

POLI 110B: Sovereigns, Subjects, and the Modern State

Winter 2017

Instructor: David Wiens

Office: SSB 387

Office hours: Tu 14:00–16:00

Email: dwiens@ucsd.edu

Web: www.dwiens.com

password for Google Classroom: 84qko75

1 Course Description and Goals

How should power be distributed within society? Should some members of society hold authority over others? Who counts as a citizen? How should political institutions be constituted? What aims should political institutions serve? Who gets to settle the laws?

These questions probe fundamental issues concerning political life. How we answer them depends on how we understand key concepts. What is power? What is authority? What is political membership? What are institutions? What is law? How are these things related to each other? How are they related to politics? (Let's not forget: What is politics?)

In this course, we discuss some of the most influential political theorists from the early modern period (roughly, 1500-1800), a period of significant political upheaval. (Consider, for example, the episode depicting the beheading of Charles I of England in 1649 on the course website.) Their questions about politics might not be the same as our questions. But their way of formulating their questions and the answers they present offer us a rich stock of concepts and models that can help us articulate questions that are appropriate to our political context.

The main pedagogical objective of this course is to help you develop a set of skills that will enable you to formulate astute questions and think critically about potential answers. These skills include: (1) The ability to summarize and synthesize what you read; (2) The ability to critically evaluate arguments; (3) The ability to communicate clearly and to construct compelling arguments. (4) The ability to collaborate with others to pursue mutual understanding. Class format and assignments are designed with these objectives in mind.

2 Course Texts

- Hobbes, *Leviathan*, edited by Edwin Curley (Hackett)
- Hume, *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, edited by J.B. Schneewind (Hackett)
- Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government*, edited by C.B. Macpherson (Hackett)
- Machiavelli, *Selected Political Writings*, edited and translated by David Wootton (Hackett)
- Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Cornell)
- Rousseau, *The Basic Political Writings*, translated by Donald A. Cress (Hackett)

Other readings will be made available electronically through the course website. **Please bring a copy of the assigned readings to class!**

3 Assessment

Please see dwiens.ucsd.edu/assign.html and dwiens.ucsd.edu/investment.html for details on assignments and grading.

Note. Late assignments will not be accepted without an approved excuse.

4 Expectations

1. Personal Investment. Your success in this course depends on how much you invest in your own learning. Simply recording notes from class — there are no exams testing your ability to recall what was said during class. The only assignments are writing assignments that will exercise your ability to interpret and synthesize the assigned readings and develop your own critical analyses of these readings. Class sessions will be predominantly discussion-based. Discussions will not exhaustively cover the details of the readings; they will serve as a guide to the readings, to alert you to important passages and raise some questions to prompt your own thinking about the readings. You should think of class meetings as “group training sessions”, where we will use individual and group discussion exercises to develop our reading and writing skills. These will be opportunities for you to ask questions about the readings, to help you get clarity on passages that were confusing; this presupposes that you have read carefully enough to know which passages confused you. Our meetings will also be opportunities for you to try out your own ideas about the issues we’ll discuss; this presupposes that you’ve done some thinking about the issues prior to arriving in class. The requirements are designed so that success in this course will require an average investment of 9–12 hours per week including class time (approx. 3–4 out-of-class hours for every in-class hour).

2. Technology I won’t ban laptops, tablets, etc. in the classroom. However, use of technology is strongly discouraged — it typically creates distractions for other members of the class, which have negative effects on the classroom dynamic. (I won’t hesitate to ask you to put it away if it becomes a distraction.) If you take notes, I strongly encourage you to do so with old-fashioned pen and paper.

3. Respect for Others. Philosophy is a collaborative process and students learn philosophy best when they engage in that process. Such a participation-heavy environment requires that each of us gives others adequate space to participate, in addition to recognizing that we don’t know everything. We must work to cultivate an environment in which people do not hesitate to ask “silly” questions, make mistakes, or disagree with others. We will disagree (sometimes vigorously) with each other and we will work through our disagreements in class. But our debate will always be conducted respectfully.

Note: Conducting class discussions respectfully does not mean that everyone gets to be right all the time; it does not mean that we must avoid critically evaluating one another's claims. Rather, respectful discussion involves acknowledging that you have a limited perspective on an issue and that your thinking can be enriched by viewing an issue from someone else's perspective. Respectful discussion involves seriously considering the possibility that you might be wrong and that someone who thinks differently than you might be right.

4. Out-of-Class Help. You are welcome to come to me for help with your assignments (but you aren't required to do so—this depends upon how much you are willing to invest in this class). However, there are some guidelines to prevent last-minute calls/emails and to insure that I am able to make time to help you.

- (1) Please try to see me during office hours (I've scheduled these to be at times when I'm sure to be available). If these hours are not convenient, it is possible to set up an appointment at a mutually convenient time. To set up an appointment with me, send me an email with the subject line "[POLI 110B] Appointment request". In the body of the email, indicate 3-5 times that work for you. I will choose a time that works for me from that list. (**Warning:** I'm generally not available to meet in the mornings.)
- (2) If you have a question or concern about the class, please search the syllabus or the course website for the answer. If there is no answer to be found, then feel free to email me or post to Google Classroom about any questions or concerns and I will try to reply to you within 24 hours. If you need an answer right away, email may not be the best option. (If this is the case, you may have waited too long.)
- (3) I will not read submissions in advance and tell you what I think needs improvement. If you would like help with a submission, you can tell me which aspects of the paper concern you and, together, we will figure out how to address your concerns.

5. Email. I am trying to minimize the amount of time I spend corresponding by email. Accordingly, I will only reply to emails requesting an appointment to meet with me. I will not answer emails concerning administrative matters, nor will I offer advice on assignments over email. If you have administrative or assignment questions, you are welcome to meet with me outside class or to approach me at the start or end of a class session. Please start the subject line with "[POLI 110B]", otherwise the email is likely to fall through the cracks of my inbox.

6. Grade Disputes. I am more than willing to re-examine assignment grades with you if you feel your work deserves a better grade. There are two steps to this process:

- (1) You must wait 24 hours after the assignment as been returned before you approach Mack.
- (2) You must approach me with a written justification for your complaint (a single paragraph is fine). In this, you must outline why you think your work deserves a better grade and where the discrepancy lies between your work and the assigned grade.

7. Plagiarism. Plagiarism is a serious academic offense, and will be treated as such. Plagiarism will not be tolerated in any form. Any case of plagiarism will be referred to the Academic Integrity Office.

Plagiarism will be defined as follows:

Plagiarism is representing someone else's ideas, words, statements or other works as one's own without proper acknowledgment or citation. Examples of plagiarism include:

- Copying word for word or lifting phrases or a special term from a source or reference — whether oral, printed, or on the Internet — without proper attribution.
- Paraphrasing, that is, using another person's written words or ideas, albeit in one's own words, as if they were one's own thought.
- Borrowing facts, statistics, or other illustrative material without proper reference, unless the information is common knowledge, in common public use.

7. Accommodations. If you feel that you need an accommodation for any sort of disability or for religious reasons, please discuss this with me as early as possible (after class, in office hours, or by email).

5 Reading Schedule

See the course page on Google Classroom for the reading schedule.