

PHIL 3700-001 Spring 2026 Political Philosophy

[PHIL 3700-001 Political Philosophy]

Spring Semester 2026
Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9:40 – 10:30 am.
Gardner Commons 4680

Course Description

This is an introductory course in political philosophy, intended to acquaint you with aspects of a few areas of political thought. Although this course will focus on the liberal tradition in political philosophy, we begin with a classic of illiberal political thought: Plato's Republic. The vivid contrast of the Republic (as well as Aristotle's Politics) will bring into focus subsequent work in the liberal, or "social contract" tradition including Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau and Rawls. Later, we introduce critiques and responses to classical liberalism, including indigenous critiques, left-wing critiques from socialist, feminist and anti-racist theorists and right-wing critiques from libertarians and anti-enlightenment thinkers.

Course Outcomes and Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify and explain central arguments in major works of political philosophy.
- Interrogate key political concepts including: political legitimacy, justice, equality, liberty, and property.
- Compare competing political theories and evaluate their underlying assumptions about individuals, society, property and the state.
- Formulate and defend philosophical arguments in writing.

Course Requirements

There will be reading assigned for every class meeting. I will generally provide you with the materials, but if there is some difficulty please make an effort to find the reading yourself. The

readings may be challenging—do your best to keep up. Reading materials will be posted on Canvas. It is mandatory that you attempt this reading before the meeting of the class. You are expected to contribute to class discussion – I will not be lecturing the entire time. For every class meeting, you are required to post on the class spreadsheet one discussion, or comprehension question about the reading. This can be a question like: “I think the state of nature is ambiguous in Locke: is it meant to be a historical state or just a tool for theorizing?” or “Why does Rawls think we should employ worst-case reasoning behind the veil of ignorance?” It can be a genuine request for clarification on some point, or a broad open-ended question for class discussion. This will be worth 10% of your final grade. For each question you fail to submit, I will subtract a point from the full 10. Please send these questions to me no later than 8AM the morning of the class that the reading is due. These are meant to give me a sense of how you are dealing with the material, and to give you a sense of what your classmates are thinking about the readings.

We will have an in-class group oral exam, tentatively scheduled for February 27th. The oral exam will consist of a discussion on one of a number of topics (announced in advance) among 3-4 students. The discussion will be facilitated by Payden or Konstantin. In addition to a demonstration of understanding and critical and creative engagement with the texts and themes of the course, the exam will be graded on the degree to which group members are able to discuss equitably and collaboratively. The exam will be graded individually.

The final paper, which will be due on April 29th, will be a longer paper in which you make your own argument concerning a topic we have discussed in class. It should be about 2500 words (about 10 pages, double-spaced). A rough outline of this final paper (1 page) will be due April 13th, approximately two weeks before the final draft. The outline itself will not be graded, but the grade of the final paper will be reduced if the outline is not received in time to give feedback.

- Attendance and participation – 15%
- Reading responses – 15%
- Oral exam – 30%
- Final paper – 40%

Required and Recommended Readings

See detailed syllabus.

Grading Scale

Students will receive numeric grades which will be converted to the usual letter scale. No “curve” will be imposed on the grades.

University Policies

Updated mandatory syllabus policies regarding the ADA Act, Safety at the U, Addressing Sexual Misconduct, and Academic Misconduct can be viewed at:

<https://cte.utah.edu/instructor-education/syllabus/institutional-policies.php>.

Preliminary Course Schedule

Date Topic/Discussion Due Dates:

Week 1: Sarah Pomeroy's *Brief History of Ancient Greece*.

Wednesday, January 7:

Chapter 3. "Archaic Greece"

See [Bookshelf] or [Course Materials] on Canvas.

Friday, January 9:

Chapter 4. "Sparta"

See [Bookshelf] or [Course Materials] on Canvas.

Week 2: Sarah Pomeroy's *Brief History of Ancient Greece*

Monday, January 12:

Chapter 5. "The Growth of Athens and the Persian Wars"

See [Bookshelf] or [Course Materials] on Canvas.

Wednesday, January 14:

No class

Chapter 6. "The Rivalries of the Greek City-States and the Growth of Democracy"

See [Bookshelf] or [Course Materials] on Canvas.

Friday, January 16

Chapter 8. "The Peloponnesian War"

See [Bookshelf] or [Course Materials] on Canvas.

Week 3: Plato's *Republic*.

Monday, January 19 (Martin Luther King Jr. Day):

Martin Luther King Jr. (1963), "Letter from Birmingham Jail"

https://www.csuchico.edu/iege/_assets/documents/susi-letter-from-birmingham-jail.pdf.

Wednesday, January 2:

Plato, *Republic*. Book I

<https://www.its.caltech.edu/~haugen/Plato-Republic-Jowett.pdf>.

Friday, January 23:

Plato, *Republic*. Book II

<https://www.its.caltech.edu/~haugen/Plato-Republic-Jowett.pdf>.

Week 4: Plato's Democratic Critics

Monday, January 26:

Plato, *Republic*. Book III-IV.

<https://www.its.caltech.edu/~haugen/Plato-Republic-Jowett.pdf>.

Wednesday, January 28:

Karl Popper (1945) *The Open Society and its Enemies*. Chapter 7.

<https://antilogicalism.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/open-society-1.pdf>.

Thucydides (5th c. BC), Pericles' Funeral Oration

<https://hrlibrary.umn.edu/education/thucydides.html>.

Friday, January 30:

C.L.R. James (1956) "Every Cook Can Govern."

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/james-clr/works/1956/06/every-cook.htm>.

Alex Guerrero (2014) "Against Elections: The Lottocratic Alternative"

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/papa.12029>.

Week 5: Aristotle: *Politics*

Monday, February 2:

Books I,II

<https://historyofeconomicthought.mcmaster.ca/aristotle/Politics.pdf>.

Wednesday, February 4:

Books III,IV

<https://historyofeconomicthought.mcmaster.ca/aristotle/Politics.pdf>.

Friday, February 6:

Books V,VI,VII

<https://historyofeconomicthought.mcmaster.ca/aristotle/Politics.pdf>.

Week 6: Hobbes: *Leviathan* (1651).

Monday, February 9:

Chapters 13-16.

<https://historyofeconomicthought.mcmaster.ca/hobbes/Leviathan.pdf>.

Wednesday, February 11:

Chapters 17-20.

<https://historyofeconomicthought.mcmaster.ca/hobbes/Leviathan.pdf>.

Friday, February 13:

Chapters 21,29,30.

<https://historyofeconomicthought.mcmaster.ca/hobbes/Leviathan.pdf>.

Week 7: Locke: *Second Treatise of Government* (1690)

Monday, February 16:

Books I-VI

<https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/locke1689a.pdf>.

Wednesday, February 18:

Books VII-XII

<https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/locke1689a.pdf>.

Friday, February 20:

Books XIII-XIX

<https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/locke1689a.pdf>.

Week 8: Rousseau: *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (1754)

Monday, February 23:

Dedication, Preface, First Part

https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/125494/5019_Rousseau_Discourse_on_the_Origin_of_Inequality.pdf.

Wednesday, February 25:

Second Part

https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/125494/5019_Rousseau_Discourse_on_the_Origin_of_Inequality.pdf.

Friday, February 27:

Sara Henry Stites (1905) *Economics of the Iroquois*. "Chapter III: The Organization of Producers"
<https://electriccanadian.com/history/first/iroquois/economicsofiroqu00stit.pdf>.

Week 9: Indigenous Economics

Monday, March 2:

Sara Henry Stites (1905) *Economics of the Iroquois* "Chapter V: The Distribution of Wealth"
<https://electriccanadian.com/history/first/iroquois/economicsofiroqu00stit.pdf>.

Wednesday, March 4:

Graeber and Wengrow (2021) *The Dawn of Everything*. Chapter 2
See [Course Materials] on Canvas.

Friday, March 6:

Graeber and Wengrow (2021) *The Dawn of Everything*. Chapter 2
See [Course Materials] on Canvas.

Week 10: Rawls: A Theory of Justice (1971).

Monday, March 9:

John Rawls (1971). *A Theory of Justice*. Chapter 1
<https://www.degruyterbrill.com/document/doi/10.4159/9780674042605/html>.

Wednesday, March 11:

John Rawls (1971). *A Theory of Justice*. Chapter 1
<https://www.degruyterbrill.com/document/doi/10.4159/9780674042605/html>.

Friday, March 13:

John Rawls (1971). *A Theory of Justice*. Chapter 2
<https://www.degruyterbrill.com/document/doi/10.4159/9780674042605/html>.

Week 11: Rawls: A Theory of Justice (1971).

Monday, March 16:

John Rawls (1971). *A Theory of Justice*. Chapter 2
<https://www.degruyterbrill.com/document/doi/10.4159/9780674042605/html>.

Wednesday, March 18:

John Rawls (1971). *A Theory of Justice*. Chapter 3
<https://www.degruyterbrill.com/document/doi/10.4159/9780674042605/html>.

Friday, March 20:

John Rawls (1971). *A Theory of Justice*. Chapter 3
<https://www.degruyterbrill.com/document/doi/10.4159/9780674042605/html>

Week 12: Rawls' Critics

Monday, March 23:

Robert Nozick (1974) *Anarchy, State and Utopia*. Chapter 7, Section I
<https://antilogicalism.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/anarchy-state-utopia.pdf>

Wednesday, March 25:

Robert Nozick (1974) *Anarchy, State and Utopia*. Chapter 7, Section II
<https://antilogicalism.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/anarchy-state-utopia.pdf>

Friday, March 27:

Susan Moller Okin (1989) *Justice, Gender, and the Family*. Chapter 4, Libertarianism: Matriarchy, Slavery, and Dystopia.
<https://philosophyandlaw.org/Class%20Readings/Okin/134047341-Susan-Moller-Okin-Justice-Gender-and-the-Family-1991-Transfer-Ro-28feb-Fd7a0f.pdf>

Week 13: Rawls' Critics

Monday, March 30:

Susan Moller Okin (1989) *Justice, Gender, and the Family*. Chapter 5, Justice as Fairness: For Whom?
<https://philosophyandlaw.org/Class%20Readings/Okin/134047341-Susan-Moller-Okin-Justice-Gender-and-the-Family-1991-Transfer-Ro-28feb-Fd7a0f.pdf>

Wednesday, April 1:

Charles W. Mills (2005) "Ideal Theory as Ideology." *Hypatia* 20(3): 165-184.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/3811121.pdf>

Friday, April 3:

G.A. Cohen (1995). "The Pareto Argument for Inequality." *Social Philosophy and Policy* 12(1): 160-185.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S026505250000460X>

Week 14: Left Anti-liberals: Marx & Engels

Monday, April 6:

Marx and Engels (1848), "Manifesto of the Communist Party"
Tucker, R. C. (1978). *The Marx-Engels Reader*. W. W. Norton, New York. pp. 469-500
<https://bildungsportal.sachsen.de/opal/auth/RepositoryEntry/43617124364/CourseNode/1693448848107944008/Marx-Engels-Reader.pdf>

Wednesday, April 8:

Marx (1867), *Capital: Volume I*. Chapters VI, VII, X in

Tucker, R. C. (1978). *The Marx-Engels Reader*. W. W. Norton, New York. pp. 336-376
<https://bildungsportal.sachsen.de/opal/auth/RepositoryEntry/43617124364/CourseNode/1693448848107944008/Marx-Engels-Reader.pdf>.

Friday, April 10:

Engels (1884), *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*.

Tucker, R. C. (1978). *The Marx-Engels Reader*. W. W. Norton, New York. pp. 734-759

<https://bildungsportal.sachsen.de/opal/auth/RepositoryEntry/43617124364/CourseNode/1693448848107944008/Marx-Engels-Reader.pdf>.

Week 15: Right Anti-Liberals.

Monday, April 13:

Carl Schmitt (1932), *The Concept of the Political* Chapters 1-6 (pp. 19-53).

<https://www.docdroid.net/cNhoLIH/the-concept-of-the-political-carl-schmitt-pdf>.

Wednesday, April 15:

Carl Schmitt (1932), *The Concept of the Political* Chapters 7-8 (pp. 54-79).

<https://www.docdroid.net/cNhoLIH/the-concept-of-the-political-carl-schmitt-pdf>.

Friday, April 17:

Leo Strauss (1941), "German Nihilism"

<https://ia600900.us.archive.org/22/items/LeoStraussGermanNihilismIntegral1941/Leo%20Strauss%20-%20%27%27German%20Nihilism%27%27%20%5BIntegral%2C%201941%5D.pdf>.

Week 16: Final Meeting.

Monday, April 20:

Robert Paxton (2004) *The Anatomy of Fascism*. Vintage Books. Chapters 1,8.

[https://files.libcom.org/files/Robert%20O.%20Paxton-The%20Anatomy%20of%20Fascism%20-%20Knopf%20\(2004\).pdf](https://files.libcom.org/files/Robert%20O.%20Paxton-The%20Anatomy%20of%20Fascism%20-%20Knopf%20(2004).pdf).