PLSC 100: POLITICAL THEORY

Professor Robert Mayer

Summer 2014

DESCRIPTION
Political theorists are concerned with the way things ought to be. Their task is to identify the best policy option in any given case. These thinkers try to offer guidance about how individuals and communities can best resolve the difficult political dilemmas that confront them. In this introductory course we will examine three such dilemmas and how a few of the greatest political theorists proposed to resolve them. Machiavelli and Plato will argue about whether it is ever permissible for politicians to do evil; Hobbes and Locke will disagree about the proper terms of the social contract; and Burke and Paine will fight about when a revolution is justified. We will scrutinize their arguments carefully and try to figure out who makes the better argument in each case. This course is an option in the “Philosophical Knowledge” section of the core curriculum.

REQUIRED BOOKS

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
Six tests, five forum posts, and five mini-essays, plus attendance and participation during six online synchronous sessions. Instructions for these assignments are posted at the course web site.

Students will accumulate points over the course of the semester. See the guide posted at the course web site for details. The maximum number of points students may earn during the course is 625. The cut-off points for the letter grades assigned at the end of the term are as follows: A=561; A-=543; B+=525; B=507; B-=489; C+=471; C=453; C-=435; D+=417; D=399.

PLAGIARISM
Any student who plagiarizes all or part of an essay in this course, or who cheats in any way, will receive zero points for the assignment. The infraction will also be reported to the Dean's Office. For details, see the statement posted at the course web site.

COURSE WEB SITE
Many of the materials you will need to complete this course are posted on Sakai, Loyola’s online learning system. The web address is https://sakai.luc.edu. At the course web site you will find a copy of the syllabus, lectures, reading guides, and assignment instructions, plus a calendar and the discussion forum.

The online synchronous sessions will be conducted through Adobe Connect, which can be accessed from the Sakai course web site. See the course web site for a schedule of meetings, system requirements, and instructions. Students will earn points for participating in these online class sessions.
OFFICE HOURS AND EMAIL
I will be available for consultation at the course web site through Adobe Connect on Tuesdays, from 6:00pm to 7:00pm, or at other times by appointment only. My email address is rmayer@luc.edu. I encourage you to contact me if you have questions about the course materials or the graded assignments. I will check my email frequently and reply to you as quickly as possible. Students should check the course web site and their Loyola email box regularly during the summer session for announcements and messages.

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CORE CURRICULUM
This course is an option in the “Philosophical Knowledge” section of the new core curriculum. The course is designed to achieve certain “Learning Outcomes” and to enhance “Skill Development.”

LEARNING OUTCOMES
Students in this course will gain an understanding of theoretical questions and traditions. Readings and assignments will teach students:

- to grasp different approaches to normative questions;
- to compare and contrast several major schools of political thought;
- to articulate the implicit assumptions underlying normative claims;
- to understand the historical or theoretical context of a theorist’s text.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT
This course will reinforce two skills associated with the Core: “Critical Thinking and Dispositions” and “Ethical Awareness and Decision-Making.”

Students will develop critical thinking skills by learning:

- to undertake the close reading of primary texts
- to identify assumptions implicit in a text
- to compare and contrast different texts
- to assess alternative interpretations of texts;
- to make arguments in defense of particular normative positions.

Students will gain ethical awareness by learning:

- to identify the norms guiding a theorist’s work;
- to compare and contrast alternative ethical positions;
- to evaluate ethical claims;
- to assess various political practices.
### PART ONE: HOW TO SUCCEED IN POLITICS

#### Week #1
**Leaders Must Learn How Not To Be Good**

- **May 18** | LECTURES #1-2: Introduction
- **May 19 at 7:00pm** | SYNCHRONOUS SESSION #1
- **May 19 at 8:00pm** | PRACTICE TEST
- **May 20** | LECTURES #3-6: Niccolò Machiavelli
- **May 20 to May 23** | READING: *The Prince*, 5-34, 47-63, 74-80
- **May 23 by noon** | FORUM POST #1: Machiavelli
- **May 26 by 9:00am** | MINI-ESSAY #1: Machiavelli

#### Week #2
**Leaders Must Always Do The Right Thing**

- **May 27 at 7:00pm** | SYNCHRONOUS SESSION #2
- **May 27 at 8:00pm** | TEST #1: Machiavelli
- **May 28** | LECTURES #7-11: Plato
- **May 28 to May 30** | READING: *Gorgias*, 1-113
- **May 30 by noon** | FORUM POST #2: Plato
- **June 2 by 9:00am** | MINI-ESSAY #2: Plato

### PART TWO: HOW TO MAKE A GOVERNMENT

#### Week #3
**To Avoid Anarchy, Strengthen Government**

- **June 3 at 7:00pm** | SYNCHRONOUS SESSION #3
- **June 3 at 8:00pm** | TEST #2: Plato
- **June 4** | LECTURES #12-15: Thomas Hobbes
- **June 4 to June 6** | READING: *Man and Citizen*, 89-133, 165-204, 221-270
- **June 6 by noon** | FORUM POST #3: Hobbes
- **June 9 by 9:00am** | MINI-ESSAY #3: Hobbes

#### Week #4
**To Avoid Tyranny, Limit Government**

- **June 10 at 7:00pm** | SYNCHRONOUS SESSION #4
- **June 10 at 8:00pm** | TEST #3: Hobbes
- **June 11** | LECTURES #16-20: John Locke
- **June 11 to June 13** | READING: *Second Treatise of Government*, 5-124
- **June 13 by noon** | FORUM POST #4: Locke
- **June 16 by 9:00am** | MINI-ESSAY #4: Locke
PART THREE: HOW TO MAKE A REVOLUTION

Week #5  If The Foundations Are Flawed, Start From Scratch

June 17 at 7:00pm  SYNCHRONOUS SESSION #5
June 17 at 8:00pm  TEST #4: Locke
June 18  LECTURES #21-24: Tom Paine
June 18 to June 20  READING: The Rights of Man, 24-49, 61-83, 123-169
June 20 by noon  FORUM POST #5: Paine
June 23 by 9:00am  MINI-ESSAY #5: Paine

Week #6  The Best Revolution Is Reform

June 24 at 7:00pm  SYNCHRONOUS SESSION #6
June 24 at 8:00pm  TEST #5: Paine
June 25  LECTURES #25-30: Edmund Burke
June 25 to June 27  READING: Reflections on the Revolution in France, 3-85, 108-122
June 27 at 2:00pm  TEST #6: Burke