

# Intro to Political Philosophy

## PolSci 175 Spring 2022

Professor: Michael Hawley  
Office Hours: Thursdays 3:00-5:00 (Gross Hall 294B)

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### Course Overview

How shall we live together? That is the fundamental political question. Aristotle points out that human beings are unique among living creatures in that we cannot live solitary lives by ourselves, yet we also have no fixed method of organization. It thus remains an open question under what terms we will organize our common life. Those who engage in political philosophy attempt to answer this simple yet knotty question. In doing so, they must determine what is permanent and what is malleable about human nature. They ask whether there is any conflict between the life of a good human being and the life of a good citizen. They weigh tradeoffs between liberty, justice, and stability—and confront disagreement over what those terms actually mean. They judge what sorts of institutions and qualities of character can best support a good political society. In this course, we enter into “the great conversation,” in which political thinkers for more than two millennia have debated these questions with each other.

### Course Aims:

The primary aims of this class are those that go into determining your grade for the course. Most basically, you will gain an understanding of the questions and problems that confront political philosophy. You will also achieve some mastery over the specific ideas and arguments of some of the most important contributors to “the great conversation” of western political thought. You will hone your skills at reading carefully and evaluating arguments. Because this is also a writing course, you will also improve your abilities in constructing your own written arguments, demonstrating your analytical skills, and expressing your ideas clearly and persuasively.

But there is another kind of aim for this course, one that will not be reflected in your grade. The thinkers we read in this class wrote not merely for their own contemporaries but for all time. These texts are therefore addressed to you, personally. They make claims to truth about fundamental questions: What is human nature? What does the good life look like? Can you be a good person and a good citizen, or must you choose? What is the relationship between freedom and justice—and how much of either of these should we give up to secure peace and security? What sort of claims do others have on us? What, in the end, is the purpose of political life? These questions matter to each of us, both as individuals and as members of a political community. Our own life choices will inevitably

presuppose answers to many of these questions. It is my hope for this class that our encounters with the authors we read will help us to think more deeply about these questions and to be more reflective citizens.

## **Course Books:**

The following books are required reading and are available for purchase or rent through Duke's textbook partner or online. You may of course purchase books from other sources, provided you use the same editions. It truly is important to get the same editions; it helps keep all of us on the same page (literally) as we discuss the readings and when it comes time to write papers. All other texts will be posted on the Sakai site. Sakai readings constitute a major portion of the course's readings; please make sure you have copies of the reading at hand for the day's class.

Plato's *Republic* (translated by Allan Bloom)  
Machiavelli's *Prince* (translated by Harvey Mansfield)  
Hobbes' *Leviathan* (Cambridge Revised Student Edition)  
Rousseau's *The Social Contract and the First and Second Discourses* (Yale University Press)

## **Course requirements:**

You will be required to write three papers (5-6 pages, double-spaced) on assigned topics. These are not research papers. The only texts you will need to write them will be what we read for this course. I will discuss the expectations and requirements for these papers at greater length in class. Second, there is a participation component to the course, which takes place through your section meetings. Attendance at section meetings is required and the standards of participation will be explained to you by your TA.

With all of your work, be sure to follow Duke's standards of conduct regarding academic honesty and plagiarism. Violations of these standards will be referred to the appropriate dean.

Course grade will be determined as follows:

Three Papers: 75%  
Participation: 25%

## **Reading assignments:**

### **The Politics of the Good Life**

Jan. 6 Intro (first three classes are now virtual, link on Sakai)

Jan. 11 Plato's *Apology of Socrates* (on Sakai) **read all**

Jan. 13 Plato's *Apology of Socrates* (on Sakai) **continued**

Jan. 18 Plato's *Republic* bk. 1

Jan. 20 Plato's *Republic* bks. 2-3

Jan. 25 Plato's *Republic* bk. 4

Jan. 27 Plato's *Republic* bk. 5

Feb. 1 Plato's *Republic* bk. 6

Feb. 3 Plato's *Republic* bk. 7

Feb. 8 Plato's *Republic* bk. 8

Feb. 10 Plato's *Republic* bk. 9(all), bk 10 (607a-end)

Feb. 15 Aristotle's *Ethics* bk. 1 (on Sakai)

Feb. 17 Aristotle's *Politics* bk. 1 (on Sakai) **First Paper Assigned**

Feb. 22 Aristotle's *Ethics* bk. 4 (selections), *Politics* bk. 3 (both on Sakai)

### **The Problem of Power**

Feb. 24 Machiavelli's *Prince*: Dedicatory Letter, chs. 1-5

Mar. 1 Machiavelli's *Prince* chs. 6-8, 14-16

Mar. 3: Machiavelli's *Prince* chs. 17-27

**Mar. 4-11: March Break!**

Mar. 15: Hobbes' *Leviathan*: introduction, chs. 1-6

Mar. 17: Hobbes' *Leviathan*: chs. 46, 10-11, 13 **Paper 1 due**

Mar. 22: Hobbes' *Leviathan* chs. 14-17

Mar. 24: Hobbes' *Leviathan* chs. 18-20, 21, 30 **Second Paper Assigned**

### **The Nature of Freedom**

Mar. 29 Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* pt. 1

Mar. 31 Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* pt. 2

Apr. 5 Rousseau's *Social Contract* books 1-2

Apr. 7 Mill's *On Liberty*: ch. 1, and first half of ch. 2 (on Sakai)

Apr. 12 Mill's *On Liberty*: second half of chapter 2, ch. 3 (on Sakai)

Apr. 14 Nietzsche: selections from *The Gay Science*, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *Beyond Good and Evil* (on Sakai) **Second Paper Due/ Final Paper Assigned**

Apr. 19 Last Day/Nietzsche: selections from *Beyond Good and Evil* (on Sakai)

Apr. 28: **Final Paper Due**