POLITICAL THEORY

COURSE OVERVIEW
This course examines a selection of the most influential and enduring works in the western tradition of political philosophy, highlighting the way in which major concepts of political thought have evolved from ancient Greece to contemporary western society. By critically examining the works of classical and modern political theorists (such as Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke, Mill, Rawls and Nozick), we will explore such topics as the nature of the state, the justification of political authority, distributive justice, democracy and freedom. What is the meaning of these concepts? How (if at all) can they be achieved? What social and political arrangements best preserve them? Our objective in the course is to understand and critically evaluate some of the most important ideas and theories in the history of political philosophy and to reach our own reasoned positions on the issues they raise.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
• Take-home midterm exam: 30%
• One long paper (20-25 pages), due Dec. 2016: 60%
• Active participation in class discussions: 10%

REQUIRED TEXT: (Readings from additional sources are shown below.)

• Immanuel Kant, Practical Philosophy, Ed. Gregor. Cambridge University Press.
• Plato, Republic. Hackett Publishing Company.
• John Rawls, Political Liberalism (expanded ed)
• Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Basic Political Writings, Hackett Publishing Company.

LECTURES AND CLASS PARTICIPATION:
Lectures have two main purposes. The first is to supply background for the readings and to place them in a larger philosophical context. The second is to demonstrate how to go about identifying, analyzing, and assessing the central claims and arguments in the readings. One of the best ways to improve your skills of analyzing and evaluating philosophical arguments
is through discussion, so there will be an attempt made to devote at least half of the class to discussion.

**PAPER GUIDELINES**

The papers must defend a thesis. It cannot consist in the mere report of your opinions, or in a mere summary of the opinions of the authors being discussed. You have to defend the claims you make, by offering a sustained critique or defense of the author’s views. These are not research papers: no texts other than those assigned in the course need to be used.

Papers should be double spaced in 12 point Times New Roman, with one-inch margins. Printed copies must be submitted by the end of the class on the due date; electronic submissions will not be accepted, except with prior permission under unusual circumstances. Extensions will not be granted except under extraordinary circumstances, and late papers will be penalized for each day they are late. If you believe your personal circumstances warrant an extension, please discuss it with me before the due date.

**Late papers.** Late papers will be penalized one-third of a letter grade for each day late (for example, from A- to B+). Weekend days count. If you finish a late paper during a weekend, e-mail it to me right away and turn in a hard copy later.

If you need assistance with your writing, please visit the NYU Writing Center (411 Lafayette, 3rd floor): [www.nyu.edu/cas/ewp/html/writing_center.html](http://www.nyu.edu/cas/ewp/html/writing_center.html).

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

All source material, whether actually quoted or not, must be properly cited. Plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Please review Academic Integrity Guide available at [http://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/academic-integrity-for-students-at-nyu.html](http://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/academic-integrity-for-students-at-nyu.html).

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at (212) 998-4980 as soon as possible to ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion. For more information, see the CSD website: [http://www.nyu.edu/osl/csd](http://www.nyu.edu/osl/csd).

**CALENDAR OF ASSIGNMENTS**

This calendar may be revised as the semester goes on.

**I. INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE.**

**II. JUSTICE, LAW AND DEMOCRACY IN ANCIENT GREECE**

- **Plato, Republic**, Books I-X.

  Secondary Sources:
  
  Julia Annas, *Introduction to Plato’s Republic*.
  Allan Bloom, “Interpretive Essay” in *The Republic of Plato*.
  Charles Griswold, ed., *Platonic Writings/Platonic Readings*.
  Terence Irwin, *Plato’s Ethics*. 

G. Klosko, *The Development of Plato’s Political Theory.*
Arlene Saxonhouse, *Fear of Diversity.*

**III. Virtue, the Common Good and Limits of Democracy**

- **Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics**, Book I, (chs. 1–13), II (chs. 1–7), V, VIII, X (ch. 9).

**Secondary Sources:**
- John Cooper, *Reason and Human Good in Aristotle.*
- David Keyt and Fred D. Miller, Jr., eds., *A Companion to Aristotle’s Politics.*
- Martha Nussbaum, *Fragility of Goodness,* pt. 3.
- Stephen Salkever, *Finding the Mean.*
- Aristide Tessitore, *Reading Aristotle’s Ethics.*

**IV. The Social Contract, Legitimacy and Political Obligation**

- **Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan**, chapters 1-16, 22-34, 46.

**Secondary Sources:**
- Quentin Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric,* ch. 8 and *Visions of Politics,* vol. 3.

- **John Locke, A Letter Concerning Toleration.**

Secondary Sources:
- Richard Ashcraft, *Revolutionary Politics and Locke’s Two Treatises of Government*.
- John Dunn, *The Political Thought of John Locke*.
- Ruth Grant, *John Locke’s Liberalism*.
- Peter Laslett, “Introduction” to CUP edition of *Two Treatises of Government*.
- James Tully, *An Approach to Political Philosophy: Locke in Contexts*.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality* and *Social Contract*.


Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, *Democracy and Disagreement*, chap. 1.


Secondary Sources:
- R.D. Masters, *The Political Philosophy of Rousseau*.
- J. Miller, *Rousseau: Dreamer of Democracy*.
- Susan Okin, *Women in Western Political Thought*, pt. III.
- Judith Shklar, *Men and Citizens*.
- Patrick Riley, *The General Will Before Rousseau*.
- Robert Wokler, *Rousseau*.
- Patrick Riley, ed., *Cambridge Companion to Rousseau*.
- Judith Shklar, *Men and Citizens*.

V. CAPITALISM, SOCIALISM, AND THE INDIVIDUAL


VI. DEMOCRACY: INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY AND FREE EXPRESSION

John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty, Considerations on Representative Government*, ch. 2-4, 7, 8, 10, 12, 16

Joel Feinberg, “Limits to the Free Expression of Opinion”

Ronald Dworkin, “Paternalism,” *The Monist*
Secondary Sources:
John Gray, Mill on Liberty
John Gray, ed. On Liberty In Focus.
Andrew Pyle, ed., Liberty: Contemporary Responses to John Stuart Mill.
Alan Ryan, J.S. Mill.
Alan Ryan, The Philosophy of John Stuart Mill.
John Skorupski, John Stuart Mill.
Dennis Thompson, John Stuart Mill and Representative Government.

VII. THE POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITS OF DEMOCRACY: CONTEMPORARY DEBATES

• Jürgen Habermas, Three Normative Models of Democracy.
• Jürgen Habermas, On the Internal Relation Between the Rule of Law and Democracy
• Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, "Why Deliberative Democracy is Different," Social Philosophy and Policy, 17 (Winter 2000).

Secondary Sources:
Norman Daniels, ed., Reading Rawls.
Thomas Pogge, Realizing Rawls.
Michael Sandel, Liberalism and the Limits of Justice.
Robert Paul Woolf, Understanding Rawls.

VIII. WEALTH, PROPERTY AND LIBERTARIANISM


Secondary Sources:
S. Hailwood, Exploring Nozick.
A. R. Lacey, Robert Nozick.
D. Schmidtz, ed. Robert Nozick.

IX. COSMOPOLITANISM AND GLOBAL JUSTICE

• John Rawls, The Law of Peoples