

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

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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 Texts

These books are available at the UCSD bookstore.

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

Learning and developing skills requires two things:

- that you engage in training exercises in which you learn and practice the skills you are trying to develop (**assignments**);
- that you receive feedback that indicates your current skill level and how to improve (**grades**, etc.).

Training exercises. This course emphasizes the construction of *arguments*. I explain what arguments are and the basics how to construct them in a video lecture (available on the course TED site). The course exercises are designed to build your understanding of how to construct arguments and how to write your own argumentative paper.

- **Assigned reading.** Everyone is expected to read and be prepared to discuss the required passages; those who wish to go deeper are strongly encouraged to read the recommended passages. (See the Schedule section below.)
- **In-class exercises.** Class sessions will revolve around small group-based exercises that involve interpreting passages from the readings, reconstructing arguments, and writing short papers.
- **Weekly reflections.** Everyone is expected to submit eight (8) short memos, which discuss your thoughts about how your learning process is going— what you think is going well and where you'd like to improve. These will be submitted electronically on Fridays. More details on the course TED site.
- **Short papers.** Everyone is expected to submit one (1) four-sentence paper, one (1) eight-sentence paper, and one (1) twelve-sentence paper. Everyone has the option of submitting a second four-, eight-, or twelve-sentence paper if you'd like to improve upon your first effort. More details on the course TED site.
- **Draft.** Everyone is expected to submit a 1500-2000 word draft of their final paper, which will be due during week 9 of the quarter. You will receive written comments on these drafts, which you will use to revise your paper for resubmission during finals week (see next item)
- **Final paper.** Everyone is expected to submit a 2000-2500 word paper, which will be due during finals week. More details on the course TED site.

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

Feedback. Here are the ways in which you will receive feedback to help you in your skill development.

- During in-class discussions, I will ask you to explain your ideas and challenge you to improve your reasoning. While these challenges are often interpreted as criticism, you should not take them as expressing a judgment that you are incompetent. Instead, you should interpret these challenges as expressing a judgment that *you are competent and able to improve* your contributions to class discussion. Philosophical discussion (like music, or sports, or...) is more fun when we do it well, so we'll want to push each other to improve.

- You will receive written feedback on your writing submissions. These comments aim to indicate what you are doing well and areas for improvement.
- Grades are also an important source of feedback. You will be graded according to a rubric so that you can clearly interpret what your grades mean with respect to what you're doing well and where you need to improve.

Here is some basic information about how your final grade will be determined. Additional details are available on the course TED site.

Table 1: Final grade calculation

Total points	Letter
152–160	A
140–151	A–
124–139	B+
112–123	B
100–111	B–
84–99	C+
72–83	C
60–71	C–
32–60	D
0–31	F

Table 2: Assignment point value and weights

Assignment	Point value	Overall weight
Weekly reflections	2 points each/16 total	10%
4-sentence paper	16 points	10%
8-sentence paper	20 points	12.5%
12-sentence paper	24 points	15%
Paper draft	24 points	15%
Final paper	60 points	37.5%

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 will not take you very far — 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. 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. Out-of-Class Help. You are welcome to come to me for help with your assignments. 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 TED site for the answer. If there is no answer to be found, then feel free to post to the TED discussion board about any questions or concerns and I will try to reply to you within 24 hours. I can't guarantee an immediate reply; if you need an answer right away, 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.

6. 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, or else post a question to the TED discussion board. If you send me an email, please start the subject line with “[POLI 110B]”, otherwise the email is likely to fall through the cracks of my inbox.

7. 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 Matthew.
- (2) You must approach Matthew 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.

If you are unsatisfied with Matthew’s response to your request, you can approach me with a written justification for your complaint. **Warning:** If you challenge a grade, I reserve the right to reset the grade *as I see fit*. Opening a grade dispute means a re-examination of the assignment. Thus, your grade will not necessarily improve and may even go down.

8. Academic Integrity. Academic integrity is essential to the learning process—I expect that the work you submit under your name reflects your own knowledge and ability. We will follow the UCSD Policy on Integrity of Scholarship in this course (<https://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu/process/policy.html>).

Since all assessment for the course is based on written assignment, plagiarism is the primary form of academic misconduct in this class. For our purposes, 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.

You should also consult the UCSD website on cheating (<https://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu/excel-integrity/define-cheating/index.html>). If you are still confused about which types of activity qualify as academic misconduct, please ask me.

To support academic integrity, all assignments will be submitted to Turnitin.com (through the TED site). Academic misconduct in any form will not be tolerated. Any suspected case of academic misconduct will be referred to the UCSD Academic Integrity Office for investigation and review.

5 Schedule

Week 1

Jan 7 — *Introduction* —

Jan 9/11 Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*

Required (36 pp): Book 1, chaps. 1–7, 16–18; Book 3, chaps. 1, 3

Recommended (26 pp): Book 1, chaps. 9–11, 34, 54–55, 58; Book 2, chap. 1; Book 3, chaps. 9, 29

Week 2

Jan 14/16 Machiavelli, *The Prince*.

Required (28 pp): chaps. 6–9, 15–18, 25

Recommended (13 pp): Dedication, chaps. 1, 10, 20, 21, 26

Jan 18 Hobbes, *Leviathan*.

Required (12 pp): Introduction, chaps. 10 (to sec. 18), 11 (to sec. 10), 13

Recommended (14 pp): chaps. 6, 10 (remainder), 11 (secs. 11–16)

Week 3

Jan 21 — *Martin Luther King Jr. Day* — *No class* —

Jan 23/25 Hobbes, *Leviathan*

Required (20 pp): chaps. 14, 15 (secs. 1–7, 34–41), 17

Recommended (13 pp): chaps. 15 (secs. 8–33), 16

Week 4

Jan 28/30 Hobbes, *Leviathan*

Required (30 pp): chaps. 18, 21, 26 (to sec. 17), 29 (to sec. 13)

Recommended (38 pp): chaps. 19–20, 24, 30

Feb 1 — *No class (out of town)* —

Week 5

Feb 4/6/8 Locke, *Second Treatise*

Required (36 pp): chaps. 1–3, 5, 7, 8 (sec. 119 to end), 9

Recommended (25 pp): chaps. 4, 6, 8 (to sec. 118), 10

Week 6

Feb 11/13 Locke, *Second Treatise*

Required (24 pp): chaps. 11, 19

Recommended (21 pp): chaps. 12–15, 18

Feb 15 Hume, *Essays* (available on TED)

Required (16 pp): “Of the original contract”

Recommended (4 pp): “Of the origin of government”

Week 7

Feb 18 — *President’s Day* — *No class* —

Feb 20/22 Hume, *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*

Required (25 pp): secs. 1, 3 (part 1), 4; appendices 1 and 3

Recommended (17 pp): secs. 3 (part 2), 5

Week 8

Feb 25/27 & Mar 1 Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*
Required (42 pp): Book 1, chaps. 1–8; Book 2, chaps. 1–6; book 3, chaps. 1–4, 12–15; book 4, chaps. 1–3
Recommended (29 pp): Book 2 (remainder); book 3 (remainder)

Week 9

Mar 4 Rousseau, *On the Social Contract* (continued)
Mar 6/8 Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*
Required (46 pp): all
Recommended: none

Week 10

Mar 11/13 & Mar 15 Mills, *The Racial Contract*
Required (37 pp): pages 62–81, 91–109
Recommended (42 pp): pages 9–31, 81–89, 120–133