

Brief Course Outline

Course Title: Introduction to Political Theory

Course Number and Section

POLISCI

2237E 550

Instructor Name(s): Will Kujala

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Disclaimer: Information in the brief course outline is subject to change. The syllabus posted on OWL Brightspace is the official and authoritative source of information for the course.

Course Description:

On what grounds, and by what right, can we criticize or defend the arrangements of power under which we live? How can we claim, if at all, to be better at, or know more, about politics – to do something called ‘political science’? What do a just polity, and a good citizen, look like? Can we reconcile ourselves to a political world inundated by and crafted through violence? How should the state educate our children, if at all? What sorts of tactics are tolerable in social and political struggles? These are just some of the big questions of political theory, the practice of reflecting on the normative principles and concepts that guide our collective life. But so are these: should you obey your parents? Is Amazon Prime good for us? Should you ever accept a challenge to ‘step outside’? Examining these big and small questions, this course is a highly selective, guided tour through some classic works of political theory from the ancient world to the twentieth century. Along the way we will examine different ways of thinking about central concepts in political theory such as justice, rights, equality, democracy, authority, progress, and critique.

Learning Outcomes: one outcome per entry

- Reconstruct and analyze key concepts in political science such as rights, democracy, the state, liberty, equality, and authority
- Situate political ideas in their historical and geographical context
- Engage with difficult, opaque texts and reconstruct their central claims and problems
- Understand the conceptual foundations of central ‘ideologies’ often considered by political scientists (liberalism, conservatism, Marxism, feminism, anti-colonialism)
- Critically examine your own convictions, actions, and principles, and the political institutions under which you live.

Textbooks and Course Materials:

Plato, *Gorgias*, translated by D. Zeyl (Hackett Press).
Machiavelli, *The Prince*, translated by P. Bonadella (Oxford University Press).
Hobbes, *Leviathan*, edited by E. Curley (Hackett Press)
Rousseau, *Basic Writings*, trans. Wooton (Hackett Press).
Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, (Harcourt Press).
Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth* (Grove Press).

Methods of Evaluation: one assignment per entry

Assignment	Due Date mm/dd/yy	Weight - %
Interpretive Papers	Throughout Term	45
Mldterm Exam		20
Final Exam		25
Participation		10

Thursday, August 13, 2026

Huron Brief Course Outline 2026/27

In-course Costs \$118.00

For Textbooks and Course Materials (below), you are required to include the cost of each textbook or other learning material.

Note whether there are any restrictions that would prevent a student from using a second-hand copy. Here is some suggested text:

- Required textbook: [author, title, edition, publisher, date]. Cost: [insert amount].
 - Or include the weblink of the textbook’s publisher site that includes the cost information.
- Students need to purchase this edition. Second-hand or older editions will not be sufficient.
- OR Students are welcome to purchase second-hand or earlier editions of this textbook.
- This course has an optional field trip that costs [insert amount].
- This course has a required field component that costs [insert amount].

In solidarity with the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Chonnonton peoples on whose traditional treaty and unceded territories this course is shared.