POLS 5321--Seminar in Political Theory
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Office Hours: T Th 1p-2p; M 4p-5p; and by appointment

Graduate Study in Political Theory
In this course, we will explore the fundamental questions of human political existence through key philosophical and literary critical texts. The Western tradition in political theory concerns itself with questions of human nature, of the proper balance between individual autonomy and community, of the nature of justice, and of the relationship between freedom and responsibility. We will explore these questions from perspectives different in time, place, and circumstance. Not only will we revisit the ‘canon,’ the ‘greatest hits’ of Western political thought (50 million Plato fans can’t be wrong!), but we will also consider the voices of those long excluded from this extended dialogue on the nature of things political. Engaging these different perspectives will allow us to critically reevaluate the preconceptions upon which our political institutions are built, and, in doing so, fashion for ourselves a working conception of the value and necessity of ‘politics.’

Learning Objectives and Essay Guidelines
This course is intended as an introduction to the advanced study of political theory. We will not concentrate on the collected works of any single thinker. Instead, the student will be exposed, to a lesser or greater degree, to a variety of thinkers. What concerns us is the multiplicity of responses to the same basic set of questions about human political existence. The student’s focus, therefore, should be on the ideas, their implications, and the many ways they have been and could be used (for good and ill). Like the thinkers we read, our experiences and beliefs are important, but also like these thinkers, those experiences and beliefs are not definitive. In this course, we will be participants in a 3,000-year-old conversation about the nature and possibilities of human political existence.

A critical analysis in political theory is, quite literally, a method of describing and evaluating an argument by separating that argument into its various parts or elements. Students will be challenged to do this in both their oral and written work in this course. Therefore, the following are both learning objectives for the course as a whole and to be applied to the works and authors we encounter in both your written and oral work in the course.

A careful analysis must begin with the text at hand. A clear and critical explanation of the meaning of the text is essential. This process is often referred to as exegesis. Special care should be taken to describe the general meaning of the text as accurately as possible. It is inevitable, however, that you will attach your own meaning to the text as you interpret it. This act of interpretation, a hermeneutical act, is a major part of your analytical essay. It is the point at which you begin to evaluate the author’s argument in terms of its component parts. This is most easily done in terms of three types of criteria: empirical, analytical, and normative.

Empirical Evaluation: What kinds of statements about the world or about human nature is the author making? Are they verifiable statements? Does the author make any attempt at verification? Is it a persuasive attempt? It is only part of your responsibility, in an analytical essay, to engage in your own testing of the author=s empirical assertions. FIRST, your role as an analyst requires you to identify those assertions.

Analytical Evaluation: In this aspect of your analysis, you are examining the author’s reasoning. What kinds of logical arguments is the author making? Do they make sense? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments?

Normative Evaluation: What kinds of values are embraced by the author? Identify both the explicit and implicit values and subject them to critical evaluation.

Obviously, the above description of the analytical process is artificially fragmented. If you proceed literally in the fashion described above, your presentation/essay will be very stilted. Don’t do it! The point to be taken is that however you proceed, and you should search for your own analytical style, your analysis must contain the ingredients discussed above. A final note: an analytical essay must follow all of the rules of formal writing. Make every effort to write clearly, with proper English and punctuation, and proofread your essay. You will be held accountable.
Textbooks. The following texts (in these editions!) are REQUIRED and available at the UT-Tyler Bookstore:

--Jeffrey Abramson, Minerva’s Owl: The Tradition of Western Political Thought (Harvard, 2009)


Grading. All grading is done on a 10 point scale: A = 90-100; B = 80-89; C = 70-79; etc. I will use the numbers (as opposed to letters alone) to give you a clearer sense of how far you must go to reach the next level of perfection.

Course Requirements. The course requirements and their relative impact on your final grade in this class are as follows:

(1) Informal Class Participation 10%
In addition to the more formal participation requirements outlined below, students are expected to attend class weekly and to participate in our class discussions. This is not a lecture class; it is a seminar. Bring your readings, your questions, your answers, and your insights to class and be ready to articulate and discuss them.

(2) Reading Summaries and Presentations 15%
Each week the student IS NOT preparing an essay, s/he will turn in a summary of the week’s readings. These summaries should be no more than half a page single-spaced per assigned reading. Students will be called upon to present particular readings to the class, addressing (at least) the following: (1) What are the issues raised by the author? (2) How does s/he address them? and (3) What has the essay to say to the subject matter/discussion of this course? LATE SUMMARIES WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

(3) Essays/Presentations 3 x 15% each = 45%
Three times during the semester, the student will be required to write an essay in response to the readings. These essays may be guided by a prompt and should be not less than 5 nor more than 7 pages in length (typed, 12 point font, double-spaced, 1-inch margins all round). Thoroughness, clarity, and economy of style are all to be valued. In addition, students will present their essays in a 15-minute presentation designed to illuminate the relevant issues and stimulate further discussion. DO NOT READ YOUR ESSAY TO THE CLASS! LATE PAPERS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

WARNING: IGNORE THE FOLLOWING PAPER GUIDELINES AT YOUR PERIL:
(1) DO NOT try to avoid addressing the issues by talking about the author’s writing style, difficulty, etc. In this class, as in all of your graduate classes in political science, you are considered a professional willing to work to understand difficult material. You can always ask the teacher for help, too, but do it BEFORE the day you turn in/present your paper.

(2) Write in reasoned, professional terms. Use your best English: there is no excuse for misspellings; make sure all of your sentences have subjects, verbs, and objects; make sure they match in number; do not use contractions; write in paragraphs (change to a new but related thought = new paragraph) above all, do not write the way you speak! Write like a professional.

(3) Focus on one or two ideas or issues that are common to all the readings. Do not simply rehearse the argument of the author—in 5-7 pages, you do not have the time! Your task is to discuss the readings in terms of the one or two most important ideas or issues that you have identified. As a start, consider the issues raised in our discussions in class and where this author/idea fits. Add your own insights where appropriate. Raise questions and critical issues—do not rant.

(4) These are NOT research papers. Limit yourself to the text before you. The assignment is designed to get you to read closely, carefully, and analytically. Resist the urge to run to the internet. Force yourself to deal with the text, come to some understanding of the issues raised, and, in this way, when presenting your paper to your colleagues, everyone will have had access to the same material.

4) Final Examination Essay 30%
A take-home final examination consisting of a comprehensive essay question will be given to students at the last class meeting. The essay will be comprehensive and will be 7-8 pages in length. Your final essay will be due via electronic mail on Wednesday December 11, 2013 at 6pm. LATE PAPERS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.
Syllabus

All readings are due on date assigned.

Aug 26 M  Distribution of Syllabus and Introduction:
The Parameters of Political Theory
Abramson, Minerva's Owl, “Introduction” (pp. 1-16)
Wolin, “Political Philosophy and Philosophy” from Politics and Vision (on Blackboard)

Sep 9 M  Political Philosophy to Political ‘Science’
Abramson, Minerva’s Owl, Chapters 1-8 (pp. 17-168)

Sep 16 M  Classical Liberalism and the Social Contract
Abramson, Minerva’s Owl, Chapters 9-12 (pp. 169-257)

Sep 23 M  Reassessing and Reframing Classical Liberalism
Abramson, Minerva’s Owl, Chapters 13-15 (pp. 258-321)
FIRST ESSAY DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS (all students)

Sep 30 M  Arendt I: Stateless Persons and Totalitarianism
Arendt from The Portable Hannah Arendt (pp. 25-48; 75-119):

Oct 7 M  Arendt II: Normalizing ‘Un-conscience’
Arendt from The Portable Hannah Arendt (pp. 120-148; 313-388):
--From Eichmann in Jerusalem: “An Expert on the Jewish Question”; “The Final Solution—Killing”;
“The Wannsee Conference, or Pontius Pilate”; “Execution”; “Epilogue”; “Postscript”
GROUP 1 SECOND ESSAY DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS

Oct 14 M  Arendt III: The Public Character of Politics
Arendt from The Portable Hannah Arendt (pp. 167-246; 419-438):
-- “Rosa Luxemburg (1871-1919)”

Oct 21 M  Arendt IV: Freedom, Authority and Revolution
Arendt from The Portable Hannah Arendt (pp. 439-507; 545-576):
-- “What is Authority?”; “What is Freedom?”
-- “Truth and Politics”
GROUP 2 SECOND ESSAY DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS

Oct 28 M  Foucault I: Knowledge and Truth
Michel Foucault, “Truth and Juridical Forms” (from Power, pp 1-89)

Nov 4 M  Foucault II: Techniques of Truth and Power
Foucault, “Truth and Power” (from Power, pp 111-133)
Foucault, “Governmentality” (from Power, pp 201-234)
Foucault, “Interview with Michel Foucault” (from Power, pp 239-297)
GROUP 1 THIRD ESSAY DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS

Nov 11 M  Foucault III: Agency and Politics
Foucault, “‘Omnes et Singulatim’: Toward a Critique of Political Reason” (from Power, pp 298-325)
Foucault, “The Subject and Power” (from Power, pp 326-348)
Foucault, “The Political Technology of Individuals” (from Power, pp 403-417)
Foucault, “Useless to Revolt?” (from Power, pp 449-453)
Foucault, “Confronting Governments: Human Rights” (from Power, pp 474-476)

Butler, Violence, Mourning, Politics and Theory as Public Critique
Butler, Precarious Life, Chapters 1-3 (pp. 1-101)

Nov 18 M

Nov 25 M
THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

Dec 2 M
Butler: Violence, Mourning, Politics and Theory as Public Critique
Butler, Precarious Life, Chapters 1-3 (pp. 1-101)

GROUP 2 THIRD ESSAY DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS

Dec 11 W
FINAL EXAMINATION ESSAY DUE via email BY 6pm.

IMPORTANT: The instructor reserves the right to make appropriate adjustments in this syllabus and in course requirements as conditions warrant. He pledges NOT to make changes disadvantageous to the pedagogical mission of the course or prejudicial to the student’s opportunity to learn the course material. By staying in this class, you agree to this and all the other terms and conditions of this syllabus.

UNIVERSITY AND UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS SYSTEM POLICIES

Policy Regarding Academic Dishonesty
Academic dishonesty is against university as well as community standards. Academic dishonesty is defined as: cheating, plagiarism, or otherwise obtaining grades under false pretenses.

Plagiarism is defined as submitting the language, ideas, or thoughts or work of another as one’s own. Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:
--use of direct quotations without quotation marks and without credit to the source;
--paraphrasing or using direct quotations within quotation marks without credit to the source;
--failure to provide adequate citations for material obtained through electronic research;
--downloading and submitting work from electronic databases without citation;
--submitting material created/written by someone else as one’s own, including purchased term/research papers;
--allowing someone to copy or submit one’s work as his/her own;
--participation in a group project which presents plagiarized materials;
--submitting the same paper in more than one course without the knowledge and approval of the instructors involved;
--assisting in the act of plagiarism by allowing one’s work to be used in this fashion;
--aiding and abetting another student’s dishonesty.

Cheating is defined generally as copying from someone else’s exam, homework, or laboratory work. Types of cheating include but are not limited to:
--using notes or other materials during a test or exam without authorization;
--obtaining or providing unauthorized information during an examination through verbal, visual, or unauthorized use of books, notes, texts, or other materials;
--obtaining or providing information concerning all or part of an examination prior to that examination;
--taking an examination for another student or arranging for another person to take an exam in one’s place;
--altering or changing test answers after submitting it for grading, or after grades have been awarded;
--releasing information about an examination to anyone who has yet to take the examination

Disciplinary procedures for incidents of academic dishonesty may result in any of the following:
(1) permanent dismissal from the university; (2) suspension from the university for not less than one semester; (3) outright failure of the course (an automatic final grade of ‘F’); (4) canceling the student’s enrollment in the class without a grade (‘W’); (5) awarding a failing grade on the exam, test, or assignment in question; (6) requiring the student to take another examination or test on the same material or to resubmit the paper or assignment based on a specific topic.

In all cases of substantiated academic dishonesty, a permanent record of academic discipline will be established in the Office of the Dean of Students. These records are searched regularly by government agencies, licensing authorities,
certification authorities, and others. The existence of such a record can bar entry to many occupations.

POLICIES THAT MUST APPEAR IN EACH COURSE SYLLABUS
The following University policies must appear on each course syllabus or be provided as an informational sheet (web-links to these policies may be used in the print or electronic syllabus)
http://www.утtyley.edu/academicaffairs/syllabuspolicies.pdf

Students Rights and Responsibilities
To know and understand the policies that affect your rights and responsibilities as a student at UT Tyler, please follow this link: http://www.утtyley.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php

Grade Replacement/Forgiveness and Census Date Policies
Students repeating a course for grade forgiveness (grade replacement) must file a Grade Replacement Contract with the Enrollment Services Center (ADM 230) on or before the Census Date of the semester in which the course will be repeated. Grade Replacement Contracts are available in the Enrollment Services Center or at http://www.утtyley.edu/registrar. Each semester’s Census Date can be found on the Contract itself, on the Academic Calendar, or in the information pamphlets published each semester by the Office of the Registrar.

Failure to file a Grade Replacement Contract will result in both the original and repeated grade being used to calculate your overall grade point average. Undergraduates are eligible to exercise grade replacement for only three course repeats during their career at UT Tyler; graduates are eligible for two grade replacements. Full policy details are printed on each Grade Replacement Contract.

The Census Date is the deadline for many forms and enrollment actions that students need to be aware of. These include:
☐ Submitting Grade Replacement Contracts, Transient Forms, requests to withhold directory information, approvals for taking courses as Audit, Pass/Fail or Credit/No Credit.
☐ Receiving 100% refunds for partial withdrawals. (There is no refund for these after the Census Date)
☐ Schedule adjustments (section changes, adding a new class, dropping without a “W” grade)
☐ Being reinstated or re-enrolled in classes after being dropped for non-payment
☐ Completing the process for tuition exemptions or waivers through Financial Aid

State-Mandated Course Drop Policy
Texas law prohibits a student who began college for the first time in Fall 2007 or thereafter from dropping more than six courses during their entire undergraduate career. This includes courses dropped at another 2-year or 4-year Texas public college or university. For purposes of this rule, a dropped course is any course that is dropped after the census date (See Academic Calendar for the specific date).
Exceptions to the 6-drop rule may be found in the catalog. Petitions for exemptions must be submitted to the Enrollment Services Center and must be accompanied by documentation of the extenuating circumstance. Please contact the Enrollment Services Center if you have any questions.

Disability Services
In accordance with federal law, a student requesting accommodation must provide documentation of his/her disability to the Disability Services counselor. If you have a disability, including a learning disability, for which you request an accommodation, please contact the Disability Services office in UC 3150, or call (903) 566-7079.

Student Absence due to Religious Observance
Students who anticipate being absent from class due to a religious observance are requested to inform the instructor of such absences by the second class meeting of the semester.
Student Absence for University-Sponsored Events and Activities
If you intend to be absent for a university-sponsored event or activity, you (or the event sponsor) must notify the instructor at least two weeks prior to the date of the planned absence. At that time the instructor will set a date and time when make-up assignments will be completed.

Social Security and FERPA Statement:
It is the policy of The University of Texas at Tyler to protect the confidential nature of social security numbers. The University has changed its computer programming so that all students have an identification number. The electronic transmission of grades (e.g., via e-mail) risks violation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act; grades will not be transmitted electronically.

Emergency Exits and Evacuation:
Everyone is required to exit the building when a fire alarm goes off. Follow your instructor’s directions regarding the appropriate exit. If you require assistance during an evacuation, inform your instructor in the first week of class. Do not re-enter the building unless given permission by University Police, Fire department, or Fire Prevention Services.

HERE ENDETH THE ENDLESSNESS.