The question at the heart of this course is the following: What kind(s) of judgment, grounded in what kind(s) of character, are required for the functioning of a just, democratic society? The question, a serious one, is harder to answer than it may seem. Apart from the challenges of the issue itself, there is the problem that taken-for-granted assumptions about what reason is (and is not), what morality is (and is not) and what the capitalist state is (and is not) may get in the way of genuinely critical reflection. The primary objective of the course, accordingly, is not necessarily to answer the question, but instead to prepare you to meaningfully ask it. Governing assumptions need first be unsettled; new concepts made available to you. Minimally, the following ideas will be challenged: (1) that reason is solely a matter of instrumental calculation; (2) that morality is, at best, a matter of rule-following; (3) that the capitalist state is simply a neutral, coordinating mechanism for the preferences of citizens.

The course will be conducted as a seminar, which means that the week-to-week responsibility for the intellectual vitality of the course falls very heavily upon the participants. There are, therefore, process as well as content-related expectations. Specifically, students will take turns preparing short seminar papers for each week’s meeting (circulated electronically by 6pm Sunday night; a copy due in my box by 9am Monday), which will be a starting point for in-class discussion. Most if not all weeks I will provide those writing with questions upon which to focus their remarks. Beyond this, students will be expected to use class time to hone the skills and traits needed to engage in a sustained, collective, intellectual enterprise.

A word of warning: this is a demanding, graduate-level course in political philosophy. If you don’t like philosophy, and/or are not in a position to take on the work-load of an advanced course, this is not the class to take. I don’t say this to be mean. Political science students do not always realize that courses in political theory are nothing like their other political science courses. If you do like philosophy – and I hope you do – welcome; the material is great, and I predict that you will find the class to be both enjoyable and rewarding.

General Expectations and Policies

The bottom line requirement for this course is that you do the reading very, very carefully, and come to class prepared to talk about the material with others in order to understand and evaluate it. Again: if, for whatever reason, you are not in a position to take on a very high level of intellectual responsibility, you should think hard about whether or not you will be able to meet this expectation; this may not be the course for you to take this semester. Also, please note that as this is an upper-level seminar, there are only a limited number of graded assignments (see below). You should be sure that you understand and are comfortable with this, if you are an undergraduate taking the class.
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.

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 will not be on campus every day. I’m also delighted to talk to you in person, during office hours.

Assignments and Grade Breakdown

Participation (undergraduate and graduate) – 50%

This includes thoughtful, constructive participation in class and good-faith preparation and presentation of seminar papers, submitted by 6pm on Sundays (students will take turns writing).

Essays (undergraduate) - 50%

#1 (5 pps) - 10%; due by noon, Friday, Oct. 16
#2 (5 pps) - 10%; due by noon, Thursday, Nov. 12
#3 (6-8 pps) - 30%; due by noon, Friday, Dec. 11

Final paper (graduate) - (12-14pps) 50%; due by noon, Monday, Dec. 14

Books

The following texts have been ordered for the SLU book store:

Plato, *The Republic*
Aristotle, *Ethics; Politics*
Christine McKinnon, *Character, Virtue Theories and the Vices*
Robert Heilbroner, *The Nature and Logic of Capitalism*
*Stanley Aronowitz and Peter Bratsis, Paradigm Lost: State Theory Reconsidered*
*James Bohman and William Rehg, Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics*
James Bohman *Public Deliberation: Pluralism, Complexity and Democracy*

Additional readings will be available on e-res. Texts with asterisks you may not need to purchase, as I may be able to make readings available electronically.
Projected Reading Schedule

Aug. 24 - Introduction to the course – no readings
Aug. 31 - Plato, The Republic – Bk 1

Sept. 7 - No class
Sept. 14 - The Republic, Books 2-3-4
Sept. 21 - The Republic, Books 5-6-7
Sept. 28 - The Republic, Books 8-9
Oct. 5 - Aristotle, Ethics, Books 1, 2, 6, 8-10
Oct. 12 - Aristotle, Ethics, Books 8-10, Politics, Book 1, selections from Books 3 and 7

Oct. 19 – No class
Oct. 26 McKinnon, Character, Virtue Theories and the Vices
Nov. 2 Heilbroner, The Nature and Logic of Capitalism; Marx, short selections
Nov. 9 Aronowitz and Bratsis (eds.), Paradigm Lost: State Theory Reconsidered, selections
Nov. 16 Bohman, Public Deliberation: Pluralism, Complexity and Democracy
Nov. 23 Bohman and Rehg (eds.), Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics, selections
Nov. 30 Bohman and Rehg (eds.), Deliberative Democracy, selections; Stephen Salkever, “The Deliberative Model of Democracy and Aristotle’s Ethics of Natural Questions”
Dec. 7 Reflections