

HURON UNIVERSITY COLLEGE – WINTER 2022

POL 2237E: INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL THEORY

Instructor: Dianne Lalonde

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Lecture Times: Tuesday 1:30 to 2:30 pm and Thursday 12:30 to 2:30 pm

Student Hours: Friday, 4:00 – 5:00 pm via Zoom link on OWL

Meeting Times: Feel free to email me and we will arrange a meeting time based on your schedule

“What I propose, therefore, is very simple: it is nothing more than to think what we are doing.” – Hannah Arendt

The proposal from Arendt to think is simple, but not easy. Political theory offers a way to understand, contextualize, and critique political relations as they intersect at multiple levels: global, national, interpersonal, and personal. Theory is more than abstract values and ideas; it impacts our lives in very real ways.

This course engages classical and contemporary materials on political theory, in addition to short stories and videos, to aid students in having the theory and vocabulary to describe and normatively assess what is happening around them and what they are doing about it.

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Define and discuss the arguments and figures associated with three key political theory concepts: power, freedom, and justice
- Assess and compare political thinkers, arguments, and traditions
- Communicate your challenges, questions, and thoughts clearly in written and oral form to the instructor and your fellow students
- Apply what you learn to critically analyze and respond to current political and social events that impact your lives and the lives of others

INSTRUCTOR GOALS

- Engage students through in-person lectures
- Identify and clarify main concepts and arguments through lectures and posted lecture slides
- Provide a clear structure for assessments and grading
- Offer students individualized and accessible support
- Prepare students for theorizing in upper year courses and careers

Introduction to Political Theory

Our exploration into political theory will be focused on three central concepts: power, freedom, and justice. These concepts overlap and intersect in ways that will add nuance to our understanding of each concept by the end of the course.



Power

What gives states power? Is that power justified? Is it desirable? Who does that power benefit and who does it harm?

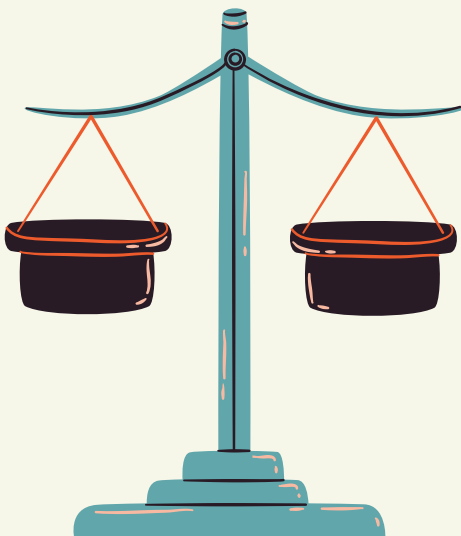
For our first course concept, we investigate justifications of the state and political obligation. More than an abstract thought experiment or idea, we think critically about what our preferred justification of the state entails with regards to state power today.



Freedom

What constrains us in society? How do these constraints play into our daily lives and political realities? Can we be free?

Next, we examine the ways in which individuals have sought freedom from systems, oppressions, and social expectations. We consider whether freedom is possible and how to go about it.



Justice

What are different forms of justice? How would a just society operate? What would it take to get there?

Our last concept looks at how justice plays out in different ways including the distribution of resources, environmental and species rights, and criminal justice. We will walk away with a better ability to critique and understand how justice is implemented today.

Course Statements

Accessibility Statement

We all learn differently. If there is something in this course or beyond the course that is a barrier to your learning, please let me know so we can make a plan to support you. I encourage all students to utilize the resources below, and other resources on campus and in the community.

Course Conduct Statement

We will engage in respectful and thoughtful dialogue. To do so, comments will not be harassing, demeaning, or discriminatory.

Name and Pronoun Statement

All people have the right to be referred to in accordance with their personal identity. In the beginning of the course, I will email you a survey to ask your name and the pronouns you use. I will refer to all students accordingly and support classmates in doing so as well.

Copyright Statement

Course materials (e.g. videos, slides) are the intellectual property of the instructor and protected by copyright. I encourage you to take notes and make copies of course materials for your own educational use. However, you may not record, reproduce, or distribute course materials publicly.

Content Warning Statement

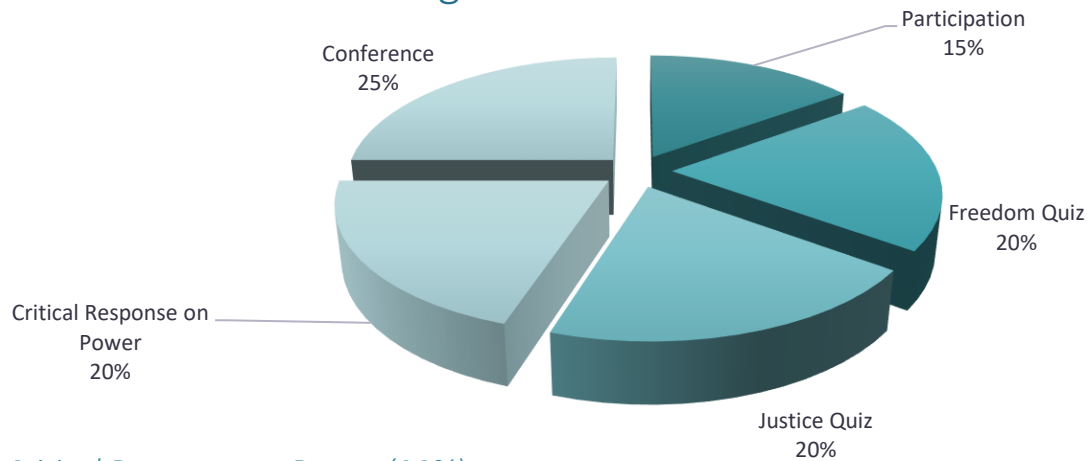
Our course materials and discussion may focus on topics that may be difficult for some students. If you need to skip a piece of material or discussion, then email me to let me know you are skipping it and we can find an alternative piece of material that works for you.

Campus Resources

- [Academic Advising](#)
- [Wellness and Safety](#)
- [Writing Services](#)
- [Indigenous Student Centre](#)
- [Gender-Based Violence and Survivor Support](#)
- [International and Exchange Student Centre](#)



Course Work & Grading Procedure



Critical Response on Power (20%)

The critical response should be approximately 1,000 words (4 pages double-spaced). A list of response prompts, a grading rubric, and more details will be provided on OWL. The response will be focused on the course concept of power. The response is due on **Friday, February 11 at 11:59 pm**.

- **Optional bonus marks:** You can submit a one-page outline of your critical response by Friday, February 4 at 11:59 pm for a 2% bonus. I will provide feedback on your outline.

Freedom Quiz (20%)

This quiz will be focused on the course concept of freedom. It will consist of short-answer questions. More information and a rubric will be shared on OWL. The quiz will be available on OWL for one day and must be submitted by **Thursday, March 10 at 11:59 pm**.

Justice Quiz (20%)

This quiz will be focused on the course concept of justice. It will consist of short-answer questions. More information and a rubric will be shared on OWL. The quiz will be available for one day on OWL and will take place during the exam period (date TBD).

Conference (25%)

The conference will be an opportunity to apply the course concepts and thinkers to topics identified by students. It will cover all concepts covered in the course. We will discuss the conference after the spring reading week to select topics, positions, and go over the format. More information and a rubric will also be shared on OWL. As part of the conference, students will be expected to:

- Submit an approximately 1,750 word (7 pages double-spaced) briefing paper due on **Friday, April 1 at 11:59 pm**
- Participate at the live conference on **Thursday, April 7 in-class from 12:30 to 2:30 pm**
- **Optional:** Submit an approximately 500 word (2 pages double-spaced) reflection after the conference by Friday, April 8 at 11:59 pm

Participation (15%)

Participation will consist of three components: attendance, in-class discussion, and online engagement through OWL Forums. Your participation will be graded in accordance with the quality and quantity of your contribution. A rubric for participation grading, in addition to examples of strong contributions to discussions, will be shared on OWL.

Late Policy

You will have a four-day time bank that you can use to extend the due date for the critical response and/or conference briefing paper. For example, you could submit the critical response one day late and the conference briefing paper three days late without penalty. If you require more time than that, email me so that we can work out a plan.

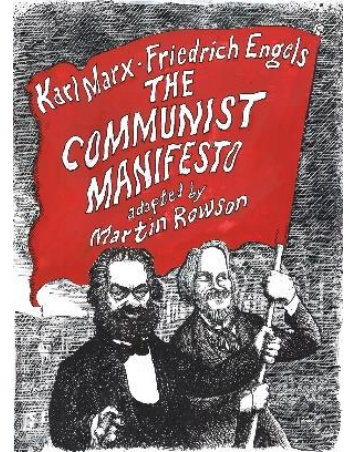
Course Materials

There is one book required for this course:

- *The Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, adapted to a graphic novel by Martin Rowson. [Link](#).

You can buy the book through the link above or access it through the two-hour course reserve at Huron Library.

All other course materials will be shared on OWL.



Course Methodology

For the month of January, or as long as we are online, this course will be offered in a blended format. You can join non-mandatory Zoom lectures with short, recorded content sessions (with your video off) and then discussion periods that are not recorded where you can participate with audio and/or video on or through the chat. You can also access the course materials (e.g. short content videos, lecture slides) and participate through weekly responses in the forums on OWL. You do not need to pick one format – you can mix attending lecture or not so long as you still follow the material and participate online.

What our week looks like:

- **Tuesday:** Zoom or live lecture from 1:30 to 2:30 pm. If Zoom lecture, the recording will be posted after.
- **Thursday:** Zoom or live lecture from 12:30 to 2:30 pm. If Zoom lecture, the recording will be posted after.



Tentative Course Schedule

COURSE INTRODUCTION

WEEK AND LECTURE	TOPIC AND QUESTION	MATERIALS AND COURSE WORK
Week 1 Recorded video on Jan 11 and Zoom lecture on Jan 13	What are different ways of political theorizing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading: Rajeev Bhargava – <i>What is Political Theory?</i> Short Story: Donald Barthelme – <i>I Bought A Little City</i> Video: Kimberlé Crenshaw – <i>The Urgency of Intersectionality</i>

POWER

WEEK AND LECTURE	TOPIC AND QUESTION	MATERIALS AND COURSE WORK
Week 2 Zoom lecture on Jan 18 & 20	Social Contract – How was the state made?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading: Thomas Hobbes – Selections from <i>Leviathan</i> Reading: John Locke – Selections from <i>Two Treatises of Government</i>
Week 3 Recorded video on Jan 25 and Zoom lecture on Jan 27	Racial and Sexual Contracts – Who was excluded in state creation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading: Carole Pateman – Selections from <i>The Sexual Contract</i> Podcast: Charles W. Mills – "There is an opening for a transracial class alliance"
Week 4 Lecture on Feb 1 & 3	The Settler Contract and Contracts in Space – Are social contracts valid and desirable?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Video: <i>Babakiueria</i> Reading: James (Sákéj) Youngblood Henderson – <i>The Context of the State of Nature</i> Short Story: Octavia Butler – <i>Amnesty</i>

FREEDOM

WEEK AND LECTURE	TOPIC AND QUESTION	MATERIALS AND COURSE WORK
Week 5 Virtual Forum on Feb 8 and lecture on Feb 10	Sex & Gender – What roles do the constructs of sex and gender play in our lives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Live Virtual Forum (Feb 8): <i>Reinventing Our Campuses: Creating Real Community Safety to Address Sexual Violence</i> ○ Reading: Simone de Beauvoir – Selections from <i>The Second Sex</i> ○ Reading: Lester C. Olson – <i>The Personal, the Political, and Others: Audre Lorde Denouncing "The Second Sex Conference"</i> ○ Critical response on power due February 11 at 11:59 pm
Week 6 Lecture on Feb 15 & 17	Tight Social Scripts – How do cultures, races, and other social scripts impact identity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Video: Kwame Anthony Appiah – <i>Mistaken Identities: The Myths That Define Who We Are</i> ○ Short Story: Rebecca Roanhorse – <i>Welcome to Your Authentic Indian Experience™</i> ○ Reading: Elizabeth Grosz – <i>Criticism, Feminism, and the Institution: Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak</i>
SPRING READING WEEK – FEB 19 to 27		
Week 7 Lecture on March 1 & 3	Capitalism – Who benefits and who suffers under capitalism?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Graphic Novel: <i>The Communist Manifesto</i> by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels adapted to a graphic novel by Martin Rowson ○ Reading: Hee-Kang Kim – <i>The Basic Income and Care Ethics</i>
Week 8 Lecture on March 8	Revolution – What cost are you willing to pay for freedom?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reading: Frantz Fanon – Selections from <i>The Wretched of the Earth</i> ○ Quiz on March 10 – Due at 11:59 pm

JUSTICE

WEEK AND LECTURE	TOPIC AND QUESTION	MATERIALS AND COURSE WORK
Week 9 Lecture on March 15 & 17	Distributive Justice – Who gets what?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reading: Amartya Sen – <i>Equality of What?</i> ○ Podcast: Mindscape – <i>Elizabeth Anderson on Equality, Work, and Ideology</i>
Week 10 Lecture on March 22 & 24	Intergenerational and Interspecies Justice – Who should we include in the scope of justice?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reading: Marion Hourdequin and David B. Wong – <i>Confucianism and Intergenerational Ethics</i> ○ Reading: Samuel J. Spiegel, Sarah Thomas, Kevin O’Neill, Cassandra Brondgeest, Jen Thomas, Giovanni Beltran, Terena Hunt, and Annalee Yassi – <i>Visual Storytelling, Intergenerational Environmental Justice and Indigenous Sovereignty: Exploring Images and Stories amid a Contested Oil Pipeline Project</i> ○ Multi-Media: Sunaura Taylor – <i>Animal & Disability Liberation</i>
Week 11 Lecture on March 29 & 31	Retributive and Restorative Justice – Should it be an eye for an eye?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reading: Jean Hampton – <i>Correcting Harms versus Righting Wrongs: The Goal of Retribution</i> ○ Reading: Jeffery G. Hewitt – <i>Indigenous Restorative Justice: Approaches, Meaning & Possibility</i> ○ In-Class Viewing: <i>Death Note</i> ○ Conference briefing paper due April 1 at 11:59 pm

CONFERENCE

WEEK AND LECTURE	TOPIC AND QUESTION	MATERIALS AND COURSE WORK
Week 12 Lecture on April 5 & 7	How can we apply these theories when debating current issues?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conference prep in-class on March 29 ○ Conference on April 7