

Introduction to Politics
POLS 100-12, Summer 2012, Second Six-Week Session
Syllabus (Revised 6/14)

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Class Meetings: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1-4:25 pm, 7/2-8/9, College Hall 317 (double-check before first class meeting)

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 4:30-6 pm in Dickson 250

Course Description

This course will devote six weeks to introducing some of the fundamental issues in politics. We will proceed in three major parts. In the first, we will digest one prominent author's attempt to introduce the essential subject matter of politics (Kenneth Minogue's *Politics: A Very Short Introduction*). Minogue's approach provides a good deal of historical and philosophical background that will prepare students for thinking about a wide range of subject matter. Our second part will turn to the history of political economy, and specifically, the enduring tension in Western politics between the desires for liberty and equality. Moreover, by studying political economy, we will secure an understanding of the origins of much modern work in political science. Finally, our last section will aim at acquiring a basic understanding of international affairs. My hope in assigning these particular readings is that students will also learn a good deal about the foundations of the four basic subfields of political science (American government, comparative politics, international relations, and political thought), giving you some sense of what to expect in later courses in our department.

Course Goals

Students will improve their ability to interpret texts as well as enhance their written and verbal expression. They will also acquire a basic understanding of the most important issues of economics that relate to politics. The course will prepare students for more advanced studies in the humanities and social sciences, and more specifically, provides an excellent introduction to the kind of close textual reading and writing required in the more advanced courses in our major.

Course Expectations

First and most importantly: Read this syllabus carefully. Clearly understanding the class requirements will save us all trouble later.

I will conduct the class primarily as a discussion and will begin each class session by calling on people at random. If you are not there on time, you will lose participation credit for that day. Active participation in class is required and will count for 30% of the final grade. On average, I ask that students make a minimum of one or two comments per class period. Questions count as a form of participation. Class discussions should be respectful and

considerate of others' views and opinions. Expect to be challenged, but look on it as an opportunity, not a threat.

In terms of general class preparation, I suggest you look over the two pdf files I have uploaded to our blackboard site concerning common writing mistakes and how to outline readings. Come prepared to discuss the questions listed in the syllabus. In any event, you should take extensive notes on the readings before each class. I recommend all students both mark up their books and take extensive notes with page references that essentially index the readings. You should type these up so that they are searchable. This is very time-consuming, but will benefit you tremendously both for the short papers I assign as well as the take-home final.

Students should come to class with the assigned texts in hand and read, and your participation in class should directly reference the readings. In order to be prepared for this, you should take notes on the readings that identify key passages for discussion, or which you do not understand. Under each class meeting, I have listed one or two questions designed to guide your reading of the texts. While in most weeks, you only need to write a response to one of them per class (due on the next meeting), you should come prepared to talk about both questions at every class meeting. I explain these short written assignments in more detail below, and they will form a total of 40% percent of your grade.

Some additional observations about reading for the class: these are not standard textbooks with bold lettering around every word you need to know. A casual reading or one undertaken with various distractions present will probably not get you very far. If you get confused, reread the passage, and if you still cannot make sense of the subject matter, make a note of the passage so we can discuss it in class at the next meeting. You should probably allot between two and three hours of focused attention per class meeting to the readings. If you fail to do this, your ability to follow class discussion will be minimal and your chances of doing well on any of the writing assignments will be slim.

Regarding note-taking in class, I have noticed that once some time has passed, most students have a very difficult time following their notes from a discussion based class like this. Because of the circuitous nature of most discussions, you will not leave class with a neat outline. This means that if you want decent notes you can use to help you with papers and the final, within a day or so of each class, you should rewrite or type up the class notes and attempt to provide a structure for them that you will understand later in the class.

Silence all cell phones, pagers, or other communication devices while in class. If I catch you texting, you will be the first person I call on and you will lose participation credit for that day. If I catch you more than once, I will lower your final grade in the class and ask you to leave.

This syllabus is subject to change, but I will always provide advance notice both in class and via email. You can always find a copy of the most up-to-date syllabus on Blackboard.

Assignments and Grading

Because we will discuss the sections listed in class on the corresponding day, you must keep up with the reading and be ready to talk about it.

I will determine your grades using the following breakdown:

Reading Responses:	40% (8 prompts, 5% each)
Final Exam:	30%
Participation:	30%

Both the individual components and final grade will be calculated on and entered into the gradebook under the slightly more generous 4.0 scale. So, A = 3.71-4.0, A- = 3.31-3.70, B+ = 3.01-3.3, and so on.

Short Reading Response Essay Assignment Instructions:

On each class session indicated, choose one of the discussion questions listed and answer it in one and a half to two double spaced pages (12 point font, double spaced). Read the instructions below carefully.

You should not attempt to outline or laundry list every idea you have, rather choose one focused line of argumentation that brings a handful of the most important points you think support your case to bear on the subject. The best method of accomplishing this is to engage in a close reading of the text and marshal evidence from them to support your claims. Do not use any outside sources.

Avoid editorializing. These essays demand careful textual analysis. I am looking for a brief but sustained effort on your part in each to understand what these authors are saying and I am not at all interested in what you think about the merits or deficiencies of their arguments. So, unless I have specifically asked for your judgment about something in the question, do not waste the space and effort.

Cite both direct quotes and all specific references to the text. By this, I mean: each and every time you use or refer to a specific passage to help develop your essay, you must use a citation (either line or page number) to tie this to the book. Failure to cite sources is plagiarism and will result in an automatic F on the assignment. Severe cases (any work simply copied without attribution) will be reported to the Dean of Students and result in an automatic final grade of F in the class.

I will mark down all essays that deviate from the formatting requirements, and that are under or over the page limit; part of what I am testing here is your clarity of thought, and whether you can determine what really bears on the subject at hand and what does not.

Yes, writing counts, so proofread your papers carefully. I will provide comments on grammar and style. If I ask you to see a writing tutor, please do so.

Each essay will be due in class on the meeting after we discuss the material and will be worth 5% of your final grade in the class. There will be no revisions allowed. Late essays without verified medical excuse will be graded down one minus increment each day after the deadline. This means you have a maximum of ten days before the assignment automatically counts as an F. Failure to complete this or any other essay in the class in that time frame will result in a zero for this assignment, as well as a maximum of D- for your final course grade.

Textbooks

Nicholas Capaldi and Gordon Lloyd (eds.), *The Two Narratives of Political Economy* (Wiley-Scrivener, 2011), ISBN: 9780470948293

Angelo M. Codevilla, *A Student's Guide to International Relations* (ISI Books, 2010), ISBN: 9781935191919

Kenneth Minogue, *Politics: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 1995), ISBN: 9780192853882

Course Schedule and Readings

I will post all texts not in the three books above on blackboard.

7/3: Introduction – Utopias and Dystopias

Read: Ursula K. LeGuin, "The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas"

Kurt Vonnegut, "Harrison Bergeron"

I also want you to download and read these two handouts on writing and outlining. You should reference them for all future courses and writing assignments with me and anyone else:

Colburn and Uphoff, "Common Expository Problems in Students' Papers and Theses," in *PS: Political Science & Politics*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (April 2012), pp. 291-297

Budziszewski, "Course Handout on Analytical Outlining"

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What is LeGuin's purpose in inventing Omelas? What do you think she hopes us to understand about utopias?
- 2) Is Vonnegut an opponent of equality? Does he believe liberty matters?

7/5: No class, Fourth of July

Take a few moments to read (hopefully this isn't the first time...) the Declaration of Independence (pp. 163-5 in *The Two Narratives*) and ponder the meaning of today's festivities. If you haven't ever seen the musical *1776*, you should watch it as well. If you are feeling particularly eager, also read the "General Introduction" to *The Two Narratives* (pp. xi-xxxiii).

7/10: Ancient and Modern Politics

Read: Minogue, *Politics*, Chs. 1-6, pp. 1-51

Discussion Questions (choose one to write up, due in class 7/12):

- 1) Choose one of the three chapters on Greece, Rome, or Christianity. Contrast what Minogue claims about that mode of political thinking with his discussion of “modern” politics.
- 2) Why does Minogue believe despots do not belong in politics? What single argument from later chapters best support that conclusion? Why?

7/12: Ideology and the Dilemmas of Modernity

Read: Minogue, *Politics*, Chs. 7-13, pp. 52-111

Discussion Questions (choose one to write up, due in class 7/17):

- 1) In what ways does Minogue believe that ideology challenge politics? Use examples from other chapters in the text that reinforce his point.
- 2) What does it mean for politics that some attempt to study it scientifically? According to Minogue, what effects does this form of inquiry have?

7/17: Locke and the Origins of the Liberty Narrative

Read: John Locke, selections in *Two Narratives of Political Economy* (hereafter *TNPE*), pp. 9-55

Recommended: “General Introduction” to *TNPE*, pp. xi-xxxiii

Discussion Questions (choose one to write up, due in class 7/19):

- 1) What role does the state of nature play in Locke’s analysis of politics? Why?
- 2) How does Locke defend the right of conscience? Why does he do so?
- 3) Why is it so important for Locke that money retain its value?

7/19: Rousseau and the Passion for Equality

Read: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, selections in *TNPE*, pp. 57-94

Discussion Questions (choose one to write up, due in class 7/24):

- 1) Why does Rousseau believe refinement destroys morals? What evidence does he give for this position?
- 2) For Rousseau, what dangers exist because of property? How does he propose that we remedy them?
- 3) In what sense does Rousseau believe that humanity lives in chains? Why does he think this is true?

7/24: Adam Smith and the Origins of the Modern Economy

Read: Smith, selections from *Wealth of Nations* and *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, *TNPE*, pp. 109-162

Discussion Questions (choose one to write up, due in class 7/26):

- 1) What causes the division of labor? What are the most important effects Smith believes it has upon the world?
- 2) What is the “invisible hand”? What arguments does Smith base this idea upon?

7/26: Two Revolutions: America and France

Read: Selections on the American Founding and from the French Revolution, in *TNPE*, pp. 163-177 and 209-228

Discussion Questions (choose one to write up, due in class 7/31):

- 1) Compare and contrast the Declaration of Independence and the French Declaration of the Rights of Men and Citizen in terms of their respect for the human person.
- 2) How might Robespierre criticize Federalist 10 and 51? Why would he do so?

7/31: Tocqueville and Proudhon

Read: Selections from Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, in *TNPE*, pp. 179-207
Selections from P.J. Proudhon, *What is Property?*, in *TNPE*, pp. 265-281

Discussion Questions (choose one to write up, due in class 8/2):

- 1) To what degree does Proudhon represent exactly Tocqueville’s fear about the likely path of equality in democratic society?
- 2) How do you think Proudhon might respond to Tocqueville’s assessment about the nature of liberty in a commercial republic? Why?

8/2: Marxism

Read: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, in *TNPE*, pp. 389-408
Friedrich Engels, selections from *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, in *TNPE*, pp. 447-465

Discussion Questions (choose one to write up, due in class 8/7):

- 1) Why do Marx and Engels critique more moderate socialist or leftists parties? To what degree do they see them as potential allies? Why?
- 2) How do Marx and Engels view their intellectual opponents? Why do they discuss them in the manner they do?
- 3) Why do both authors believe that understanding the mode of production and the class conflicts it creates is so important?

8/7: On States and the International System

Read: Codevilla, *A Student's Guide*, pp. 1-55

Discussion Questions (no write-up, spend time on final exam below):

- 1) What is the international system? How does Codevilla believe it primarily operates?
- 2) According to Codevilla, why do cultures and regimes matter?

8/9: Strategy, Politics, and the Instruments of Power

Read: Codevilla, *A Student's Guide*, pp. 57-92

Discussion Questions (no write-up, spend time on final exam below):

- 1) What are the most important instruments of modern power?
- 2) How does geography affect international politics?

Final Exam due via email no later than 4:30 pm on Friday, August 10th.

For the final exam, in no more than 5 pages (12 point font, double-spaced), please answer the following prompt:

Of all the various ideas we have read in this course, in your opinion, which poses the greatest danger to a decent political life? Why? Use at least two texts we have read to justify your answer.

Apart from my ban on opinion, the instructions listed above on essay-writing apply here as well. Please reference them. The final exam will be worth 30% of the final grade. I will post your course grades no later than Sunday, August 12th.