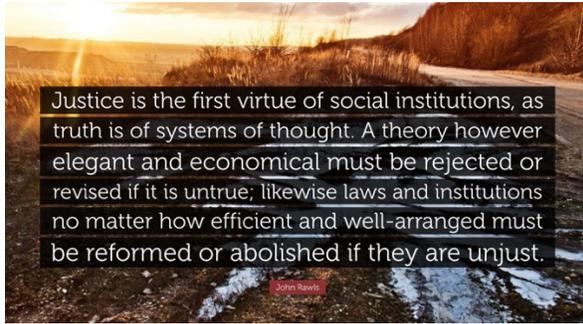


Political Science/Social Justice 378
office hours: 9-9:30 W; 1:00-2:15 TTh
or by appointment

Prof. David Siemers, Sage 4622
phone: (920) 424-3456
email: siemers@uwosh.edu

Modern American Political Thought

(Spring 2021; 3 credits; TTh 3-4:30 in Sage 2232)



“The ethics of care begins with a conception of moral life as a network of relationships with specific people, and it sees ‘living well’ as caring for those people, attending to their needs, and maintain their trust”

Feminism and the ethics of care, from *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*. Rachels (2010, p. 153).

Course Description: An exploration of key themes, dilemmas, and decision points in American political history from the New Deal to the present. The ideas of influential thinkers and political practitioners like John Dewey, Milton Friedman, Michael Walzer, Ronald Reagan and Barack Obama are featured, as well as those who present alternative visions of the American political landscape.

Learning Outcomes: The proximate goal in this course is to have you encounter, understand, and react to some important, thoughtful writings about American politics and society from about 1950 to the present. 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 Americans 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

Format: Because classroom transmission of the covid-19 has been very limited, we will be meeting in person. Political Theory consists of writing that is often dense and difficult. I want you to develop the skill of reading this difficult material and considering the varied perspectives it has to offer as best you can. Read the works assigned carefully before class.

Course Readings: There are two books to buy, available in the bookstore, on-line, or from a library.

Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*

Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*

A third book, Joan Tronto’s *Moral Boundaries*, is required, but I got the library to buy an eBook subscription, so you need not buy this book. There are additional readings, all provided through Canvas except for a few others available via listed links. The schedule of readings is listed below.

Grading: There are five components to your grade, each worth 20%. Two tests, a research paper (with an affiliated presentation), attendance/participation, and reading response papers.

Exams: I use a variety of means to discern how well you have mastered the course material. You can expect multiple-choice questions, terms/names/concept definitions, and essay questions. Since political theory is analytical as well as conceptual, both of these matters will be considered in assessing your performance. The two tests are each worth 20% of your grade. The first will be on **March 18th** and the second on **April 29th**.

Because some people are taking this course on line, the format will likely be **open note and open book**. This means more challenging questions as well as a necessity to know material well going in to the timed exam. Stay tuned for further information. The notes you use on tests must be your own.

Research Paper: You will be assigned (or you may pick) a living American political theorist. Your job is to read, summarize, analyze, and comment on published writings of that political theorist. Further instructions will be given out in class.

Political theorists are published in books, scholarly journals and other eclectic sources. Use the Polk Library website to your advantage. Some items are available through our library; others are available through universal borrowing or Interlibrary Loan. Outside sources should be reputable ones.

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

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/>

Attendance and Participation: Political theory is a dialogue and that is what I hope for in class. 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 (there are disputes over that last decades or centuries), but you do need to show that you are reading and trying to understand, and that you want to learn what these people have to say. At stake in political theory are big things: what is just, how should we treat each other, what laws should we pass, and what are the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship. 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 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.

Half of this grade will be given for attendance and half for your participation. You may ask me at the midterm how you are doing. You must earn participation points, they are not automatic.

Please note that if you are taking the course on line and do not have a microphone you will be asked to write a longer research paper to make up for not being able to contribute verbally.

Reading Responses: I will split up the class into two groups, one of the groups will write reading responses on Tuesdays and the other will write them on Thursdays. You will produce six reading reaction papers that follow the directions below. The weeks that you are expected to write response papers are weeks 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 11. Keep in mind you can choose which one of these weeks to skip, because there are seven weeks listed.

The reaction should be approximately one single-spaced page, three paragraphs in length. The first paragraph should be a summary of the reading; the second should feature a meaningful comment on the reading with an explanation of your comment; the third paragraph should ask a question that is prompted by the reading, one that you are genuinely curious about—not something you likely 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 assessment will be. When you refer to something in the text, please cite the page number.

Papers will be graded either ++, +, 0, or –

- ++ a well-executed response that clearly shows you read the assigned material;
- + a moderately successful response that has some successful relation to assigned material
- 0 a poorly executed response with little understanding or relationship to assigned material
- reaction paper is not done

At the end of the semester I simply add up how many + you have and your grade is determined by that: A = 11 or 12 total; A- = 10; B+ 9; B = 8 etc. Please hand reaction papers in on Canvas **by the end of the day prior to the class we will discuss them (so Monday for the Tuesday group and Wednesday for the Thursday group)** to allow me to read these before class. If you hand in your reaction after that you are subject to a one-step grade penalty.

Joining Collaborative Ultra Lectures: Those who are taking the class on line or who are required to be in quarantine will join our sessions via Collaborate Ultra. You can simply use this link <https://us.bbcollab.com/guest/4780d893ce1f4e08ba6e2a2c4c4d660e>, 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: 920 845 0061.

Course Readings, Assignments, and Activities

note that I plan on meeting in person each day of class; if this changes you will be informed

- | | |
|------------|---|
| February 2 | course introduction; syllabus; what is American political thought
reading: none |
| February 4 | the “consensus school” of American political thought
reading: Daniel Boorstin, Intro. and ch. 1 <i>The Genius of American Politics</i> (Canvas) |
| February 9 | the “paranoid style” in American politics
reading: Richard Hofstadter, “The Paranoid Style in American Politics”
found at https://harpers.org/archive/1964/11/the-paranoid-style-in-american-politics/ |

- February 11 indispensable African American voices
readings: Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”
and Malcolm X, “The Ballot or the Bullet”
- February 16 1960s student radicalism/anarcho-Marxism
reading: “The Port Huron Statement” excerpt (up to “What is Needed”)
- February 18 modern libertarianism
reading: Milton Friedman’s *Capitalism and Freedom*, Introduction and ch. 2
- February 23 modern libertarianism, continued
reading: Friedman’s *Capitalism and Freedom*, chapters 6 and 7
- February 25 modern libertarianism, continued
reading: Friedman’s *Capitalism and Freedom*, chapters 11, 12, and 13
- March 2 John Rawls’ “Justice as Fairness”
reading: none
- March 4 feminists critique the history of political theory
reading: Susan Moller Okin, *Women in Western Political Thought*, Intro. and Afterword
- March 9 Walzer’s communitarianism—justice as shared communal meanings
reading: Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*, chapter 1
- March 11 Walzer’s communitarianism, continued
reading: *Spheres of Justice*, chapter 3 or chapter 4
- March 16 Walzer’s communitarianism, continued
reading: *Spheres of Justice*, chapter 12 and 13
- March 18 **midterm exam**
- Week of March 23/25 Spring Break
- March 30 Straussian conservatism
reading: Allan Bloom, *Closing of the American Mind*, “Our Virtue” and “Music”
- April 1 Benjamin Barber’s “strong democracy”
reading: Barber, “The Near Death of Democracy”
- April 6 Tronto’s feminist “ethic of care”
reading: Joan Tronto, *Moral Boundaries*, chapter 1
- April 8 Tronto’s feminist “ethic of care,” continued
reading: Tronto, *Moral Boundaries*, chapter 3

- April 13 Tronto's feminist "ethic of care," continued
reading: Tronto, *Moral Boundaries*, chapter 4
- April 15 Tronto's feminist "ethic of care," continued
reading: Tronto, *Moral Boundaries*, chapter 5 *or* chapter 6
- April 20 liberal pluralism
reading: Will Kymlicka, "Human Rights and Ethnocultural Justice"
- April 22 democracy and foreign-ness
reading: Bonnie Honig, "The Foreigner as Citizen"
- April 27 green political theory
reading: Alan Carter, "Towards a Green Political Theory"
- April 29 **final exam**
- May 4 paper workshop
- May 6 continue work on research paper
- May 10 **term papers due at 5 PM**
- May 11 reports on research papers
- May 13 reports on research papers; course conclusion

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. If you use a laptop to access readings only, that's fine, use it. But if I find you distracted by the laptop or doing other things I will ask you to put your computer away.

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. 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. 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, quarantine, 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/>