

POLS 232 - 01: Nature and Uses of Political Theory

Fall 2020 Online, Wednesday 5:10 pm - 7:30 pm EST

Instructor: Robinson Woodward-Burns, robinson.woodward@howard.edu

Instructor Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:00 – 4:00 PM on Zoom via this [link](#) and passcode OHFall2020. Please schedule office hours via signup.com/go/OUgcQMy and email me to confirm.

Course Overview

This course is an introduction to normative political theory. The class is arranged chronologically and topically, examining core concepts in political theory including liberty, democracy, legitimacy, justice, power, and empire. More broadly, the class explores methods for normative theory and the history of ideas, the traditional Western canon and its critics, and how political theory fits with mainstream empirical political science. The class thus prepares students for subsequent political theory courses and for adopting the study of values and intellectual traditions into their own research.

This course will be entirely online and will be both asynchronous, in that students can read at their own pace, and synchronous, in that students are expected to participate in live online class meetings at the above time. Course meetings will be held via the following Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82034554586?pwd=RzRyTzVZMW41NVVrS1lBMFNxOUpKZz09>

Password: POLS232

Course Requirements and Grading

Your course grade has two parts:

- 1) Paper(s), worth 75% of the total grade. All papers must be submitted by **December 6**. Papers should include citations and/or a bibliography. Students may choose the citation style. Please use 10 to 12 pt. font and one-inch margins. Students can choose one of two paper options:
 - A single article-length research paper of roughly 20 pages on a topic of the student's choice. The paper should engage a thinker or concept and the secondary scholarly sources on that topic. Students should submit a one-paragraph abstract and several sources on their topic by email to the instructor by **November 1**.
 - Three short response papers of roughly 6-8 pages each, each on a separate class topic, e.g. democracy or liberty. These for example can for example compare or contrast readings within a given topic, e.g. comparing Locke and Rousseau's views on property.
- 2) Participation, worth 25% of the total grade. Students are required to give one in-class presentation of roughly 10-15 minutes on the reading of their choice. Presentations should 1) give an overview of the thinker's context, 2) summarize the main points of the reading, and 3) include question(s) to prompt discussion. If a student misses his or her assigned presentation date, he or she may reschedule, but will lose a third of a letter grade for each time rescheduled. Students should email the instructor their reading choice by **September 9**.

All grades are assigned as letter grades, i.e. A+, A, A-, B+, B, etc.

Students are expected to read and follow Howard University's [Academic Code of Student Conduct](#), including rules on cheating, plagiarism, etc. Plagiarized assignments will receive a zero. Late assignments decrease a third of a letter grade per day for up to five days. Students missing a paper or meeting for an emergency or for health or family issues can retake the assignment given documentation. All assignments, including make ups, must be completed before the last day of class.

If you do not have regular access to a computer, need accommodation because of a disability, or if you have other questions, please email me. If you have issues with Blackboard, please see the university's [Blackboard orientation site](#) or contact ETS at helpdesk@howard.edu or 202-806-2020. Students should also note college and university deadlines on the university's [academic calendar](#).

This syllabus may be revised at the instructor's discretion.

Course Schedule and Readings

Students are required to purchase the following works:

Machiavelli, Niccolò. *The Prince*

Mills, Charles W. *The Racial Contract*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999.

All other readings are available on Blackboard as a course packet. Some weekly reading files include optional/supplemental readings which we will not discuss in class. For hard copies of other readings, [Cambridge](#) or [Hackett](#) editions are best. For background and interpretation of many of the assigned authors, students are encouraged to refer to the online [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#) and Strauss, Leo, and Joseph Cropsey. *History of Political Philosophy*. University of Chicago Press, 2012.

8/26	<p>Introduction to Political Theory I</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gunnell, John G. "The Founding of the American Political Science Association: Discipline, Profession, Political Theory, and Politics." <i>The American Political Science Review</i> 100, no. 4 (2006): 479-86. http://www.jstor.org/stable/27644373. 2. Strauss, Leo. "What is Political Philosophy?" <i>What Is Political Philosophy? And Other Studies</i>. Free Press, 1959. 3. Skinner, Quentin. "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas." <i>History and Theory</i> 8, no. 1 (January 1, 1969): 3-53. https://doi.org/10.2307/2504188. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Skim 4. Wolin, Sheldon S. "Political Theory as a Vocation." <i>American Political Science Review</i> 63, no. 4 (December 1969): 1062-82. https://doi.org/10.1017/S000305540026320X. <p>Supplemental:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Easton, David. "The Decline of Modern Political Theory." <i>The Journal of Politics</i> 13, no. 01 (1951): 36-58. https://doi.org/10.2307/2126121. 6. Rehfeld, Andrew. "Offensive Political Theory." <i>Perspectives on Politics</i> 8, no. 2 (June 2010): 465-86. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592710001209. <p>Reading Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - According to Gunnell, how has political science evolved? How has this affected the role of political theory in the discipline? - How does Strauss define political philosophy? What is the correct method for this? How do ancient and modern political philosophy differ? - According to Skinner, what are the common, incorrect methods for doing intellectual history? How can this be fixed? - According to Wolin, what are the main issues with behavioralism in political science? How does Wolin conceive of political theory?
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9/2	<p>Introduction to Political Theory II</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Aristotle. <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>. Translated by Terence Irwin. Indianapolis, Ind: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1999. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Book I, Ch. 1-3, Book X, Ch. 9 2. Hamilton, Alexander, James Madison, and John Jay. <i>The Federalist: With Letters of Brutus</i>. Edited by Terence Ball. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. No. 37 3. Weber, Max. <i>The Vocation Lectures</i>. Edited by David S. Owen and Tracy B. Strong. Translated by Rodney Livingstone. Hackett Publishing, 2004. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. “Science as a Vocation.” <p>Supplemental:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Tocqueville, <i>Democracy in America</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Vol. I, Part I, Introduction <p>Reading Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Why, according to Aristotle, is political science the highest science? What is the correct method for studying political science? Who is capable of this method? - According to Madison, why is political science an inexact science? - How does Weber define science? How does it relate to progress and modernity? How should the political scientist conduct research?
9/9	<p>Justice I</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Thucydides. <i>On Justice, Power, and Human Nature: Selections from The History of the Peloponnesian War</i>. Translated by Paul Woodruff. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1993. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Book V, §84-116 2. Plato. <i>The Republic</i>. Translated by Desmond Lee. Second Edition. Penguin Classics, 2007. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Book I-IV <p>Reading Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - According to Thucydides, how do the Melians define justice? The Athenians? - <i>The Republic</i> concerns justice – what are the initial definitions of justice given in Book I? - Why, in Book II, do the interlocutors try to understand justice in an imagined city? What is the structure of this city? How should the parts of the city interact? - What kinds of education does Plato propose for the city? - What is Plato’s definition of justice at the end of Book IV?

9/16	<p>Justice II</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Aristotle. <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>. Translated by Terence Irwin. Indianapolis, Ind: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1999. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Book V 2. Aristotle. <i>The Politics</i>. Translated by Carnes Lord. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Book I, III-IV <p>Reading Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How does Aristotle define justice in the <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>? - How does Aristotle define justice in the <i>Politics</i>? How does this compare to the <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>?
9/23	<p>Modernity</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bennett, Jane. “Modernity and Its Critics.” <i>The Oxford Handbook of Political Theory</i>. Ed. Dryzek, John S., Bonnie Honig, and Anne Phillips. Oxford Handbooks Online, 2008. 2. Machiavelli, Niccolò. <i>The Prince</i> <p>Reading Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - According to Bennett, what are the defining characteristics of modern political theory? How does this approach differ from the thought of Thucydides, Plato, or Aristotle? - By Bennett’s definition(s) of modernity, can we count Machiavelli as a modern political thinker?
9/30	<p>Authority and Liberty I</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Constant, Benjamin. Fontana, Biancamaria, ed. <i>Constant: Political Writings</i>. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. “The Liberty of the Ancients Compared to that of the Moderns.” 2. Hobbes, Thomas. <i>Leviathan</i>. Edited by Richard Tuck. Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Introduction (ix-xlv), Part I, Ch.10-16, Part II Ch. 14-21 <p>Supplemental:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Hobbes, <i>On the Citizen</i>, Preface, <i>Leviathan</i>, Book I, Ch. 4-5, 9 <p>Reading Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - According to Constant, how did ancient thinkers define liberty? How did modern thinkers? - Hobbes understands the world through the Newtonian interaction of physical things – how, accordingly, does he define liberty? How does liberty relate to law? - What, according to Hobbes, gives the sovereign authority/legitimacy? What are the characteristics of Hobbes’ sovereign?

10/7	<p>Authority and Liberty II</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Locke, John. <i>Political Essays</i>. Cambridge University Press, 1997. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Second Treatise, Ch. 1-9, 18-19 <p>Supplemental:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Jefferson, Thomas. <i>Political Writings</i>. Edited by Joyce Appleby and Terence Ball. Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. "Letter to Samuel Kercheval" 3. Arendt, Hannah. <i>On Revolution</i>. New York: Penguin Classics, 2006. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ch.1 <p>Reading Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What, according to Locke, are the laws of nature? What is the source of liberty? Of property? What gives the sovereign authority/legitimacy? - How does Locke describe tyranny? What are the grounds for and means to revolution?
10/14	<p>Authority and Liberty III</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rousseau, Jean Jacques. <i>Basic Political Writings</i>. Hackett Publishing, 1987. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. On the Social Contract, Book I 2. Engels, Friedrich, and Karl Marx. <i>The Marx-Engels Reader</i>. Edited by Robert Tucker. New York: Norton, 1978. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. On the Jewish Question 3. Garnet, Henry Highland. Basker, James G., ed. 2012. <i>American Antislavery Writings: Colonial Beginnings to Emancipation</i>. New York: Library of America. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. "An Address to the Slaves of the United States of America." 4. Berlin, Isaiah. <i>Four Essays on Liberty</i>. Oxford University Press, 1969. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. "Two Concepts of Liberty" <p>Supplemental:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Mill, <i>On Liberty</i>, Chapter I, III 6. Skinner, Quentin. "A Third Concept of Liberty." <i>London Review of Books</i>, April 4, 2002. <p>Reading Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How does Rousseau describe the social contract? Why, according to Rousseau, does one gain freedom from entering such a contract? How does Rousseau describe the general will? - Why is Marx skeptical that granting political/civil rights is sufficient for political equality? - What are the two types of liberty Berlin describes? How might we apply these to Rousseau or Marx?

10/21	<p>Race and the Social Contract</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mills, Charles W. <i>The Racial Contract</i>. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999. <p>Supplemental:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Mills, Charles W. <i>Black Rights/White Wrongs: The Critique of Racial Liberalism</i>. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. <p>Reading Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are Mills' three main contentions about white supremacy? How does white supremacy relate to contract theory?
10/28	<p>Gender, Sexuality, and the Social Contract</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pateman, Carole. <i>The Sexual Contract</i>. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988. 2. Lorde, Audre. <i>Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches</i>. Berkeley: Crossing Press, 2007. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. "The Master's Tools" b. "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference" 3. bell hooks, "Understanding Patriarchy" <p>Supplemental:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Pateman, Carole, and Charles Mills. <i>Contract and Domination</i>. Cambridge: Polity, 2007. 5. Brennan, Teresa and Carole Pateman. "'Mere Auxiliaries to the Commonwealth': Women and the Origins of Liberalism." <i>Feminist Interpretations of John Locke</i>. Ed. Nancy J. Hirschmann and Kirstie McClure. University Park: Penn State Press, 2007. <p>Reading Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - According to Pateman, how do liberal contract theorists address the status of women? Specifically, what do Hobbes and Locke say about women in the social contract? - What does Lorde mean when she asserts "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house?" - According to hooks, who is harmed by patriarchy and how?

11/11	<p>Democracy</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dahl, Robert Alan. <i>A Preface to Democratic Theory</i>. University of Chicago Press, 2006 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ch. 1 2. Wolin, Sheldon. "Fugitive Democracy" <i>Constellations</i> 1, no. 1 (1994): 11–25. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8675.1994.tb00002.x. 3. Sen, Amartya Kumar. "Democracy as a Universal Value." <i>Journal of Democracy</i> 10, no. 3 (1999): 3–17. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.1999.0055. 4. Schaffer, Frederic Charles. <i>Democracy in Translation: Understanding Politics in an Unfamiliar Culture</i>. Cornell University Press, 2000. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ch.1-2 <p>Supplemental:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Schumpeter, Joseph A. <i>Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy</i>. Taylor & Francis, 2012. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ch. 21-22 6. Green, Jeffrey Edward. <i>The Eyes of the People: Democracy in an Age of Spectatorship</i>. Oxford University Press, 2009. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ch. 1 7. Recommended: 5. Wolin, Sheldon. "Democracy: Electoral and Athenian." <i>PS: Political Science and Politics</i> 26, no. 3 (September 1, 1993): 475–77. https://doi.org/10.2307/419985. <p>Reading Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How does Dahl define democracy? How does this compare to Wolin’s understanding? - Is democracy normatively good? If so, is it a universal normative good?
11/4	<p>Power and Prisons</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dahl, Robert Alan. <i>Who Governs: Democracy And Power In An American City</i>. Yale University Press, 2005. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ch.1 2. Bachrach, Peter, and Morton S. Baratz. "Two Faces of Power." <i>American Political Science Review</i> 56, no. 04 (1962): 947–52. https://doi.org/10.2307/1952796. 3. Foucault, Michel. <i>Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison</i>. Translated by Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, 1995. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Part I, Ch.1, III, Ch.1 4. Bryan Stevenson, "A Presumption of Guilt" <p>Reading Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - According to Dahl, who holds power in American cities? How does Dahl conceive of power? - How do Bachrach and Baratz critique Dahl? How, instead, do they conceive of power? - What sorts of modern spaces and institutions does Foucault study? How do they discipline and shape the individual? How do these spaces and institutions exercise power? How does this compare to Dahl and Bachrach and Baratz’s conceptions of power?

11/18

Empire

1. Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Grove Press, 2005.
 - a. Ch.1
2. Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. Random House, 1979.
 - a. Intro., Ch.1
3. Getachew, Adom. *Worldmaking after Empire*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019.
 - a. Intro., Ch.1
4. Simon, Joshua. *The Ideology of Creole Revolution: Imperialism and Independence in American and Latin American Political Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.
 - a. Ch.1

Reading Questions:

- According to Fanon, how does colonization shape the colonized? Fanon argued decolonization should not be a gradualist or moderate process – what is his preferred method?
- How does Said define orientalism? Why is control over knowledge necessary for colonizers to exercise power over the colonized?