

Brief Course Outline

Course Title: **Political Theory of Policing**

Course Number and Section:

POLISCI

3394F 550

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

Course Description:

This political theory seminar examines the place of police power in modern political orders. We do so in the shadow of policing's ongoing legitimacy crisis, and the growing prominence of abolitionist demands in contemporary political life. Increasingly, publics in Canada, the US, and the UK are asking: does a just society require police? For political theorists, these debates show that the study of policing is an indispensable site for thinking through basic concepts of political theory such as rights, authority, the state, democracy, and the rule of law, and of course, key concepts associated with policing, such as security, safety, discretion, and peace. Along the way, students will be exposed to a variety of approaches to contemporary political theory rooted in liberalism, critical theory, feminism, and anticolonialism. We will proceed in three steps: first, we will examine perspectives on the structural place of policing in liberal political orders; second, we will discuss the historical specificity of policing in Canada's colonial past and present; third, we will examine attempts to theorize transformative movements beyond policing (abolition).

Note: A blog shared with classmates is a key component of this course.

Learning Outcomes:

Demonstrate and evaluate major approaches to conceptualizing policing in political and social theory

Demonstrate understanding of the historical and philosophical foundations of police power in modern political thought

Critically examine these foundations in relation to histories of settler colonialism, slavery, and exclusion in North America

Critically evaluate common popular arguments about policing in the contemporary public sphere

Reconstruct difficult theoretical texts in concise, clear, and publicly-legible language

Textbooks and Course Materials:

All course materials will be available online through Western Libraries or uploaded on OWL Brightspace.

No costs associated with this course.

Methods Of Evaluation:

Assignment	Due Date mm/dd/yy	Weight - %
Introductory Reflection	09/15/2025	5
Blogpost 1	10/09/2025	15
Blogpost 2	10/27/2025	15
Blogpost 3	11/14/2025	15
Blogpost 4	12/03/2025	15
Final Reflection	12/09/2025	10
Participation	Ongoing	7.5
Blogpost Comments	Ongoing	7.5
Seminar Questions	Ongoing	10

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

Tuesday, August 12, 2025