

Brief Course Outline

Course Title: Introduction to Political Theory

Course Number and Section:

POLISCI

2237E 550

Instructor Name(s): Will Kujala

Instructor Email(s): wkujala@uwo.ca

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:

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:

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. Wootton (Hackett Press).

Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, (Harcourt Press).

Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth* (Grove Press).

Costs approximates are \$117.00

Methods Of Evaluation:

Assignment	Due Date mm/dd/yy	Weight - %
Interpretive Papers	Multiple	45
Midterm Exam	tbd	20
Final Written Exam	tbd	25
Participation	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