 13+; B+ 12+; etc. Please hand these reaction papers in on Canvas **by the end of the day on Wednesday** to allow me to read some of these before class. If you hand in your reaction after that you are subject to a one-step grade penalty. The – grade is reserved for reaction papers that are not done [e.g. if you end up doing seven instead of eight I will subtract 1 from your running total].

**Joining Collaborative Ultra Lectures:** On days we are not in class, we will meet synchronously via Collaborate Ultra. It is easy to join our sessions. You can simply use this link <https://us.bbcollab.com/guest/14747e6f8ab74d75806e73b4af6739cf>, or you can click on the Collaborate Ultra tab at the bottom left of the course's Canvas page then click the Online Synchronous Lecture box, or you can dial in at +1-571-392-7650 PIN: 246 219 9804.

## **Course Readings, Assignments, and Activities** (we meet face to face on dates that are in bold)

### **Part I: Liberalism as a Public Philosophy**

- Sept. 10** Course introduction; what is Political Theory?; Syllabus; The Reformation, as a precursor of liberalism
- Sept. 15 Niccolo Machiavelli, Renaissance precursor to liberal thought  
reading: *The Prince*, chapter 17, “Concerning Cruelty and Clemency...”  
found within <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1232/1232-h/1232-h.htm>
- Sept. 17** Niccolo Machiavelli reading analysis  
reading: *The Discourses*, Book 1, chapters 4-5, 7-10, and 58 found at  
<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/10827>
- Sept. 22 Thomas Hobbes, defender of absolutism and a right to life  
reading: chapter 13 of *Leviathan*, found at  
<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/3207/3207-h/3207-h.htm>
- Sept. 24** John Locke, the originator of classical liberalism  
reading: *Second Treatise on Civil Government*, chapters 1-4, 6

- Sept. 29 John Locke lecture I and Locke on property  
reading: *Second Treatise on Civil Government*, chapter 5
- October 1** John Locke, continued  
reading: *Second Treatise on Civil Government*, chapters 7-10
- October 6 John Locke lecture II  
reading: A Letter Concerning Toleration, sections 1-3 (Canvas)
- October 8** John Locke, continued  
reading: *Second Treatise on Civil Government*, chapters 11-13, 17-18
- October 13 Jeremy Bentham, the founder of utilitarianism  
reading: chapter 13 of *The Principles of Morals and Legislation*, “Cases Unmeet for Punishment,” to be found at:  
<https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/bentham-an-introduction-to-the-principles-of-morals-and-legislation>
- October 15** Mary Wollstonecraft, defender of universal rights  
reading: excerpts from *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Canvas)
- October 20 Adam Smith, explainer of the economic and social sides of liberalism  
reading: *The Wealth of Nations*, chapter 8 “Of the Wages of Labour” (Canvas)

**October 22** test #1

## Part II: Critics of Liberalism

- October 27 Edmund Burke, cultural distinction and continuity over liberal universalism  
reading: excerpts from speech in the House of Commons on India (Canvas)
- October 29** Edmund Burke, continued  
reading: *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, excerpts (Canvas)
- November 3 Karl Marx, critique of liberal economics and rights  
reading: “A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy” (Canvas)
- November 5** Karl Marx reading  
reading: excerpts from “Alienated Labor” and “Wage Labour and Capital” (Canvas)
- November 10 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, communitarian critic of liberal individualism  
reading: excerpts from “The Social Contract” (Canvas)
- November 12** Black Elk, harmony with nature as an alternative to liberal Western values  
reading: excerpt from *Black Elk Speaks* (Canvas)
- November 17 Mohandas Gandhi, nonviolent spiritualism as an alternative to Western values  
reading: second letter “To Every Englishman Living in India”

**November 19 Mohandas Gandhi**

reading: pp. 37-61, 67-81, and 91-94 of *Selected Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, found at: <https://www.mkgandhi.org/ebks/SWMSGandhi.pdf>

**November 24 Paper workshop day**

November 26 No class: Thanksgiving

December 1 Carl Schmitt, plebiscitary authoritarianism over parliamentary democracy  
reading: "Principles of Parliamentarism" from *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*

December 2 **Analytical Essay due**

December 3 discuss analytical essays

December 8 Friedrich Nietzsche, champion of the heroic individualism  
reading: excerpts from *The Birth of Tragedy*, section numbers 1-4 at  
<http://www.russoeconomics.altervista.org/Nietzsche.pdf>

**December 10** Friedrich Nietzsche, continued  
reading: from *Beyond Good and Evil* section numbers 1, 5, 29, 43, 59-108, 202-3, 291-2  
found at <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/4363/4363-h/4363-h.htm>

December 15 Final discussion on liberalism and its critics

**December 17 test #2**

### **Additional University and Course Policies**

**Electronics Policy:** Given the ample evidence that computer usage in the classroom harms academic performance, both for the user and the students around the user, electronics use *in the classroom* is by permission only.

**Mask Policy:** You are required to wear a mask while in all University buildings at all times, including while in the hallways and in this class.

**Office Hours on MS Teams:** The Political Science Department uses Microsoft Teams (MS Teams) for holding office hours. This system is available to all UWO students. Faculty will be available during the hours noted on your syllabus. When logging into MS Teams, look closely at the status symbols for your instructor. A green dot by the professor's icon (which may be their picture or their initials) means they are available. A red dot means they are busy. Generally, you are able to join office hour meetings and talk openly in the forum or use the chat function freely. At times, your instructor may be in a private meeting with a student during office hours, and will mark my availability as "busy" (a red dot).

We hope that using MS Teams for office hours for all of our courses will help students become more accustomed to virtual office hours during the pandemic. *The main point to remember is that we are available to you. Please use our office hours freely and often. We are here to help.* I am also happy to set up meetings outside of my office hours if you have a conflict with the posted times.

**Class Quality and Feedback:** The Department of Political Science is committed to offering you a high-quality classroom experience, and we take your feedback very seriously. If you have concerns about anything related to this

course, assignments, or teaching method, you are encouraged to first speak with your instructor directly. If you are not comfortable speaking with the instructor, you are invited to speak with the Chair of the Department of Political Science, Dr. James Krueger. He can be reached at [kruegerj@uwosh.edu](mailto:kruegerj@uwosh.edu). Should he be unable to resolve your concerns, he will guide you to appropriate resources within the College of Letters and Science.

**Expectations for Academic Honesty:** A college education is intended to develop your skills, knowledge, and confidence. Graded assignments are designed to work on these items. Thus, to gain the skills, knowledge, and confidence of a college-educated person all graded work is to be your own. When you are directed to work alone, an assignment or test must be done by you, its primary ideas are to be your own, and any outside materials should be dealt with properly (quoted when using someone's words, and cited when quoting or referencing them in any other way). When your teacher directs you to work in teams, the work is to be done by the team.

Two general rules should be kept in mind: all quoted and paraphrased material must be cited and when something is not common knowledge, you should have a citation. Plagiarism is using others' ideas without giving them credit. Most of it is inadvertent; some is intentional; some covers a small amount of text, others involve a whole paper. More information can be found here: <https://uwosh.edu/politicalscience/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2020/08/Academic-Honesty.pdf>

**Disability Accommodations:** It is the policy and practice of UW Oshkosh to create inclusive learning environments. If there are aspects of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion, please notify me as soon as possible. You are also welcome to contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 920-424-3100 or [dean1@uwosh.edu](mailto:dean1@uwosh.edu). For more information, visit the Services for Students with Disabilities website at <http://www.uwosh.edu/deanofstudents/disability-services>.

**Attendance Policy:** I do expect you to attend class and I do keep attendance. This semester, of course, that means attending in person, generally, or attending on line for those who have made a specific request to attend on line. Let me know if you cannot attend for University-recognized reasons, like illness, family emergency, religious holiday, or University-sanctioned events and I will mark you excused. This semester, particularly, it is important that if you feel ill, you should not be in the classroom. For every unexcused absence after your first one, I will reduce your participation score by four percent, roughly the portion of the class that you are missing by being away.

**Political Science majors (and prospective majors):** You should be taking Political Methodology (PS 245) in your sophomore year (or, if you cannot, in the first semester of your junior year at the latest). PS 245 is a prerequisite for our capstone course Political Analysis (PS 401) and cannot be taken concurrently with PS 245. You should save all your graded work from this class and the others in the major.

**Note:** If any major changes are made to this schedule and these policies, I will announce them in a timely manner via your UW Oshkosh email account and make a revised syllabus available.

The term paper and both tests must be completed to pass the course. Papers will be accepted beyond the due date, but will be docked a partial grade increment (B becomes B-) if late by 1 to 3 days and by a full grade (B becomes a C) thereafter. Barring documented medical necessity or a pre-approved University sanctioned event, the exams must be taken in class on the days scheduled. The notes that you use on the exams must be your own.

The following URL contains a description of students' consumer protection rights required by the Students Right to Know Act of 1990: <https://uwosh.edu/financialaid/consumer-information/>