

SGBS 102: The Western Political Tradition

Spring 2019

MWF, 1:20-2:25pm, Goldspohn 35

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Office: Seybert 102 (far northeast corner of campus, across from chapel)

Office Hours: 9:15-10:15 MWF, 2:30-3:30 MW, or by appointment

Course Description

The development of the Western political thought and of the US in particular can be traced from ancient through contemporary texts. This course addresses questions about the nature of laws and the authority of the state across this long tradition. Students study key terms in political thought, including freedom, liberty, equality, power and responsibility. The course concludes by looking deeply into challenges posed to the American political order over time by the movements for abolition, women's suffrage and civil rights.

As part of the “Engaging Civic Life” iCon, this course explores classic and contemporary texts which examine what it means to be a citizen, what are the obstacles and incentives to fully participate in civic life, who is encouraged and who is discouraged from participation in civic life? In reading classic documents such as the Constitution of the United States and classic court cases such as *Brown vs. Board of Education*, students will explore the ethical and political challenges to building better communities and solving problems.

Course Objectives

Course-Specific Goals

- Show understanding of the essential characteristics of classical political theory (politics as the basis of a full human life) and modern political theory (based on a social contract between individuals)
- Demonstrate understanding of how modern political tradition informed the inception of the US political system
- Demonstrate understanding of the criteria for citizenship rendered or implied in each of the course texts and ability to apply them to contemporary issues
- Analyze and critique the US political system on the basis of the essential characteristics of classical political theory
- Examine a topic or issue in political theory from multiple perspectives in both speech and writing

Gen Ed Area: Social Sciences

- Explain how social scientists conduct the systematic study of social relations and/or human behavior
- Analyze the interrelationships among individuals, communities and societies. All course materials bear in some way upon the relationship between individuals, communities, and societies
- Apply social scientific methods to explain social relations and/or human behavior

Gen Ed Area: Ethical Dimensions

- Evaluate the ethical dimensions of life and work across multiple cultural, philosophic and/or historical traditions

- Identify characteristics of major ethical traditions
- Apply ethical principles in decision-making

Gen Ed Area: Power Structures

- Analyze power structures that determine hierarchies, inequalities, and opportunities among groups, such as those based on race, ethnicity, gender, or class
- Explain how race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, or other markers of social identity affect individual perspectives and social relations in the United States or early Americas

Course Readings

Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Sachs (Focus). [ISBN: 978-1585102617]
 Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. Sachs (Focus). [ISBN: 978-1585103768]
 Machiavelli, *The Prince* (Bantam). [ISBN: 9780553212785]
 Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Penguin). [ISBN: 978-0140431957]
 Locke, *Second Treatise on Civil Government* (Hackett). [ISBN: 978-0915144860]
 Rousseau, *The Basic Political Writings* (Hackett). [ISBN: 978-1603846738]
 Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (Dover). [ISBN: 978-0486290362]
 de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (Harper Perennial). [ISBN: 978-0061127922]
 Schneir, *Feminism: The Essential Historical Writings* (Vintage). [ISBN: 978-0679753810]
 Douglass, *The Story of My Life* (Dover). [ISBN: 978-0486284996]
 Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Dover). [ISBN: 978-0486419312]

Other readings will be provided via Blackboard and are marked on the class schedule with (**).

Assignments and Grading

Courses in the Shimer Great Books Program are heavily discussion-based and student-driven. Accordingly, class participation counts for a much higher proportion of student grades than in most courses: in this case, 50%. The remainder of the grade will be determined by two short analytical papers (12.5% each) and a final research paper (25%).

Class participation presupposes careful and thorough preparation and serious intellectual involvement in class discussion. Students should come to class not only having read the text through, but having underlined, taken notes, and scanned over the marked text at least one additional time after the initial reading. On the basis of such preparation, students should be prepared for an intensive, text-focused discussion.

You must also come prepared to class, and that means having *hard copies* of the course materials with you. You should purchase all course textbooks (which are inexpensive and widely available used) and print any supplementary readings. For days when we are watching a film, written notes will take the place of the printed reading. No student will be permitted to use a smartphone at any point during class without explicit permission; persistent usage will result in the student losing all participation points for that class session. The professor reserves the right to count a class period where a student has not brought the reading to class as an absence.

My expectation for class participation is that every member of class will be able to contribute with remarks and citations that are on-topic and reflect solid preparation for class. A student who meets that baseline will receive a grade in the **B range** for their participation portion. Students

whose contribution is notably lacking—for instance, those who speak very little, who give no evidence of having done the reading carefully, who consistently change the topic in a disruptive way, or whose primary contributions are jokes or personal anecdotes—will receive a participation grade in the **C or D range**. Students who distinguish themselves through some particular service—such as consistently contributing new topics that shape the discussion, serving as a resource for navigating the text, or making a special effort to draw in quieter classmates—will qualify themselves for a participation grade in the **A range**.

The baseline condition for class participation is of course physical presence in class. Absences not only affect the individual student, but the entire group, and the same is true of habitual lateness. Punctual attendance should be regarded as mandatory. Lateness will count against a student's participation for that session, and in extreme cases will be treated as the equivalent of an absence. An increasing number of absences carries with it increasing consequences, which are as follows:

- 1-2 absences No grade penalty, in recognition of our shared human frailties. (If students miss fewer than two classes, however, then in cases where a student is at the threshold between two grades, the professor will go with the higher one.)
- 3-5 absences A half letter grade is deducted from the student's final grade for each absence; this penalty may be lifted by doing an absence make-up for each missed class.
- 6-8 absences For each absence, the student *must* complete an absence make-up (described below) to avoid failing the course, and a half letter grade penalty is imposed on the student's final grade which *cannot* be made up.
- 9 absences Automatic failure of the course.

In order to make up for an absence, students must visit a museum or attend a cultural or academic event relevant to the content of the course. They must write a reflection on this experience (2 *full* pages, double spaced), relating it in some way to material that they have studied in the present class. Absence make-ups must be completed **within three weeks** of the absence being made up. Students have ample opportunities to attend events on the North Central campus, in Naperville, or in Chicago. Hence there should be no difficulty in finding an appropriate event or time for a museum visit (beyond the required visits listed on the schedule below).

Analytical papers will draw primarily on course readings. The first paper must compare the perspectives of two authors from different time periods or social backgrounds on an important ethical problem of their choice. The second will involve a small research component, as students will be required to test de Tocqueville's claims about the nature of American politics against demographic, polling, or other social scientific data. Each essay must be 3-4 pages in length (750-1000 words) and must use references (quotations and page numbers) from the text(s) to support your claims.

The **research paper** will center on a course text of the student's choice and engage with at least two scholarly articles on that work. The research paper must be 5-6 pages in length (1250-1500 words) and must include full citations and a bibliography in either MLA or Chicago parenthetical

reference style. Further details on all writing assignments will be provided closer to the time they are due.

All written assignments must be turned in on Blackboard by the due date listed on the course schedule below; in case of technical difficulties with Blackboard, you may submit the paper via email or, in a true emergency, in print form for the sake of meeting the deadline, but the paper must be posted on Blackboard as soon as possible in order to receive comments and a grade. Outside of cases involving computer problems, students should **not** print their papers.

Students submit **all written work** in Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) format; in case of technical difficulties submitting in the required format, you may use another format for the sake of meeting the deadline, but must resubmit in the required in order to receive comments and a grade. **Unless otherwise stated, the deadline is always the beginning of class time on the date in question.** Papers turned in within 24 hours of the deadline will receive a 5% grade penalty on the assignment; papers turned in within a week of the deadline will receive a 10% grade penalty, with an additional 10% penalty for each additional week (or portion of a week) the paper is late.

Students may rewrite all papers for a higher grade. For analytical papers, rewrites must be submitted within two weeks of the date when I post the graded version of Blackboard. For the research paper, an advance draft must be submitted by the deadline listed below.

Note on Institutional Policies

Please note that the college-wide policy on plagiarism holds for this class and that student assignments may be run through plagiarism-detection software at the professor's discretion. Plagiarism is a very serious academic and ethical offence that can lead to failure of the assignment or course—or, after multiple instances, expulsion from college. Please consult the Student Handbook for more details of the plagiarism policy.

All other institutional policies apply equally, including those related to accommodations for students with learning disabilities or differences and Title IX protections. More details on those policies are available in the Student Handbook, and students are encouraged to approach the professor with any questions or concerns they may have.

Class Schedule and Readings

*This calendar provides the schedule for assignments and readings for our time together this semester. Students should be aware that the schedule may change, particularly given that this is the first time the course is being offered in its current form. All students will be alerted as soon as possible via email and Blackboard announcement to any changes. **Failure to check email regularly is no excuse for missing these updates.***

Monday	January 6	Class intro; Plato, "Allegory of the Cave" (handout)
Wednesday	January 8	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Book 1
Friday	January 10	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Book 2
Monday	January 13	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Book 3, 405a-417b; Book 4
Wednesday	January 15	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Book 5
Friday	January 17	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Book 6, 497b-511e; Book 7, 514a-521c
Monday	January 20	NO CLASS—Martin Luther King Day

Wednesday	January 22	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Book 8
Friday	January 24	Aristotle, <i>Politics</i> , Book I, chs. 1-13
Monday	January 27	Aristotle, <i>Politics</i> , Book II, chs. 1-5; Book III, chs. 1-13, 17-18
Wednesday	January 29	Aristotle, <i>Politics</i> , Book VII, chs. 1-4, 9, 13-15
Friday	January 31	Machiavelli, <i>The Prince</i> , chs. 1-16
Monday	February 3	Machiavelli, <i>The Prince</i> , chs. 17-26
Wednesday	February 5	Machiavelli, selections from <i>Discourses on Livy</i> (found in assigned edition of <i>The Prince</i> , or **)
Friday	February 7	Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , Ch 13-15, 17-18
Monday	February 10	Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , Ch 19, 21, 22
Wednesday	February 12	Locke, <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> , chs. 1-6
Friday	February 14	Locke, <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> , chs. 7-14
Monday	February 17	Locke, <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> , chs. 15-19
Wednesday	February 19	Rousseau, “Sophie” (**); Wollstonecraft, <i>A Vindication...</i> , Author’s Introduction and chs. 1-3; ch. 5, section 1
Friday	February 21	Wollstonecraft, <i>A Vindication...</i> , chs. 6, 9-12
Monday	February 24	Rousseau, <i>Social Contract</i> , Book 1; Book 2, chs. 1-7
Wednesday	February 26	Rousseau, <i>Social Contract</i> , Book 3, chs. 1-4, 6, 15-16; Book 4, chs. 1-2
Friday	February 28	NO CLASS—Analytical Paper #1 Due
Monday	March 2	NO CLASS—Spring Break
Wednesday	March 4	NO CLASS—Spring Break
Friday	March 6	NO CLASS—Spring Break
Monday	March 9	Thomas Paine, “Common Sense”; Thomas Jefferson et al., “The Declaration of Independence” (**)
Wednesday	March 11	“Articles of Confederation”; “The Virginia Plan”; Federal Convention Debates (see Blackboard for specifics); “The Constitution of the United States” (**)
Friday	March 13	<i>The Federalist</i> , nos. 1, 10, 14 (up to comparison of size of US to European countries), 47, 49, 51, 78 (**)
Monday	March 16	de Tocqueville, <i>Democracy in America</i> , Vol. 1 Author’s Introduction (pp. 9-20), Vol. 1, Part 1: Chapters 2-4 (pp. 31-60)
Wednesday	March 18	de Tocqueville, <i>Democracy in America</i> , Vol. 1, Part 2: Chapter 6 & 7 (pp. 231-261); Chapter 10 (pp. 316-363)
Friday	March 20	NO CLASS—Professor attending conference
Monday	March 23	de Tocqueville, <i>Democracy in America</i> , Vol. 1, Conclusion (pp. 408-413); Vol. 2, Author’s Preface (pp. 417-418); Vol. 2, Part 2: Chapters 1-6 (pp. 503-520); Chapter 8 (pp. 525-528); Vol. 2, Part 3: Chapters 9-13 (pp. 590-603)

Wednesday	March 25	Dred Scott v. Sanford; Douglass, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July” (pp 1-12); Plessy v. Ferguson (**)
Friday	March 27	Lincoln, “Cooper Union Speech,” “Gettysburg Address,” “Second Inaugural Address”; Alexander Stephens, “Cornerstone Speech” (**)
Monday	March 30	Analytical Paper #2 due by noon, Sunday, March 29 Douglass, <i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass</i> (entire book)
Wednesday	April 1	Jacobs, <i>Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl</i> , pp. 8-59
Friday	April 3	Jacobs, <i>Incidents</i> , pp. 59-109
Monday	April 6	Jacobs, <i>Incidents</i> , pp. 109-164
Wednesday	April 8	Schneir, <i>Feminism: The Essential Historical Writings</i> , pp 2-4, 35-48, 62-98 (Abigail Adams, Sarah Grimke, Margaret Fuller, Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, Sojourner Truth)
Friday	April 10	NO CLASS—Good Friday
Monday	April 13	Draft of research paper due by noon, Sunday, April 12 (if rewriting) Schneir, <i>Feminism: The Essential Historical Writings</i> , pp 99-142, 155-159 (Lucretia Mott, Lucy Stone, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Ernestine Rose, Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony)
Wednesday	April 15	Martin Luther King, “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”; Supreme Court: <i>Brown v. Board of Education</i> (**)
Friday	April 17	NO CLASS—Honors Day
Monday	April 20	Martin Luther King, “Beyond Vietnam” (**) Malcolm X, “The Ballot or the Bullet” (**)
Wednesday	April 22	Supreme Court Cases: <i>Obergefell v. Hodges</i> , <i>Citizens United</i> (**)
Monday	April 27	FINAL EXAM PERIOD: Research paper due by 12:30pm