

POLS 2700
Basic Issues in Political Philosophy: Human Nature and Politics
Spring 2019
TTH 9:30-10:45
Professor Chris Duncan. Ph.D.

Instructor: Christopher M. Duncan, Ph.D.
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Office Hours: TTH 8: 30-9:15 & 10:45-11:30. For an appointment at other times please call Carol Murphy at 314.977.2244 to schedule.
Class Meets: Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30-10:45 in McGannon Hall 211



Course Objectives

The political theorist, Hannah Arendt, described the attempt to understand human nature as the equivalent of a person trying to jump over their own shadow. And yet, most political theorists and philosophers must have at least some sense of the kind of beings they are writing about in order to imagine the best sort of political regime possible for us to live under with one another. In this course, we will explore a number of different approaches to the question of human nature as embedded in the work and thought of Western political philosophers ranging from the ancient period to the Christian era to the early modern world to the postmodern and contemporary landscapes. Along the way we will read a wide range of theorists and philosophers to both understand their particular political projects and their implied answers to the two basic questions that underlie this course:

1. From a social, theoretical, and philosophical perspective what does it mean to be human?
2. What kind of political order is properly suited and sustainable for human habitation?

Required Texts*

The Trial and Death of Socrates by Plato

The Prince by Machiavelli

The Second Treatise of Government by John Locke

Existentialism and Human Emotions by Jean-Paul Sartre

Augustine and the Limits of Politics by Jean Bethke Elstain

The Person and the Common Good by Jacques Maritain

Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach by Martha Nussbaum

*Other readings will be provided electronically during the semester.

Requirements

Students will be expected to attend each class session with the required readings done and be prepared and willing to participate thoughtfully in the discussions of them. Grades for the course will be determined based on the following:

(10) Quizzes	100 points (10 points each)*
(1) Mid-term Examination	150 points
(1) Final Examination	<u>150 points</u>
	400 points total

*There are no make-up quizzes. To provide some relief in case of absence every student gets 20 bonus points to start the course. This would allow you to miss two quizzes without penalty to your grade. However, if you take all 10 quizzes then the 20 points will count as extra credit toward your final grade.

Grade Scale in Points

400-368=	A
367-360=	A-
359-348=	B+
347-328=	B
327-320=	B-
319-312=	C+
311-288=	C
387-280=	C-
279-220=	D
Below 220=	F

Examinations

The mid-term exam and the final are both take-home exams. The exams will include short answer questions and longer integrative essay questions.

Academic Integrity and Honor Code

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 through 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.

The governing University-level Academic Integrity Policy was adopted in Spring 2015, and can be accessed on the Provost's Office website at:

[http://www.slu.edu/Documents/provost/academic affairs/Universitywide%20Academic%20Integrity%20Policy%20FINAL%20%20%206-26-15.pdf](http://www.slu.edu/Documents/provost/academic%20affairs/Universitywide%20Academic%20Integrity%20Policy%20FINAL%20%20%206-26-15.pdf)

Disability Services

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.

Student Success Center:

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**.

Discrimination Policy:

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.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is mandatory. Any student with more than 3 absences automatically has his or her total points reduced by 10. All subsequent absences reduce the grade by 10 points each time.

Civility

A course like this can give rise to strong opinions and even vigorous arguments. That is perfectly acceptable. However, each person and their opinions will be treated with respect and dignity.

The use of cell phones, computers or other electronic devices during class is prohibited except as approved for note-taking. Receiving calls, texting or other behavior that detracts from course material will not be tolerated. Anyone engaging in such behavior will be asked to leave the class and the day will be counted as an absence for the first offense. For the second offense, the person engaging in the behavior will be asked to leave and not return to class for the rest of the semester.

Important Dates

March 11-15	Spring Break (no classes)
April 18-22	Easter Break (no class)

Course Outline

Assignment

January 15

Introduction to Political Theory & The Course

Plato's 7th Epistle

January 17-22

Socrates and the Good Life

The Trial and Death of Socrates (all)
[Plato]

January 24

Quiz #1

January 24-29

Aristotle and the Art of Being Human

Nicomachean Ethics (selections)

January 31

Quiz #2

January 31- February 7

The Politics of the Faith and Faithful Politics

Augustine and the Limits of Politics (all)
[Jean Bethke Elshtain]

February 12

Quiz #3

February 12-19

Political Realism and Machiavelli

The Prince (all)

February 19

Mid-term Examination Handed Out

February 25

**Mid-term Examination Due
in Hard-Copy by 5 p.m.**

February 21

Quiz #4

February 21

Thomas Hobbes and the State of Nature

February 26-28

The Liberal State and John Locke

The Second Treatise of Government (all)

March 5

Quiz #5

March 5

The Social Contract & the Original Position

A Theory of Justice [John Rawls] and
Anarchy State and Utopia [Robert Nozick]
(selections)

March 7 Objectivism & Ayn Rand	<i>The Virtues of Selfishness</i> (selections)
March 19	Quiz #6
March 19 Beyond Good and Evil: Nietzsche	<i>The Genealogy of Morals</i> (selections)
March 21- 28 Freedom, the Death of God & Responsibility	<i>Existentialism and Human Emotions</i> (all) [Jean Paul Sartre]
April 2	Quiz #7
April 2-9 Christian Personalism & The Good Life	<i>The Person and the Common Good</i> (all) [Jacques Maritain]
April 11	Quiz #8
April 11-23 Labor, Work, and Action: Human “nature?”	<i>The Human Condition</i> (selections) [Hannah Arendt]
April 25	Quiz #9
April 25-May 2 An Ethic of Care & Human Well-Being	<i>Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach</i> (chs. 1-7) [Martha Nussbaum]
May 2	Quiz #10
May 2	Final Exam Handed Out
May 9	Final Examination Due in Hard Copy by 9 a.m.

