Course Description

This course will introduce you to political theory through the question “What is the difference between morally legitimate authority and brute force?” You may think that the answer is easy: “A government exercises power legitimately if it does what people want and/or if it came to power in a way that people like.” But things are not so simple. Which people? What if what they want is really bad? Once again you may think that there are obvious answers: “The majority,” and “There is no such thing as ‘bad’ – if someone wants something, then it’s good for them; and if it’s good for them, then it’s good. ‘Really bad’ just means that the person calling it that doesn’t like it.” I suspect, however, that you don’t actually believe this, especially when it comes to things that you yourself think are bad. So the question about what makes the exercise of power be legitimate is harder than it may seem. And it underlies just about every single aspect of political life.

We will look at 5 possible ways to answer the question. You will read original, often-difficult, primary texts. You may not understand what you read at first, and it will be up to you to keep at it until you do. I will not be spoon-feeding you information. My role will be to train you to become good readers of complex material, and to help you to understand the structures of whole theories, whole ways of answering a fundamental question.

This is a course in political philosophy, which means that our discussion of the topic will be conceptual, rather than applied. We will be talking about ideas, rather than examining concrete cases as you might expect to do in a course on comparative or American politics. Applied political analysis is important, and may even be your main concern in the long run. But applied analysis presupposes underlying theoretical assumptions. Political philosophy is the area of political science in which such assumptions are examined directly.

Course Format

This course is a discussion-based seminar, augmented by presentations by me to frame the material and by occasional lectures.

General Expectations and Policies

The bottom line requirement for this course is that you do the readings very, very carefully (more than once, in most cases), and come to class prepared to talk about the material with others in order to understand and evaluate it. If, for whatever reason, you are not in a position to take on a very high level of intellectual responsibility, this may not be the course for you to take this semester.
**Attendance** is mandatory unless you are sick or face an emergency situation. Irregular participation will result in a significant reduction of the final grade or in failure. Cell phones, laptops, and other electronic devices must be turned off during class. In keeping with the 5 principles of Jesuit education at SLU (detailed below), I take it for granted that comportment in the classroom will be good-natured, considerate, and intellectually disciplined; failure to meet this expectation will result in a student being required to leave the room, and will constitute an unexcused absence. I also expect that you will come to class on time.

All written and oral work must be either (a) your own ideas, expressed in your own words, or (b) properly referenced. Plagiarism will result in a failure for the course, at a minimum. Please ask me, if you have any questions about academic integrity; not knowing that you have plagiarized does not make it acceptable to have done so. See the final page of the syllabus for further information.

Students with disabilities, or who face other circumstances that may impact their classroom performance, may arrange for appropriate accommodations and/or academic support. See the final page of the syllabus for further information. Please let me know if you need any help with this.

The easiest way to contact me is through e-mail, which I check frequently. In most cases I will be able to get back to you within 24 hours; if you haven’t heard back, send me another e-mail. I will retrieve phone messages when I am in my office, but I am not on campus every day, so it’s not the best way to reach me. I’m also delighted to talk to you in person, during office hours.

**Assignments and Grade Breakdown**

- Quality of participation & preparation (may include snap quizzes or short writing assignments) - 25%
- 5 tests – 25%
- Paper - (6-7 pps., due near the end of the term) – 25%
- Final exam – 25%
- Non-graded “benchmark” essay – you will flunk the course if you do not submit the benchmark essay.
- Around mid-semester, you will be required to have a short meeting with me in my office, to check in on your progress in the course. This meeting is mandatory.

Your grade will be based on the factors listed above. There is no extra credit available for the completion of additional work. I give letter grades, corresponding to qualitative assessment criteria.

I do not grade on a distributional curve; your grade is based solely on the quality of your own performance. I am a very transparent grader, and am happy to talk with you about how to do your best in the course. Please note the College of Arts and Sciences’ common grading scheme: A=93-100; A-=90-92; B+=87-89; B=83-86; B-=80-82; C+=77-79; C=73-76; C-=70-72; D=60-70; F=below 60.
I don’t accept late papers, unless you have contacted me ahead of time concerning an absolute emergency. Papers are due at the beginning of class on the date that they are due, unless otherwise stipulated.

Relevance to the Five Dimensions of Education at SLU

1. **Scholarship and knowledge**: students will acquire an understanding of major views concerning political legitimacy in the history of Western political thought.
2. **Intellectual inquiry and communication**: students will develop their abilities to read and to write analytically; to think conceptually; to pursue clarity; to accept ambiguity, contradiction and uncertainty. See #5 also.
3. **Community building**: in addition to the inherent relevance of the course topic, students will be required to engage in collective intellectual activity throughout the semester, in the context of the classroom experience.
4. **Leadership and service**: see #3 and 5.
5. **Spirituality and values**: Students will reflect critically upon the ideal of legitimacy, what it implies and what it potentially enjoins in the way of action. See also #2: collective, non-dogmatic inquiry, aimed at the achievement of insight, cultivates important virtues, including but not limited to: the toleration of ambiguity and uncertainty, intellectual fearlessness, attentiveness to the truth-value of the contributions of others, a desire for clarity rather than for victory or esteem.

**Required texts**

The following books have been ordered at the SLU Bookstore:

- Plato, *The Republic*
- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*
- Aristotle, *Politics*
- Hobbes, *Leviathan*
- Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*
- Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*
**Additional University Information**

**Academic Integrity Syllabus Statement**

*Academic integrity is honest, truthful and responsible conduct in all academic endeavors.* The mission of Saint Louis University is "the pursuit of truth for the greater glory of God and for the service of humanity." Accordingly, all acts of falsehood demean and compromise the corporate endeavors of teaching, research, health care, and community service via which SLU embodies its mission. The University strives to prepare students for lives of personal and professional integrity, and therefore regards all breaches of academic integrity as matters of serious concern.


Additionally, each SLU College, School, and Center has adopted its own academic integrity policies, available on their respective websites. All SLU students are expected to know and abide by these policies, which detail definitions of violations, processes for reporting violations, sanctions, and appeals. Please direct questions about any facet of academic integrity to your faculty, the chair of the department of your academic program, or the Dean/Director of the College, School or Center in which your program is housed.

**Title IX Syllabus Statement**

Saint Louis University and its faculty are committed to supporting our students and seeking an environment that is free of bias, discrimination, and harassment. If you have encountered any form of sexual misconduct (e.g. sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, domestic or dating violence), we encourage you to report this to the University. If you speak with a faculty member about an incident of misconduct, that faculty member must notify SLU’s Title IX coordinator, Anna R. Kratky (DuBourg Hall, room 36; akratky@slu.edu; 314-977-3886) and share the basic fact of your experience with her. The Title IX coordinator will then be available to assist you in understanding all of your options and in connecting you with all possible resources on and off campus.

If you wish to speak with a confidential source, you may contact the counselors at the University Counseling Center at 314-977-TALK. To view SLU’s sexual misconduct policy and for resources, please visit the following web address: http://www.slu.edu/general-counsel-home/office-of-institutional-equity-and-diversity/sexual-misconduct-policy www.slu.edu/here4you .

**Student Success Center Syllabi Statements**

In an effort to be inclusive of students’ learning styles and needs with regard to academic support, the following statement has been developed for use in course syllabi which identifies resources for student support in various areas of learning. As faculty members construct their syllabi for future courses, it is requested that they update materials to include new language regarding academic and career related support offered to students through the Student Success Center.
The syllabus statement will be available throughout the year by visiting the following websites, but we encourage you to place these resources on any departmental websites you feel necessary:

- Student Success Center:  [www.slu.edu/success](http://www.slu.edu/success)
- Reinert Center for Transformative Teaching & Learning:  [www.slu.edu/cttl](http://www.slu.edu/cttl)

**Student Success Center Syllabus Statement:**

In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available on campus. The Student Success Center, a one-stop shop, which assists students with academic and career related services, is located in the Busch Student Center (Suite, 331) and the School of Nursing (Suite, 114). Students who think they might benefit from these resources can find out more about:

- Course-level support (e.g., faculty member, departmental resources, etc.) by asking your course instructor.
- University-level support (e.g., tutoring services, university writing services, disability services, academic coaching, career services, and/or facets of curriculum planning) by visiting the Student Success Center or by going to [www.slu.edu/success](http://www.slu.edu/success).

**Disability Services Academic Accommodations Syllabus Statement**

Students with a documented disability who wish to request academic accommodations are encouraged to contact Disability Services to discuss accommodation requests and eligibility requirements. Please contact Disability Services, located within the Student Success Center, at Disability_services@slu.edu or 314.977.3484 to schedule an appointment. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries. Once approved, information about academic accommodations will be shared with course instructors via email from Disability Services and viewed within Banner via the instructor’s course roster.
Projected Reading Schedule

Aug. 24 - About the course
Aug. 26 – Introductory lecture

**Plato – Legitimacy from Goodness**

Aug. 28 - Setting the stage (*Republic*, Bk 1)

Aug. 31 – Might makes right: the exchange with Thrasyvachus (no new reading)
Sept. 2 – The make-believe city (read Bks 2-4)
Sept. 4 – Moral education (review Bk. 3)

Sept. 7 – LABOR DAY – (No in-class session; use for reading)
Sept. 9 – Harmony, justice and the love of truth (no new reading, review Bk. 4)
Sept. 11 – Discussion continued

Sept. 14 – Knowledge and the love of goodness (read Bks 5, 6, 7)
Sept. 16 – Discussion continued
Sept. 18 – Types of illegitimate societies (Bks 8-9)

Sept. 21 – Goodness and Order
Sept. 23 – Discussion continued
Sept. 25 – Test #1

**Aristotle – Legitimacy from Human Nature**

Sept. 28 – Living a properly human life (*Ethics*, Bk 1)
Sept. 30 – Excellence of character and of judgment (*Ethics*, Bks 2 and 6)
Oct. 2 – Discussion continued

Oct. 5 – Excellence in relationships (*Ethics*, Bks 8 and 9)
Oct. 7 – Flourishing and citizenship (*Ethics*, Bk 10; *Politics*, Bk 1)
Oct. 9 – Discussion continued

Oct. 12 & 14 – Political community, cont.
*Politics*, Bk 3, chs. 6-7; Book 7, ch. 4
*Politics*, Bk 3, chs. 1, 4, 5; Bk 7, chs. 4, 9, 10

October 16 – Test #2

**Hobbes – Legitimacy from Force**

Oct. 19 – FALL BREAK – No class
Oct. 21 & 23 - The premises: instrumental reason, appetite and moral subjectivism
*Leviathan*, chs. 1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 11

- The logic of a-moral self-interest
*Leviathan*, chs. 13, 14, 15 (secs. 1-3), 19, 20, 21, 26 (secs. 1-6), 29
Oct. 26 – The Laws of Nature; no new reading
Oct. 28 – The Absolute Sovereign; no new reading
Oct. 30 – Test #3

**Locke – Legitimacy from God**

Nov. 2 – The “State of Nature” metaphor
   *2nd Treatise*, chs 1-5; ch 6 (paragraph 54)
Nov. 4 – “Slavery” and “the State of War”
Nov. 6 – The inviolability of property (Re-read ch. 5)

Nov. 9 – Discussion continued
Nov. 11 – Property, consent and the terms of political association
   *2nd Treatise*, paragraphs 87; 89; 91-99; 119-122; 138-140; 221-222
Nov. 13 – Discussion continued; no new reading

Nov. 16 – Test #4

**Rousseau – Legitimacy from Collective Participation**

Nov. 18 – Chains: The Problem of Legitimacy (*The Social Contract*, Bk 1, chs. 1-8)
Nov. 20 – The Sovereign & Its General Will
   *SC*, Bk 1, ch 9; Bk 2, chs. 1-6; Bk 4, chs. 1-2

Nov. 23 – The Nature & Role of the Sovereign, continued
Nov. 25 & 27 – THANKSGIVING – No class

Nov. 30 – Test #5
Dec. 2 – The Institution of Government
   *SC*, Book 3, chs. 1-4, 8, 11, 15
Dec. 4 – The General Will, Revisited
   *SC*, Bk 2, ch. 7

Dec. 7 – Review