



JOHN CABOT UNIVERSITY

COURSE CODE: "PL 210-1"

COURSE NAME: "Introduction to Political Theory"

SEMESTER & YEAR: Fall 2024SYLLABUS

INSTRUCTOR: Camil Roman

EMAIL: croman@johncabot.edu

HOURS: MW 3:00 PM 4:15 PM

TOTAL NO. OF CONTACT HOURS: 45

CREDITS: 3

PREREQUISITES:

OFFICE HOURS: MON/WED: 5.45 - 6.45 pm, by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

An introduction to the history of political thought, from Ancient Greece to the 19th century. Through a close reading of selected canonical texts, students will examine the evolution of ideas about democracy, liberty, equality, justice, political authority, the social contract, different conceptions of human nature and the role of the individual in society. The theorists examined may include Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, de Tocqueville and John Stuart Mill.

SUMMARY OF COURSE CONTENT:

This course introduces the students to some of the most significant texts and events in the history of the Western world, from antiquity up until the 19th century modernity. It is organized around four parts, interspersed with 2 "reflection classes". The purpose of this arrangement is to familiarize the students with the chronology and content of events and texts that were arguably foundational in the making of the Western world, but also to organize the material around substantive discussions and moments that introduce a certain verticality in the process of learning, allowing for further comparative reflection towards central questions regarding what it means to be human. The first part deals with classic texts around the trial and execution of Socrates. The second part takes on another watershed moment of history, the trial and execution of Jesus, introducing students to central ideas and moments of the Gospels. The third part focuses on the most iconic experience in the history of Western political modernity, the French revolution and more specifically the trial and execution of Louis XVI, elaborating on key speeches at the king's trial. Finally, the last part revisits the ambience and context of the already undertaken readings, by being organized around classic texts in the history of political thought - ancient Greek, Christian and modern - that offer highly significant contributions to our understanding of political experiences and symbols, from antiquity to the 19th century. **LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

The aim is that at the end of this course, the students will:

- 1) acquire significant knowledge of some of the most important events and texts in the history of political thought.
- 2) have the reflexive and critical ability to engage different historical contexts, escaping a taken

- for granted moderno-centrist conceptual mind-frame, and think comparatively across epochs.
- 3) be able to recognize old discussions in "new clothes", and hence understand easier central issues of political thinking and concrete political problems, in their relation to all spheres of life.
 - 4) enhance their interpretative and judgment skills based on a close reading of the texts.
 - 5) develop their capacity to write essays and formulate cogent and rigorous arguments of increasing complexity.
 - 6) improve their learning and memorizing skills

TEXTBOOK:
NONE

REQUIRED RESERVED READING:

NONE

RECOMMENDED RESERVED READING:

NONE

GRADING POLICY

-ASSESSMENT METHODS:

Assignment	Guidelines	Weight
REFLECTION PIECE (CLASS 8)	Two-pages reflection piece on an author/topic shared with you a week in advance (Format: Times New Roman, size 12, space 2). Reflections that cross the limit will be penalized. Your answers will elaborate on central aspects of the text and relate them to political experiences of the modern world. Excellent responses will understand/review correctly the text, will write interesting arguments, raise significant questions or provide thoughtful, non-commonplace critiques. Your answers will be marked according to the following criteria: (a) understanding of the material (35%), (b) logical structure of the argument (35%), and (c) depth and content of thought (30%). Further instructions in class.	15%
MIDTERM EXAM (CLASS 13)	The exam will comprise 1 to 3 questions of content and reflection that require a close reading experience of the covered texts. Further instructions in class.	30%
PRESENTATIONS (CLASSES 19 and 24)	The students will be required to respond to specific tasks on authors/texts shared with them a week in advance, and present their answers in front of the class. All presentations are to be submitted by email, by the due date. Presentations will be graded according to the following criteria: the documentation of material (25%), the capacity to communicate in a clear, engaging and thought provoking manner (25%), the logical structure of the theoretical argument (25%) and depth of content and research (25%). Further instructions in class.	15%
FINAL EXAM	The exam will comprise 1 to 3 questions of content and reflection that require a close reading experience of the covered texts. Further instructions in class.	30%
PARTICIPATION	Reading the texts, just as attendance and participation to discussions are mandatory for this class. The goal here is to	10%

	<p>learn how to ask good questions and provide thoughtful answers. You have 3 excused absences. Each extra absence will lower your final attendance grade by 10%. More than 10 unexcused absences may result in failure to pass the course.</p>	
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-ASSESSMENT CRITERIA:

A Work of this quality directly addresses the question or problem raised and provides a coherent argument displaying an extensive knowledge of relevant information or content. This type of work demonstrates the ability to critically evaluate concepts and theory and has an element of novelty and originality. There is clear evidence of a significant amount of reading beyond that required for the course.

B This is highly competent level of performance and directly addresses the question or problem raised. There is a demonstration of some ability to critically evaluate theory and concepts and relate them to practice. Discussions reflect the student's own arguments and are not simply a repetition of standard lecture and reference material. The work does not suffer from any major errors or omissions and provides evidence of reading beyond the required assignments.

C This is an acceptable level of performance and provides answers that are clear but limited, reflecting the information offered in the lectures and reference readings.

D This level of performance demonstrates that the student lacks a coherent grasp of the material. Important information is omitted and irrelevant points included. In effect, the student has barely done enough to persuade the instructor that s/he should not fail.

F This work fails to show any knowledge or understanding of the issues raised in the question. Most of the material in the answer is irrelevant.

-ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS:

ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS AND EXAMINATION POLICY

You cannot make-up a major exam (midterm or final) without the permission of the Dean's Office. The Dean's Office will grant such permission only when the absence was caused by a serious impediment, such as a documented illness, hospitalization or death in the immediate family (in which you must attend the funeral) or other situations of similar gravity. **Absences due to other meaningful conflicts, such as job interviews, family celebrations, travel difficulties, student misunderstandings or personal convenience, will not be excused.** Students who will be absent from a major exam must notify the Dean's Office prior to that exam. Absences from class due to the observance of a religious holiday will normally be excused. Individual students who will have to miss class to observe a religious holiday should notify the instructor by the end of the Add/Drop period to make prior arrangements for making up any work that will be missed. The final exam period runs until _____ **ACADEMIC HONESTY**

As stated in the university catalog, any student who commits an act of academic dishonesty will receive a failing grade on the work in which the dishonesty occurred. In addition, acts of academic dishonesty, irrespective of the weight of the assignment, may result in the student receiving a failing grade in the course. Instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of Academic Affairs. A student who is reported twice for academic dishonesty is subject to summary dismissal from the University. In such a case, the Academic Council will then make a recommendation to the President, who will make the final decision. **STUDENTS WITH LEARNING OR OTHER DISABILITIES**

John Cabot University does not discriminate on the basis of disability or handicap. Students with approved accommodations must inform their professors at the beginning of the term. Please see the website for the complete policy.

SCHEDULE

INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL THEORY

(I RESERVE THE RIGHT TO MAKE MINOR CHANGES TO THE SYLLABUS)

Class 1 Introduction to Political Theory

Class 2 Reflection 1: Anthropos as sacred demos, modern and ancient:

“Pericles’ Funeral Oration”

<https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/ancient/pericles-funeralspeech.asp>

Abraham Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address

<http://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/gettysburg.htm>

PART I: The trial and execution of Socrates

Class 3 Aristophanes’ *Clouds*, from Plato’s *Four Texts on Socrates*

Library Reserve

Class 4 Aristophanes’ *Clouds*, from Plato’s *Four Texts on Socrates*

Library Reserve

Class 5 Plato’s *Apology*, from Plato’s *Four Texts on Socrates*

Library Reserve

Class 6 Plato's *Apology*, from Plato's *Four Texts on Socrates*

Library Reserve

Class 7 *Crito*, from Plato's *Four Texts on Socrates*

Library Reserve

PART II: The trial and execution of Jesus

Class 8 New Testament, Matthew V, XIII; XXII, 1-22; John I, 1-18, Acts II (**Reflection piece due**)

<https://www.biblegateway.com/versions/Revised-Standard-Version-RSV-Bible/#booklist>

Class 9 New Testament, Romans I, VII, VIII, XIII, Galatians I; II, III, Revelation XX, XXI, XXII

<https://www.biblegateway.com/versions/Revised-Standard-Version-RSV-Bible/#booklist>

Class 10 New Testament, John XVIII, XIX

<https://www.biblegateway.com/versions/Revised-Standard-Version-RSV-Bible/#booklist>

Weiler, J.H.H. - The trial of Jesus

at: <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2010/06/the-trial-of-jesus>

PART III: The trial and execution of Louis XVI

Class 11 Speech of Saint Just, 13 November 1792

Speech of Thomas Paine, 21 November 1792

all in: Walzer, Michael (ed.) 1992. *Regicide and Revolution. Speeches at the Trial of Louis XVI*, New York: Columbia University Press

Library Reserve

Class 12 Speech of Robespierre, 28 December 1792

Speech of Vergniaud, 31 December 1792

all in: Walzer, Michael (ed.) 1992. *Regicide and Revolution. Speeches at the Trial of Louis XVI*, New York: Columbia University Press

Library Reserve

Class 13 **MIDTERM EXAM**

PART IV: POLITICAL EXPERIENCES / POLITICAL SYMBOLS

Class 14 Aristotle - Book I

Frohring Library e-book: Aristotle, *Politics*, edited by Peter L. Phillips
Simpson, The University of North Carolina Press 1997

Class 15 Aristotle - Book III

Frohring Library e-book: Aristotle, *Politics*, edited by Peter L. Phillips
Simpson, The University of North Carolina Press 1997

Class 16 Saint Augustine - Book XI

Frohring Library e-book: The City of God, Books VIII-XVI, Catholic University of America Press (editors Walsh and Monahan)

Class 17 Saint Augustine Book XIX

Frohring Library e-book: The City of God, Books XVII-XXII, Catholic University of America Press (editors Walsh and Honan)

Class 18 Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Dedicatory Letter, AND chapters I-VII

Frohring Library e-book (see end bibliography)

Class 19 **Student presentations I**

Class 20 Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chapters VIII-XV

Frohring Library e-book (see end bibliography)

Class 21 Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chapters XVI-XXI, AND chapters XXV-XXVI

Frohring Library e-book (see end bibliography)

Class 22 Rousseau, *Discourse on the origins of inequality*, from the Dedicatory Letter to the end of Book I

Frohring Library e-book (see end bibliography)

Class 23 Rousseau, *Discourse on the origins of inequality*, from the Dedicatory Letter to the end of Book I

Frohring Library e-book (see end bibliography)

Class 24 Student presentations II

Class 25 Rousseau, *Discourse on the origins of inequality*, Book II

Frohring Library e-book (see end bibliography)

Class 26 Reflection 2: Anthropos and the Enlightenment

1) Kant: What is Enlightenment?

essay in Reiss, Hans Siegbert (ed.) *Kant: Political Writings*, Cambridge University Press, 1991

Library Reserve

2) Foucault: What is Enlightenment?

essay in Rabinow, Paul (ed.) *The Foucault Reader*, Pantheon Books, 1984

Library Reserve (see end bibliography)

Class 27 Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Ancien Regime and the Revolution*, Foreword and Book I

Library Reserve (see end bibliography)

Class 28 Final remarks

FINAL EXAM

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Plato, *Four Texts on Socrates*, trans. West, Cornell University Press 1984 (Library Reserve)
2. Aristophanes, *Clouds* - in Plato, *Four Texts on Socrates*, trans. West, Cornell University Press 1984 (Library Reserve)
3. Aristotle, *Politics*, edited by Peter L. Phillips Simpson, The University of North Carolina Press 1997 (Frohring e-book)
4. *The Bible, Revised Standard Version*

<https://www.biblegateway.com/versions/Revised-Standard-Version-RSV-Bible/#booklist>

5. Walzer, M. (ed.) 1992. *Regicide and Revolution. Speeches at the Trial of Louis XVI*, New York: Columbia University Press (Library Reserve)
6. Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, Catholic University of America Press 2008, editors Walsh and Monahan, (Frohring e-book)
7. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Peter E. Bondanella, Oxford University Press 2005 (Frohring e-book)
8. Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Ancien Regime and the French revolution*. Cambridge University Press, 2011 (Library Reserve)
9. Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and the First and Second Discourses*. Yale University Press, 2002 (Frohring e-book)

10. "Pericles' Funeral Oration"

<https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/ancient/pericles-funeralspeech.asp>

11. Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address

<http://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/gettysburg.htm>

12. Weiler, J.H.H. - The trial of Jesus

<https://www.firstthings.com/article/2010/06/the-trial-of-jesus>

13. Immanuel Kant, *What is Enlightenment?* - in Reiss, Hans Siegbert (ed.) "Kant: Political Writings", Cambridge University Press, 1991 (Library Reserve)

14. Michel Foucault: *What is Enlightenment?* - in *The Foucault Reader*, editor Paul Rabinow, Pantheon Books, 1984 (Library Reserve)