

POLI 13: Power and Justice (Introduction to Political Theory)
Summer Session II, UC San Diego
Detailed Syllabus (7/30/2017)

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2 to 4:50 PM
OH: Wednesdays 2-4 PM, outside the Loft
WLH 2115

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Grader: Mack Rice (mdrice@ucsd.edu)

Course outline: This course looks in sequence at different moments in history and one case study to provide an introduction to some of the themes and concepts that have influenced the history of Western political theory. We begin in Greek antiquity, with Platonic idealism, justice, and the Socratic method. Then to 1500 in Tuscany (now Italy) and around, a tumultuous and violent time that produced Machiavelli's blunt descriptions of how power and political leadership work in different regimes at different times. On to the England of John Stuart Mill's 1859 *On Liberty*, which sets out the argument for freedom of thought and speech that has been subsequently popular in the Anglo-American world in particular. We then have a session looking at both Marxism and conservatism, to make up for some of the gaps in this course's approach. The next to last class presents a very brief set of 20 lessons from the history of the twentieth century, focusing on the horrors of WWII and the holocaust and the legacy of the Cold War. The final class applies these theoretical frameworks to the case of race and civil rights in the USA.

Course expectations: You can expect the following from me. I will: treat you with respect; respond to any queries as promptly as possible; come to class each day prepared to discuss the material; provide any knowledge and guidance I can in office hours or during discussion; and grade (or supervise the grading of) your work and comment on it as fairly as I can and with attention to how you can improve as a writer and a thinker. In response, I expect you to: treat each other with respect; read the syllabus carefully; come to class each day having done the required reading and ready to participate; and complete all of the required assignments promptly and to the best of your abilities.

Course objectives:

- Learning to carefully, critically, and sympathetically read classical primary texts
- Thinking creatively about important ideas that have shaped much of the way we now look at the world, and trying to understand how the ancient way of looking at the world is or is not different from our own
- Coming to think of the author as a friend, to be sympathetic to their time and circumstance – and to the reasons we still read them.
- Have a systematically better understanding of the relation between power and justice than you did prior to the course, both at different moments in history and, hopefully, in your own life

Required texts: Many if not all of these classic texts could be found for free online, but it's important that you have the same version we're all using, for a number of reasons. First, the free translations are

usually quite bad. Second, this is the only way we can all literally be on the same page when discussing passages in class, which we will do often. And third, the editions we're using have good introductions and footnotes that can help to guide you through some of the more difficult passages. We'll be reading them in the order presented here, so you have plenty of time to buy at least two thirds of them used online and much cheaper than at the bookstore.

- **Plato, *Republic* (Grube and Reeve, 2nd ed.), 9780872201361 (ISBN)**
- **Ludovico Machiavelli, *Selected Political Writing* (ed. Wooton), 9780872202474 (ISBN)**
- **John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (ed. Rappaport), 9780915144433 (ISBN)**
- **Timothy Snyder, *On Tyranny*, 9780804190114 (ISBN)**

Grading:

- two two-page papers (40% - 20% each)
 - see the comment on the longer paper below for details on drafting and editing. These papers, like the final, will be drawn from two to three questions distributed a week in advance. The first short paper will be on books I, II, VII, and VIII of Plato's *Republic*, and the second on the assigned chapters of Machiavelli's *Prince* and *Discourses*. The third paper will focus on Mill's *On Liberty* and Snyder's *On Tyranny*, but will also require you to refer back to either Machiavelli or Plato. To prepare well for these arguments, read the books closely and take notes as you go as they relate to the themes presented in this syllabus. Also feel free to email me or Mack questions as you're reading.
- Tuesday reading questions (15% total - 3.75% each – we have four Tuesdays after the first)
 - submitted via email by Monday night (late Monday night, if need be), discussing what you think of the reading, and how it might connect to the themes in the syllabus
- participation (10%)
- final assignment(35%):
 - 3x5 card-sized or emailed outline of final paper, due on the last day of class (5%)
 - four (full) page (but no more) paper (30%)
 - grading for this paper – and for the shorter ones above – will focus on whether you are attempting to edit your work and to write something concise and clear, which is more difficult than writing something longer but less coherent. Work on cutting out qualifiers you don't need, as well as things that are 'fluff' or filler or not really on-prompt. Be specific. Have an argument, defend your argument with evidence, and illustrate support or falsification for your argument with argument with case (or other) examples. One can generally tell if something has been thrown together or worked on a bit.
- Extra credit opportunities (1-2% each, up to 4% total): for any of the classes with “supplemental” material, you can watch or read that material and write one full single-spaced page describing how that material relates to the specific text we are reading on the relevant day. You can do this up to two times.

Weekly (due Monday evening by email to me) Question Guidelines: This assignment is intended both to get you engaged with the material and to provide ideas for class discussion beyond the

questions and lecture notes I will prepare each class. We have nine meetings after the first meeting, and you will be required to email me four out of these nine times in order to get full credit on this part of your grade. In addition to showing that you're doing the reading, this is also meant to provide you with a chance to ask me any questions you might have, or point out what you think are interesting linkages to current events or other issues. These questions should be relevant to the weekly themes, or to any supplemental themes I mention in lecture the previous week. They are due via email no later than Monday night – but earlier if possible, so I have time to look through them. I may not respond to each individual email, but do feel free to contact me at any point in the quarter to ask how many submissions I have on file for you.

Paper Guidelines. More detail on the paper requirements will be provided in class, and some is provided above in the grading section. I will also distribute some writing tips on style, structure, and substance prior to the first written assignment. Without prior approval, late papers will be docked a third of a letter grade for every unexcused calendar day (*not* class day) a paper is overdue. Because I am assigning three *short* papers, the emphasis will be on quality over quantity. I will again discuss what I mean by this in more detail, but generally it means avoiding “fluff” and “filler” and outlining and editing your work carefully to make sure everything you've included is purposeful and directly relevant to the question at hand, which you are, ideally, addressing in a clear and compelling way.

Academic Honesty: Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Be sure to provide a full citation for any external sources used in your papers (but I recommend not using external sources for this class), and to always provide parenthetical citations even if you're paraphrasing or 'moving the words around a little'. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please feel free to contact me. I would much prefer to clarify a small confusion than be forced to give you a failing grade in the class.

Supplement on writing tips, for the purpose of this class

Be concise. Write in a way that shows some evidence of editing, and of honing in on the strengths of your argument and winnowing out the bits that really don't belong. [this is why only two pages are provided to answer a topic that should really take four or more] (“I would have written a shorter letter...” - the point here is to focus on quality and relevance, and not just quantity.

Course outline

nota bene – reading assignments are subject to revision any time up to the class prior to their assignment. If you miss a class, verify the next day's readings by contacting me. For days with heavier reading or viewing loads, I will specify areas of focus.

1. Tuesday, August 8 – Power and justice

A lecture to set the stage, on these topics

- A note on reading classic texts: I want you to be friends with these texts and authors, not to just focus on what's wrong with them, because then you don't get to know them first.
- What is power?

- The use of force? Hobbes' idea of being awed? Social norms?
- Can we discuss what justice is without first looking at power, as Plato seems to do?
 - Is justice just constraints on different kinds of power? Is it something additional, or something else?
- Different faces of power
 - coercive power
 - hegemonic power (Gramsci)
 - agenda-setting power
- Max Weber
 - Politics as a Vocation lecture: on the ethic of conviction and the ethic of responsibility, and the mature political leader
 - the disenchantment of the world and the iron cage of rationalization
- (Backdrop to) Course Themes
 - reform v. revolution (“a revolution is not a dinner party” - Mao)
 - “forceful transformation of political institutions and the ruling regime”
 - proportion and distance, conviction and responsibility (Weber)
 - the ethics of leadership and citizenship
 - violence and direct action
 - freedom and liberty, and their role in political organization and society
 - negative, positive, and republican freedoms
 - the idea of freedom as nondomination
 - hierarchy and equality in human relationships
 - in human prehistory
 - types of interaction (Pinker): dominance, communality, reciprocity
 - today?

2 – Thursday, August 10. Plato day 1 of 2

- Read books I and II closely
- If you finish the first two books in less than than two hours, please also try to read book IV
- I will explain some of what we'll be jumping over to account for this being an intro class and not wanting to start with a whole and difficult text (but wanting to maintain a spirit of primary text-informed inquiry).
- **First paper topic to be distributed and discussed**

Themes

The Socratic method

Justice

Thrasymachus' political realism

Glaucon's psychological egoism and the ring of Gyges

Justice as an instrumental (vs inherent) good

Metaphor of the body politic

The allegory of the cave

The examined life
The Noble Lie
Women in the *Kallipolis*
Platonic idealism and the Forms
Private property and political community

3 – Tuesday, August 15. Plato day 2 of 2

- Read books VII and VIII, and the first part of chapter IX (up until 580a - p. 250 – when it switches from describing the tyrannical man to another topic)

Transitioning from Plato

Leads to: Aristotle and Christianity
briefly on Aristotle:

- responding to Plato
- sixfold typology of constitutions
- “man is by nature a political animal”

Opens to: distributive justice, gender relations, fascism?

4 – Thursday, August 17. Machiavelli

- Read *The Prince*
 - Try to read the whole thing, but because of the time crunch you can skip the following chapters if you're in a hurry: 3, 11-14, 20

Supplemental

- Youtube video version of Thucydides' Melian Dialogue here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PNzHOqjMHwY>
- A good documentary about Machiavelli (part one of five available here): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5IGBKu6qM7Y>

Themes:

The realist tradition in political theory
Stability and the breakdown of social order: previewing the 'state of nature'
The state's interests and/vs. the people's values
Relation of law to justice and morality
Within and between (city-)states
Democracy and empire
Means and ends – morally dubious means toward good ends
Political virtue, citizens and leaders
Roman Republic, Roman Empire
Civic Republicanism

Questions:

- What is the proper role of authenticity in politics? For leaders? For citizens?
- Is political morality different from 'regular' morality? Under what conditions?

First short paper due at the beginning of class (either hard copy or online, tbd)

5 – Tuesday, August 22. Machiavelli

- Read chapters from the *Discourses*, some specifics still to be determined, but to include at least: book one, chapters 1 through 10 as included in Wootton reader
- Reading for this Tuesday also to include some key passages from Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* (to be posted on TritonEd)

Leads to

Hobbes, the realist tradition
What it means to study the science and craft of politics

Supplemental

- Isaiah Berlin on Machiavelli in the *New York Review of Books*:
<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1971/11/04/a-special-supplement-the-question-of-machiavelli/>

6 – Thursday, August 24. Mill

- *On Liberty*, read at least books I and II (“Introductory” and “Of the Liberty of Thought and Discussion”). The editor's introduction is recommended but optional.

Themes

The liberal state and the ethics of anonymity
The individual and the community, and the extent to which the two can or should be in a state of conflict or cooperation
Does it make sense to say that people should be able to do whatever they want, so long as they are not harming others? What counts as harm?
What are some cases where social opprobrium or shaming would be appropriate, but not banning or prohibiting by law?

Second short paper due

7 – Tuesday, August 29. Mill

- books III, IV, and V (specific passages of focus to be determined)

Leads to...

John Rawls and the original position
The ubiquity of utilitarianism in modern global political economy
Cass Sunstein and Richard Thaler's libertarian paternalist “nudge”

8 – Thursday August 31, Marxism and Conservatism

- Oakeshott, “On Being Conservative” (to be provided)
- Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (to be provided)

Supplemental

- *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema*

Themes and questions forthcoming

9 – Tuesday, September 5. Timothy Snyder, *On Tyranny*

Primary: *On Tyranny*

- Please read the whole book. It's a very fast read.
- **Final paper question distributed**

Secondary

- Thadeus Borowski, “This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen” (to be provided upon request – this is difficult reading)
- Milgram obedience and Stanford prison experiments (to be specified prior to class)

Themes and questions forthcoming

10 – Thursday, September 7. A Case in Conclusion: Slavery and Civil Rights (US)

Read: Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X (both available online, and to be provided)

MLK, “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”

Malcolm X, “The Ballot or the Bullet”

due at the beginning of class (or by email): a 3x5 card with an outline of your final paper

Supplemental (other cases)

- *The Gate of Heavenly Peace* (film)
- *Annihilation of Caste*, B.R. Ambedkar

Supplemental (same case)

Please email me if you actually got this far.

Themes

a dialogue with the law (The Law and a law), black nationalism, direct action and four steps of active nonviolence, active and passive consent (in systems of hegemony and coercion and etc); virtue, fortuna, occasione, necessita; King, X, and Machiavelli; actors and tactics

Final paper (4 pages) due at final time in final place or online (still tbd)

