

Introduction to Political Thought
POLI2310 (3 Credits)
Fall 2023

INSTRUCTORS

Professor Emma Rodman, emma_rodman@uml.edu

Office: Dugan Hall 201K

Office Hours: Wednesday noon-1 pm (in person or Zoom); Thursday 3-4 pm (Zoom)

You may show up (and risk waiting) or book an appointment in advance here:

<https://emmarodman-uml.youcanbook.me/>

Zoom Room: <https://uml.zoom.us/j/8270397923>

Teaching Assistant: Myat Su Tin, myatsu_tin@student.uml.edu

Note: Myat Su is available for office hours by appointment, email to arrange

GENERAL LOGISTICS

Lecture: Monday and Wednesday, from 2 pm to 3:15 pm, in Coburn Hall, Room G30

Blackboard: Readings, the most-up-to-date copy of the syllabus, and essay prompts will be posted

COURSE DESCRIPTION

A critical survey of the history of Western political thought from Plato to the present.

Aristotle famously called human beings “political animals.” We live not as solitary creatures, nor even in small family groups, but in large (and ever-growing) communities. As a result, human beings have continually faced the question of how to organize and arrange those communities. How we organize and arrange our communities – how we live together – depends on how we answer a number of questions, questions which we will explore in this course. As we read a selection of texts in western political thought, we will consider questions like: what kind of creatures, exactly, are human beings and what kinds of needs do we have? (What does human flourishing consist in?) What values should shape our communal arrangements and how do we arrive at these values? (How *ought* we arrange things?) How does history – the fact that we are born into a world that already exists – shape possibilities for political arrangements? (Is it true, that as Margaret Thatcher famously put it, “there is no alternative” to the way things are arranged now?) And in the face of all this talk about communal and political life, what space should we make for individualism? (Is individualism the thing politics is trying to protect, or is it the root of all our political problems?) By exploring these questions, this course introduces students to the history of western political thought as well as the process of doing political theory; we will engage in close reading of political theory texts as well as exercise our own skills in thinking and writing theoretically.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

To develop:

1. A grounding in the central concepts, arguments, and thinkers in western political theory
2. An appreciation for how political theory informs the study and practice of politics and political science
3. Skills in analytical, interpretive, and reflective writing

REQUIRED TEXTS

Many of the required readings will be posted as PDF files to Blackboard (these are marked with an * in the course schedule, below). Others – usually the readings we are engaging across multiple class meetings – you will need to purchase or borrow from the library. If you purchase the recommended editions, below, you will be able to correctly follow my references to page numbers in class. I have attempted to select the least expensive good translations available; used and rental versions of these editions are even more inexpensive.

Plato, *The Republic* (Hackett Press, \$13 new)

Aristotle, *Politics* (Oxford World Classics, \$13 new)

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Hackett Press; \$17 new)

John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* (Hackett Press, \$9 new)

Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (Hackett Press; \$10 new)

W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Dover Thrift Edition; \$5 new)

These texts should all be available for purchase at the campus bookstore in the University Crossing building. I have also placed these texts on reserve in O'Leary Library where you may borrow them for two hours at a time.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES

Your grade in this course will be based on one essay in lieu of a midterm exam (1000-1250 words, which translates to about 4-5 double spaced pages), one longer paper in lieu of a final exam (2500-3000 words; about 9-12 double spaced pages), several short reflective writing exercises, and eight reading quizzes. There are no exams in this course. I will circulate writing prompts with more detailed instructions and guidelines approximately two weeks before the midterm and final due dates. Assignments and quizzes will be weighted and due as follows:

Class Participation		10%
Quick Writes		10%
Reading Quizzes		20%
Midterm Essay	Nov. 1 st at 3 pm	20%
Final Essay	Dec. 19 th by 3 pm	40%

I care that you keep up with the readings; I have scaled them to be relatively manageable, and I expect you to read them carefully before class. You'll get much more out of lecture and discussion if you do the readings beforehand. To encourage this, there will be eight reading quizzes on Blackboard randomly throughout the semester. These have to be completed prior to attending class. These should not be a source of anxiety for anyone keeping up with the readings. Students may not make up missed quizzes. However, to accommodate illness or absence, I will drop students' two lowest quiz grades. Please do not ask to make up a quiz because you were sick. This 'drop-2' policy exists to allow you to miss two quizzes due to illness without damage to your grade.

I will ask you to do a handful of short reflective writing assignments throughout the semester; I will either ask you to write during class or I will give you the prompt at the end of class to be completed as homework. In the latter case, you will be expected to turn in your thoughts (approx. 200-300 words); 1 page) at the beginning of the next class meeting; they will be graded Pass/Fail. Though they should demonstrate that you put thought and care into them in order to receive a grade of "Pass," these definitely do not need to be highly polished pieces of writing. You can treat them like meditations or journal entries; they are a written form of class participation. Your regular and thoughtful in-class participation in discussions will also be factored into your final course grade.

I will note that while there is no official attendance policy for the course, policies on quizzes, quick writes, and class participation are designed to incentivize your attendance.

Course Schedule

* = reading posted on course website

Wednesday, Sept. 6: Syllabus review and a brief introduction to the course

Human Beings

Monday, Sept. 11: Plato, *The Republic*, Book 2: 368c-376d, Book 3: 412a-417b, Book 4: 433a-434c

Wednesday, Sept. 13: Plato, *The Republic*, Book 4: 419a-427a, Book 7: 514a-521b, Book 9: 588b-589e

Monday, Sept. 18: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 1: Ch. 7, 13; Book 2: Ch. 1, 3-4, 6-7*

Wednesday, Sept. 20: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 1: Ch. 1-2 and 12; Book 3: Ch. 1 and 6-9

Monday, Sept. 25: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 4: Ch. 11; Book 6: Ch. 2; Book 7: Ch. 1, 3, 14; Book 8: Ch. 1

Wednesday, Sept. 27: Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Book 3: 81-84*
Machiavelli, "Letter to Francesco Vettori" and *The Prince* [excerpts]*

Values and Institutions

Monday, Oct. 2: Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Ch. 13, Ch. 14 [sections 1-11, 18-33]

Wednesday, Oct. 4: Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Ch. 17-18, 21

Wednesday, Oct. 11: John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, Sections: 1-51, 77, 86-101, 113-114, 119, 122-131

Monday, Oct. 16: John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, Sections: 132-150, 155, 159-160, 168-174, 199, 201-202, 211-217, 219-229, 240-243

– Midterm Paper Topics Circulated –

Wednesday, Oct. 18: Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (pg. 16-43)

Monday, Oct. 23: Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (pg. 44-71)

Wednesday, Oct. 25: John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, Ch. 1*

Monday, Oct. 30: John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, selections from Ch. 2, 3 and 4 (pg. 18-23, 52-57, 66-76)*

Wednesday, Nov. 1: *No class; midterm papers due by 3 pm on Blackboard*

Alternatives

Monday, Nov. 6: Karl Marx, *The German Ideology* (selections)*

Wednesday, Nov. 8:	Karl Marx, <i>Excerpt-Notes of 1844</i> *
Monday, Nov. 13:	Karl Marx, <i>Critique of the Gotha Program</i> (selections)* Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, <i>The Manifesto of the Communist Party</i> (selections)*
Wednesday, Nov. 15:	David Graeber and David Wengrow, <i>The Dawn of Everything</i> (selections)*
Monday, Nov. 20:	<i>No class; Thanksgiving week</i>
Wednesday, Nov. 22:	<i>No class; Thanksgiving week</i>
Monday, Nov. 27:	Peter Kropotkin, “Mutual Aid”* Emma Goldman, “Anarchism: What It Really Stands For”*

Individualism

Wednesday, Nov. 29:	Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Self-Reliance”*
Monday, Dec. 4:	W. E. B. Du Bois, <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i> , Preface/Forethought, Ch. 1, Ch. 13 – <i>Final Paper Topics Circulated</i> –
Wednesday, Dec. 6:	W. E. B. Du Bois, <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i> , Ch. 4, Ch. 11

Wrapping Up

Monday, Dec. 11:	David Foster Wallace, “This is Water”* Fyodor Dostoevsky, <i>Notes from Underground</i> (selections)*
Wednesday, Dec. 13:	Final class meeting

– *Final papers due to Blackboard by Tuesday, Dec. 19th at 3 pm* –

COURSE DETAILS, POLICIES, & MISCELLANY

Communication

It is important that you check your UML email regularly, as I and/or Myat Su may send out vital course information via email throughout the semester. If for any reason I need to cancel class, I will communicate via email.

Students are welcome to contact me via email for logistical inquiries (such as making appointments). Please use your UML email account for such correspondence. Substantive questions and communications are very much encouraged but will be reserved for office hours and in-person meetings. My email address is emma_rodman@uml.edu. I make every effort to reply to emails within 48 business hours of receiving them (i.e. if you email me on Monday morning, I'll reply by Wednesday morning; if you email me on Friday evening, you can expect to hear back by Tuesday evening). Please note that this timeline applies even when deadlines loom: i.e. if you have a question about a paper, please be sure to be in touch at least 48 hours before it is due. You can also reach Myat Su via email at myatsu_tin@student.uml.edu; she is here to help you

answer logistical or substantive questions about the course, and you can make appointments to meet with her in person or via Zoom.

Finally, I reserve the right to modify any part of this syllabus over the course of the semester as necessary. I will communicate all such modifications both over email and in lecture.

Office Hours

I enjoy meeting with students during office hours! In fall 2023, my in-person office hours are noon-1 pm on Wednesday, and my Zoom office hours are on Thursday from 3-4 pm. I'm also available by appointment. My office is in Dugan Hall in the Political Science Dept. suite on the second floor of the building (suite 201).

Health Notes

I am immunocompromised and will be wearing a mask during our class meetings and in office hours. I would appreciate it if you would wear a mask as well during class, but I am not requiring it. My office, however, is a mask-required place; if you prefer not to wear a mask, I will ask you to schedule our meetings over Zoom rather than in person.

Policy on Technology

Cell phones, tablets, and laptops are not permitted at any time in class. There is a large body of research that demonstrates that taking notes on paper allows for better focus and retention. There is a similarly large body of anecdotal evidence that no one can help watching the activities taking place on the screen of the person sitting one row in front of them. If you have a compelling reason to request an exception to this policy, please see me.

Writing Skills & Tutoring

Good writing only comes with practice and revision. As you work through your writing assignments for this course, I encourage you produce drafts, revise them, and discuss them with each other, Myat Su, and myself. I also strongly encourage you to avail yourself of the Center for Learning and Academic Support Services (CLASS). CLASS will be offering [tutoring](#) and [Writing Center](#) services in-person this fall at both O'Leary Library (during the day) and at Fox Hall (nights and weekends). You may drop in any time to the tutoring center. I am in the process of requesting a tutor specific to this course; I will update you if that becomes available over the course of the semester. The Writing Center requires that you make appointments; you may book up to two 45 minute sessions with a tutor per week. I have also included an appendix to this syllabus at outlines the basics of a good essay. If you want to see what good political theory papers from past students look like, get in touch with me; I have several examples I can share.

Late Policy

Uncompleted or missing papers will receive a grade of 0.0. Late assignments will be docked one grade interval per day. That is: 3.7 paper, if turned in past the deadline, will become a 3.3, if turned in one full 24-hour day late, will receive a 3.0, and so on. Exceptions *may* be made given prompt and (if necessary) documented consultation with the instructor. For full consideration, make sure to correspond with me via email *prior* to a late submission rather than afterwards. In addition, any papers which appear blank, corrupted, incorrect, or otherwise unreadable will be treated as though nothing has been submitted and will be marked as late; it is your responsibility to make sure you are submitting clear, correct, and readable copies.

Plagiarism

Do not copy another person's writing or ideas and claim them as your own! This course puts a strong emphasis on developing your skills as a writer and thinker, which requires you to struggle through the process

of writing in your own voice about your own ideas. You would be well advised to stay far, far away from online sources of summary or Wikipedia pages. If you are confused about a thinker or concept, talk to me and Myat Su and not to the internet. Should any of the internet's language seep into your work – or should you engage in any other form of academic dishonesty – you will receive a 0.0 for the assignment and a Notification of Academic Dishonesty Form will be filed with the Office of the Provost. Note that I am quite experienced and adept at detecting plagiarized work. University policies and guidelines regarding academic dishonesty and plagiarism can be found at <https://www.uml.edu/catalog/undergraduate/policies/academic-policies/academic-integrity.aspx>. In addition, you are required to disclose in writing, in detail, any and all uses of generative language models or other artificial intelligence tools.

Student Mental Health and Well-Being

These are strange and uncertain times. If you or someone you know are experiencing mental health challenges at UML, please contact [Counseling Services](#). My understanding is that they offer free in-person counseling for all students.

Disability Services & Accommodations

If you have a documented disability that will require classroom accommodation, please notify me as soon as possible, so that we might make appropriate arrangements. Please speak to me during office hours or send me an email, as I respect, and want to protect, your privacy. Visit the [Student Disability Services webpage](#) for further information.

If you wish to observe a religious holiday that is not recognized by the University calendar, please let us know in advance, so that we may accommodate your absence from class.

Recordings and Privacy

Massachusetts is a two-party consent state, which means it is illegal to record someone without their permission. Recordings of classroom lectures are my intellectual property. Audio and video recording of my lectures is prohibited, unless you are registered with Disabilities Services and recording of class sessions is an approved accommodation. In addition, sharing or selling recordings of classroom activity, discussions, or lectures with any other person or medium without my permission is prohibited.

APPENDIX:
BASIC FEATURES OF A GOOD ESSAY

- It has an interesting, defensible, and clearly stated thesis, responsive to the paper topic.
- It presents well-developed arguments in support of the thesis.
- It supports those arguments with textual evidence.
- It cites textual evidence by using a standard method of citation (e.g., Chicago, MLA, APA) or by simply naming the author, text, and page number in parentheses following the quotation or paraphrase. *Example:* Locke contends that the state of nature is “a state of perfect freedom” (Locke, *Second Treatise*, 8).
- It anticipates potential objections.
- It is clearly and carefully organized.
- It is concisely and grammatically written.
- It is paginated and carefully proofread.