Politics 203:01 -- Themes in Political Theory
Smullin 216, MWF 1:50-2:50
Prof. David Gutterman
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Office Hours: T, W, TH: 3-4:00

Course Description
This course considers critical themes in the history of Western political philosophy. We will examine such topics as the creation of social and political orders, justice and citizenship, truth and the performance of politics, and obligation, order and political crisis. The primary theme we will be addressing throughout the semester is freedom. Throughout, we will explore the interplay between the work of political theorists and contemporary political issues.

Course Readings
The following texts are required and can be purchased at the Willamette Bookstore. (If you would like to purchase the texts elsewhere, please be sure to acquire the editions I have selected for this class.)


There will also be readings available online and through the class WISE site.

Student Learning Outcomes
Students who succeed in this course will develop:

- their capacity to read, think about and discuss works of political theory
- thoughtful and nuanced ideas about freedom
- the ability to use analytic lenses provided by political theory to analyze political issues
- their inclination and capacity to ask challenging questions

Course Requirements
Success in this course will require commitment and dedication on your part. If you are not able to make this commitment, I strongly urge you to reconsider taking this course at this time.

The reading assignments for this course are rigorous and challenging. You are required to thoughtfully read every assignment. When I say that you are required to read, I do not mean that you should mechanically scan every page, but that you should grapple with the ideas. Mark up your text, read with a pen and paper, and write down ideas, questions, quotations, and points of confusion or contention. *Read for comprehension rather than completion, pondering every idea rather than*
looking at every word. This means that you may need to read a section, think about it, read it again, write about it, discuss it, and then read it again. So, “do the reading” means “engage yourself with the ideas of the texts.”

The reading load will be quite heavy at times. To stay afloat, plan for a sufficient amount of time to complete the assignment, and read aggressively. Remember to make use of your resources. Come to my office hours and form reading groups with your classmates.

Reading in this way will assist you in the second requirement: Your regular attendance, careful preparation, and active participation are essential. Unexcused absences from class will have serious and significant detrimental effects on your final grade. Come prepared to participate by doing the reading, reflecting upon the course material, and bringing to class issues, questions, and passages for discussion. Moreover, class participation does not simply entail speaking, but also listening in an engaged and respectful manner to the thoughts of your classmates.

In addition to class participation there will be three exams covering the major themes we will be exploring in this course. There is also an introductory writing assignment on Questions of Freedom.

Grading

Questions of Freedom, 10%
Exam #1, 20%.
Exam #2, 20%.
Exam #3, 30%
Class Participation, 20%

** Note: A penalty of 1/3 grade per day will be imposed on assignments submitted late (one day’s lateness would reduce a B+ to a B). I generally do not grant extensions, but if extraordinary circumstances arise, please consult with me as soon as possible -- and certainly prior to the due date of the paper.

*** Another note: I fully appreciate that students like fast and thorough comments on their writing assignments. Unfortunately “fast” and “thorough” do not often go together well. I will strive to return your final papers in a timely fashion. As a general rule, you should receive your papers back within two weeks of turning them in.

**** Of Special Note: I take plagiarism and cheating very seriously. Willamette’s policy on cheating and plagiarism states:

Cheating is any form of intellectual dishonesty or misrepresentation of one’s knowledge. Plagiarism, a form of cheating, consists of intentionally or unintentionally representing someone else’s work as one’s own. All members of the Willamette University community are expected to be aware of the serious breach of principles involved in plagiarism. Ignorance of what constitutes plagiarism shall not be considered a valid defense. If students are uncertain as to what constitutes plagiarism for a particular assignment, they should consult the instructor for clarification.

Students found guilty of plagiarism will receive a zero for the assignment AND WILL BE REPORTED TO THE DEAN. http://www.willamette.edu/cla/dean/policies/plagiarism.html
Statement Concerning Disabilities: Students with documented disabilities who may need accommodations, who have any emergency medical information the instructor should know of, or who need special arrangements in the event of evacuation, should make an appointment with the instructor as early as possible, no later than the first week of the term.

Willamette’s Credit Hour Policy holds that for every hour of class time there is an expectation of 2-3 hours work outside of class. Thus, you should anticipate spending 6-9 hours outside of class engaged in course-related activities. Examples include study time, reading and homework assignments, research projects, and group work. And the reality is that for you to succeed in this course, you should expect to dedicate much more than this required 6-9 hours per week.

Willamette University recognizes the value of religious practice and strives to accommodate students’ commitment to their religious traditions whenever possible. When conflicts between holy days or other religious practice and academic scheduling arise, every effort should be made to allow students to adhere to their tradition, including, when possible,excusing class absences and allowing make-up work. A student anticipating the need to miss a class for religious reasons should alert the faculty member within the first two weeks of the semester, and the two of them should determine the next course of action. Any unresolved difficulty should be referred to the Office of the Chaplains.

Schedule of Events
(Note: The schedule is subject to change – particularly with the addition of other texts.)
1) W 8/28: Syllabus
3) M 9/2: Labor Day -- No Class.
   Questions of Freedom Assignment Due.
5) F 9/6: Sophocles, Antigone.
14) F 9/27: EXAM #1
23) F 10/18: **FALL BREAK** – NO CLASS
25) W 10/23: Frederick Douglass, “What to a Slave is the Fourth of July?” (WISE)
28) F 11/1: **EXAM #2**
38) M 11/25: No Class
39) W 11/27: **Thanksgiving Break**
40) F 11/29: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. “Letter from Birmingham City Jail” (WISE).
43) F 12/6: Review.

**FINAL EXAM**