

## **On Human Nature**

### **Introduction to Western Political Thought I (POLS 1401)**

#### **Course Description**

This class will explore some of the central debates in Western political thought from the ancient Greeks to today. As we explore these early and modern philosophical, ethical, moral and religious debates, we will ask how changing political values have deepened and expanded our understanding of politics and shaped political thought. Class readings are structured around a series of major themes that we will be exploring during the semester, including: Human Nature, The State, Democracy, Liberty and Rights, Economic Justice, Social Justice, Liberalism and its Critics, Progress and Civilization, War and Peace, Dictatorship and Imperialism.

Some of the authors we will be reading include: Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Smith, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Wollstonecraft, Darwin, Hegel, Bentham, Mill, Berke, Montesquieu, Marx, Engels, Lenin, Kropotkin, Hayek, Weber, Kant, Thoreau, ML King Jr, Rawls, Taylor, Berlin, Dworkin, Hart, MacKinnon, Nozick, Skinner, Freud and Foucault.

#### **Course Goals**

By the end of this course students will be familiar with many notable political thinkers and debates in Western political thought. Some of the figures and debates will be familiar, while others will likely be new. The course is designed to help students gain a deeper understanding of how political ideals and debates have influenced the ways in which we understand politics today, and why certain political ideas have gained more or less support at different periods of time. By the end of class, students will have a good idea of the scope of Western political thought.

#### **Required Course Text**

Michael Rosen and Jonathan Wolff (Eds.). *Political Thought (Oxford Readers)*. 1999

*\*Additional course readings and online content will be posted to Blackboard.*

#### **Optional Book**

Alan Ryan. *On Politics: A History of Political Thought from Herodotus to the Present*. 2012

# Policies and Procedures

## Class Organization

- **Class Participation:** Students will be expected to have done all assigned reading before class and to take an active role in classroom discussions.
- **Group Presentations:** Students will be put into small groups, and each group will be responsible for leading a class discussion on readings from that week.
- **Short Essays:** Students will write 4 short essays in response to a reading or article.
- **Final Research Paper:** The final exam will be in the form of an 8-10 page academic research paper on a theme in Western political thought.

## Class Participation (15% of grade)

Students are expected to read and reflect on the assigned material before class, and to actively participate in the class in an informed and respectful way throughout the semester. You are required to bring all assigned readings (books or handouts) with you to class every week.

## Group Presentations (15% of grade)

Students will be divided into groups and each group will be asked to lead one class presentation. Each student in the group will be responsible for leading one part of the discussion, as well as preparing any handouts or summaries for class. Each group will have 20-30 minutes to present. Students will receive an overall group grade (10%) and an individual presentation grade (5%).

## Short Essays (40% of grade)

Students will be asked to write four short essays (4 pages each) in response to course readings or a specific class topic. These essays will require students to critically reflect, analyze and respond to a specific political question or problem. Each essay will count for 10% of your grade.

## Final Exam (30% of grade)

Students will be asked to write an original academic research paper on a topic of their choosing, related to some issue in American Politics. Students will submit a draft outline of the proposed paper in advance to be approved by the professor. The paper should be 8-10 pages in length, with proper citations, 12 point font, double spaced, and 1" margins.

## Class Attendance

More than 3 unexcused absences will result in a grade reduction for the course. Coming to class significant late will count as one unexcused absence. More information concerning class absence policies is available in the Seton Hall [Student Handbook](#).

Exceptions for class absences are as follows:

- Personal illness or death in the immediate family (documentation required)
- Observance of a formal religious holiday
- Participation in university-sanctioned activity (documentation required)

- An act of nature or cosmic event making attendance impossible (flood, earthquake, zombie apocalypse, North Korean nuclear attack)

### **Assignment Due Dates**

Any late assignments will have points deducted from the total. This is a firm policy, except for the extenuating circumstances noted above. There are no makeup assignments or extra credit papers. No credit will be given for any assignment more than 3 days late.

### **Use of Electronics in Class**

All cell phones and other electronic devices should be silenced and put away during class. Laptops or tablets are allowed **only** if being used for note taking or referencing an e-book. Ignoring this policy may result in a reduced letter grade for this course. Your friends can wait an hour for your SMS reply. Facebook does not constitute active class participation. Improper use of electronics is grounds for a reduced class participation grade and/or overall class grade.

### **Office Hours**

Students who wish to meet with me can either speak to me before or after class or e-mail me to schedule a time to meet during regular office hours.

### **Communications**

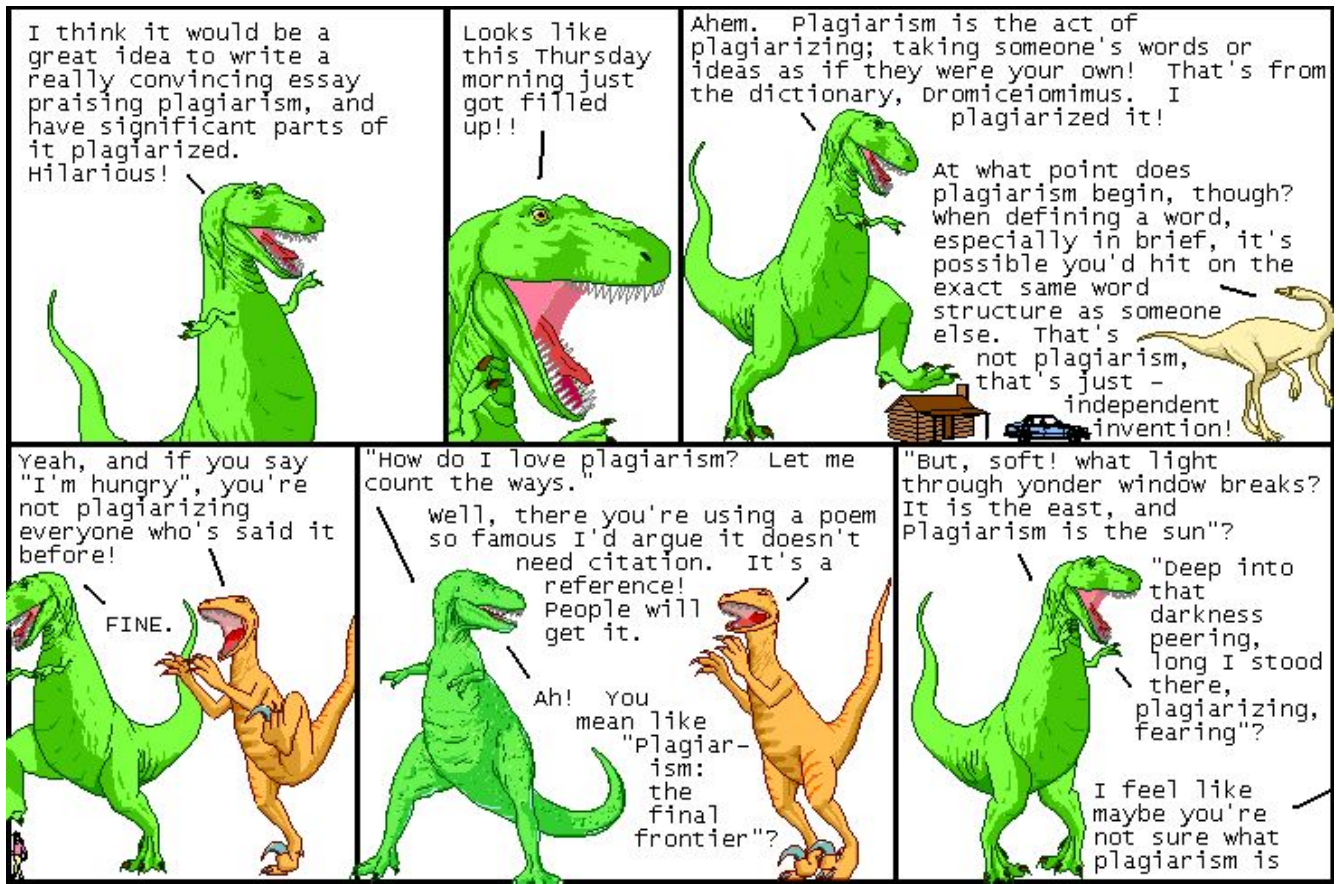
I will try to respond to all e-mails within 48 hours. If for some reason you do not receive a reply after two days, please send a follow up email.

### **Writing Help**

Students needing additional writing help should contact the Writing Center, located in the Walsh Library, rooms 304, 310 and 316. More info is available at: [www.shu.edu/writing-center/](http://www.shu.edu/writing-center/)

### **Disability Support**

The professor will make every effort to accommodate any special needs students may have in the classroom. Students who have a physical, medical, learning or psychiatric disability may be eligible for reasonable accommodations at the University per the Americans with Disabilities Act and/or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. To access these services, students must visit the Office of Disability Support Services to provide documentation and receive an accommodation plan. <https://www.shu.edu/disability-support-services/>



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## **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is a sign of intellectual laziness. Students found guilty of plagiarism risk an F for the course. Seton Hall's statement on plagiarism is under [Academic and Professional Integrity](#):

*"All forms of dishonesty, whether by act or omission, including, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism and knowingly furnishing false information to the University, are prohibited. University sanctions may extend to suspension and dismissal...The presentation of another's work as one's own is a serious violation of the academic process, and it is penalized accordingly. The decision on the appropriate penalty is in the first instance the professor's, and it may extend to a failing grade for the course."*

## **Classroom Conduct**

Students are expected to treat each other and the professor with courtesy, and refrain from any personal attacks. Due to the nature of political disagreements, arguments may emerge from time to time over deeply-held convictions. Students are encouraged to express their beliefs and convictions, but must do so respectfully, and without insulting or attacking fellow classmates. Any discriminatory remarks, personal attacks or threats will not be tolerated, and students will be asked to leave the class if they cannot respect their peers.

## ***Week 1 (8/28 and 8/30): Welcome & Course Introduction***

Monday (8/28) will be our first class. Hand out course syllabus and review goals, organization and materials for class. Introduction by students and professor.

Readings:

**Political Thought** – Intro (pgs 3-9)

**Reconstructing the Classics** - Ch 1: Great Books and Political Science (pg 1-12)

**!! Note: No Class on Monday (9/4) – Labor Day !!**

## ***Week 2 (9/4 and 9/6): Human Nature***

Readings:

**Political Thought** - Ch 1: The Natural State of Mankind; Man's Nature and Woman's Nature (pgs 10-51)

**Writing Assignment #1 - Handed out Wednesday**

## ***Week 3 (9/11 and 9/13): Justification of the State***

Readings:

**Political Thought** - Ch 2: What is the State; Social Contract (pro/con); Anarchist Response; Civil Disobedience (pgs 52-88)

**Writing Assignment #1 - Due in class Wednesday**

## ***Week 4 (9/18 and 9/20): Democracy and Its Difficulties***

Readings:

**Political Thought** - Ch 3: Against democracy; Democratic Ideals; True & False Democracy; Dangers in Democracy; Democracy vs Bureaucracy; Separation of Powers (pgs 89-118)

## ***Week 5 (9/25 and 9/27): Liberty and Rights***

Readings:

**Political Thought** - Ch 4: What is Liberty; Law & Morality; Toleration and Free Expression (pgs 119-154)

**Writing Assignment #2 - Handed out Monday**

## ***Week 6 (10/2 and 10/4): Liberty and Rights Cont'd***

Readings:

**Political Thought** - Ch 4: Virtue & Citizenship; Rights; Punishment (pgs 155-186)

**Writing Assignment #2 - Due in class Monday**

**!! Note: No Class on Monday (10/9) – Fall Break !!**

***Week 7 (10/9 and 10/11): Economic Justice***

Readings:

**Political Thought** - Ch 5: Private Property; Market; Theories of Distributive Justice (pgs 187-255)

**Writing Assignment #3 - Handed out Monday**

***Week 8 (10/16 and 10/18): Justice Between Groups***

Readings:

**Political Thought** - Ch 6: Peace & War; Nationalism; Minority Rights; Intergenerational Justice; International Justice (pgs 256-318)

**Writing Assignment #3 - Due in class Monday**

***Week 9 (10/23 and 10/25): Alternatives to Liberalism***

Readings:

**Political Thought** - Ch 7: Liberal Theory under Strain; Conservatism; Communitarianism; Socialism; Post-modernism (pgs 319-365)

**\*\*\*First Draft of Final Paper Proposal due Wednesday (11/1)\*\*\***

***Week 10 (10/30 and 11/1): Progress and Civilization***

Readings:

**Political Thought** - Ch 8 (pgs 366-390)

**Writing Assignment #4 - Handed out Monday**

***Week 11 (11/6 and 11/8): The World after Marx***

Readings:

**On Politics** - Part II Preface, Ch 22-23: The Twentieth Century and Beyond; Empire and Imperialism (pgs 722-782)

**Writing Assignment #4 - Due in class Monday**

**\*\*\*Revised Draft Paper Proposal due Monday (11/13)\*\*\***

***Week 12 (11/13 and 11/15): The isms***

Readings:

**On Politics** - Ch 24-25: Socialisms; Marxism, Fascism, Dictatorship (pgs 782-840)

**!! Note: No class this week (11/20 - 11/22) – Thanksgiving !!**

***Week 13 (11/20 and 11/22): Time for Reflection***

\*Professor Crews will be gone on 11/20, and 11/22 is Thanksgiving break. Enjoy the week off!

***Week 14 (11/27 and 11/29): Democracy, Peace & the Future***

Readings:

**On Politics** - Ch 26-27: Democracy in the Modern World; Global Peace and the Human Future (pgs 841-899)

***Week 15 (12/4 and 12/6): Review Week***

No readings. Review major themes and thinkers over the course of the semester.

**!! Finals Week !!**

***Week 16 (12/11 and 12/13): Finals***

Last day of class Monday 12/11.

Final papers due in class Wednesday **December 13.**