



UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK IN PRAGUE

Course: POL101 Classics of Political Theory
(6 ECTS/3 US credits)

Semester: Spring 2024

Prerequisites: None

Instructor:

Contact:

Office hours:

1. Catalogue Description

A survey of the major contributions to Western political thought. Classical theory from the pre-Socratic period to that of 21st Century. Concepts such as authority, legitimacy, law, justice, constitution, and public good are analysed through the lenses of political thinkers from different periods and schools of thought.

2. Course Purpose

The aim of the course is to provide students with knowledge of the major Western Philosophers, their ideas and the societal context in which they developed their theories. The course provides an overview of the nature and history of the Western political theory, from the Greek political philosophers, to the major medieval, modern and contemporary political theorists. Students will be acquainted with foundations, frameworks, theories and applications of philosophical reasoning and argumentation linking the work of major political philosophers with important historical and contemporary political and social dilemmas and challenges that present difficult and sometimes conflicting choices.

The course aims to challenge students to come to terms with the political choices they face, and will face in their professional, social, and personal lives.

3. Required Readings:

- George H. Sabine, *A History of Political Thought*, 4th edition (New York: Dryden Press, 1974)
- John Somerville and Roland E. Santoni (eds.), *Social and Political Philosophy* (New York: Anchor Books, 1963)

It is up to you to purchase these books before the class. There are some copies in the UNYP library. They might also be accessible electronically, the instructor will not provide the access to them. We will be using them from the first day of class onwards.

4. Additional Readings

- Cummins, Robert C. and Thomas D. Christiano, *Modern Moral and Political Philosophy* (Mountain View: Mayfield Publishing, 1999)
- Cohen, Martin, *Political Philosophy from Plato to Mao* (London: Pluto Press, 2001)
- Mackenzie, Iain, *Politics: Key Concepts in Philosophy* (London: Continuum, 2009)
- O'Sullivan, Noel (ed.), *Political Theory in Transition* (London: Routledge, 2000)
- Rosen, Michael and Jonathan Wolff (eds.), *Political Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)
- Solomon, Robert C., *What is Justice? Classic and Contemporary Readings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)
- Webel, Charles, *The Politics of Rationality Reason Through Occidental History* (London: Routledge, 2014)

- White, Michael J., Political Philosophy: A Historical Introduction (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)
- Wolff, Jonathan, An Introduction to Political Philosophy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006)

5. Learning Outcomes

Knowledge gained, Students will learn to:

- identify the major political theories from the Ancient Greeks to contemporary theorists, being able to understand the evolution of Western political theory;
- describe different Western political theories from the Ancient Greeks to Rawls and other recent and contemporary thinkers;
- be familiar with the types of Western political and social theories and ideologies, including democracy, oligarchy, tyranny, fascism, communism, monarchy, empire, and mixed forms of government, and linking them to the work and ideas of major Western political philosophers;
- compare the similarities and differences between different political and social theories, linking them to their intellectual, social and historical contexts;
- demonstrate an understanding of the impact of political theories and ideas on political and social institutions;
- evaluate critically the strengths and weaknesses of the major Western political theories and theorists.

Skills gained, Students will be able to:

- read and understand sophisticated texts of political philosophy and to be able to relate its contexts with political, historical or social developments;
- explain and evaluate types of political theories and their strengths and weaknesses and be able to associate the work of political philosophers in a diachronic form;
- critically evaluate the roles played by major political theorists and theories in the development of Western culture and institutions,
- identifying the impact of important political ideas on historical developments;
- conduct research in political theory and be able to present it in a professional way in front of an informed audience;
- critically evaluate the internal arguments used by political theorists to justify their theories.

6. Course Schedule

- Week 1: Introduction: What is political thought?
- Week 2: The Greek Philosophy and the Ideal State: Socrates and Plato
- Week 3: The Greek Philosophy and the Ideal State: Aristotle
- Week 4: Christianity and the Empire: Gelasius and Augustine
- Week 5: Renaissance and Reformation Philosophy: Machiavelli and Luther
- Week 6: Midterm Exam
- Week 7: The Right to Rule and the Modern State: Hobbes and Bodin
- Week 8: The Notion of Freedom: Locke and Montesquieu
- Week 9: Participation and Democracy: Rousseau and Kant
- Week 10: The Conservative View on Participation: Burke and Hegel
- Week 11: Extending Freedom: Mill and Bentham
- Week 12: The Social Question: Marx and Lenin
- Week 13: Change, Crisis, Individuals and Communities: Nietzsche, Fascism and Gandhi

Week 14: Progress, Regress, and the Future of Civilization

Week 15: Final Exam

7. Course Requirements and Grading – the course will be graded on the basis of:

An end-of-semester final exam	40%
A midterm exam	20%
One essay paper	20%
Class assessments and participation	20%

Final and midterm exams: The final exam will be comprehensive and students will be responsible for all the topics covered in class as well as the assigned readings. The format of the exam will be reviewed in class. The midterm exam will assess the progress of students in the first half of the course and it is scheduled for week 6.

Long Essay: Each of the students will have to produce an original long essay that must include an appropriate bibliography and format. Deadlines, topics and length will be fixed in the first weeks of the course. Those students who failed to fulfil the requirements that will be provided would fail and would not score any point for this part of the evaluation. Please, note that this include missing the deadlines to hand the papers. Any form of plagiarism will be punished severely according to UNYP policies regarding this serious offence.

Class Assessment and Participation: active and constructive participation is a required and important part of the course.

Reluctance to participate actively is likely to result in a mediocre mark and disruptive activity (late arrival, chat, etc.) will result in a low mark.

This part of the evaluation does include the following elements:

- Short Tests or assignments
- Class Presentations
- Class activity (answering questions, participation in life or online discussions)

The terms in which the class presentations will take place will be made public once the final amount of students taking the course will be known. In addition to the presentations, students must read the materials related with the presentation scheduled for that week. Failing to do so is a serious fault.

The general UNYP policy on attendance is observed and any student missing 20% of the classes (3 full classes) will fail the course.

Grading scale

Letter Grade	Percent (%)	Generally Accepted Meaning	Notes
A	95-100	Outstanding work	x
A-	90-94		x
B+	87-89	Good work, distinctly above the average	x
B	83-86		x
B-	80-82		x
C+	77-79	Acceptable Work	x
C	73-76		x
C-	70-72		x

D+	67-69	Work that is significantly below average	Credits for the course will not transfer to ESC
D	63-66		
D-	60-62		
F	0-59	Work that does not meet the minimum standards for passing the course	No credits awarded

8. Key UNYP Policies

Attendance:

-It is your responsibility to show up to class on time. If you are late you will be marked as absent for that hour. **If you miss more than nine hours of class for any reason, you will automatically fail the entire course. Pay strict attention to this. This class policy is standard UNYP policy.**

Academic Honesty

- The university's rules on academic dishonesty (e.g., cheating, plagiarism, submitting false information) will be strictly enforced. Please familiarize yourself with the ***student honor code*** or ask your instructor for clarification.
- For examinations: copying from your neighbor, communicating with another student, using a phone or anything similar will result in you failing the test or quiz.
- On written papers, properly note your sources with academic citations. Cutting and pasting from the Internet without accurately citing the source may be considered plagiarism. Students may be required to submit papers electronically, which could mean an automated check for plagiarism via the Turnitin resource. Students may also be required to defend the content of a paper orally to an instructor as a check on authorship.
- If you have questions about any of the above, please consult with the instructor.

9. General Requirements

- All papers must follow appropriate format style, that means being word-processed and with full bibliographies and notations. Papers in which the used sources are not stated will not be acceptable.
- In the event of illness or emergency, contact your instructor IN ADVANCE to determine whether special arrangements are possible.
- The use of laptops, mobiles and other electronic equipment during class time is strictly forbidden unless the instructor gives express permission for it.
- Students have to respect the deadlines that will be established for handing the assessments. Failing to do so will imply an F.
- Students are assumed to follow political and social developments in mass media that could be related with the course. They are also expected to consult various journals and dailies for recent events.
- Students are expected to being familiar with accessing the online resources provided by UNYP and they will be requested to use them in their research papers.

- The University's rules on academic dishonesty (e.g. cheating, plagiarism, submitting false information) will be strictly enforced. Please familiarize yourself with the STUDENT HONOUR CODE, or ask your instructor for clarification.

10. European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)

The students who complete the course will receive 6 ECTS credits which are the equivalent of 3 American credits (in other words, 2 ECTS credits equal 1 American credit hour).

Further, 1 ECTS credit corresponds to 25-30 hours of work. Thus, a 6-credit ECTS course (equivalent to a 3-credit American course). For this course, students are expected to spend time in the following course-related activities:

Class Lectures and exams	45 hours
Reading class related articles	80 hours
Exam preparations	20 hours
Long papers preparation	20 hours
Small projects preparation	5 hours
Preparation class presentation	5 hours
Review of non-class related materials	5 hours
TOTAL	180 hours

11. Technology Expectations

Assignments, excluding those that are carried out exclusively in class, must be word-processed.

Students are assumed to be familiar with the use of internet and in particular with the gathering of data from the wide world web. This will be a necessary tool for carrying out some of the course assignments (i.e. long essay or class presentations).

In addition to this, students are expected to have and use the access to online databases provided by ESC.