

POLI 3: INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY/ POLITICAL THEORY

Foothill College Course Outline of Record

Heading	Value
Effective Term:	Summer 2025
Units:	5
Hours:	5 lecture per week (60 total per quarter)
Advisory:	Demonstrated proficiency in English by placement via multiple measures OR through an equivalent placement process OR completion of ESLL 125 & ESLL 249; not open to students with credit in POLI 3H.
Degree & Credit Status:	Degree-Applicable Credit Course
Foothill GE:	Area 4: Social & Behavioral Sciences
Transferable:	CSU/UC
Grade Type:	Letter Grade (Request for Pass/No Pass)
Repeatability:	Not Repeatable

Student Learning Outcomes

- Critically Analyze the historical development of political thought focusing on the works of any of the following political philosophies - Augustine & Aquinas, Machiavelli and Hobbes, Locke & Rousseau, Bentham and Mill, Hegel and Marx, Antonio Gramsci.
- Critically analyze any of the models of political justification, forms of the state, civil and political society, and their institutional manifestation in government.

Description

Analysis of the history of political thought, the development of forms of political ideologies and their manifestation in forms of the state. Philosophical formulations of concepts of state of nature, natural law, natural rights, civil and political society explored as integral parts of philosophies of: Plato and Aristotle, Augustine and Aquinas, Machiavelli and Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, Bentham and Mill, Hegel, Marx, and Antonio Gramsci.

Course Objectives

The student will be able to:

1. Analyze historical development of political thought of: Plato and Aristotle, Augustine and Aquinas, Machiavelli and Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, Bentham and Mill, Hegel, Marx, and Antonio Gramsci.
2. Compare and contrast competing philosophical concepts of state of nature, human nature, natural law, natural rights, civil society, political society, and locate concepts in governmental structure, law, and society.

3. Analyze models of political justification, forms of the state, civil society, and political society, and their institutional manifestation in the system of government.
4. Identify the various models of political justifications of forms of the state and connect them to their philosophical roots.
5. Explore the philosophical basis of law and justice in society.
6. Analyze the influence of political philosophies on the historical development of various forms of civil society, political society, and the state.

Course Content

1. Ancient/classical/medieval political philosophy: Plato and Aristotle
 - a. Philosophy vs. politics
 - b. The ideal city and concepts of justice
 - c. Virtue politics and the best and worst regimes
2. Models of political justification: Augustine and Aquinas
 - a. The City of God and the City of Man
 - b. The virtuous man
 - c. Augustine's best form of government
 - d. Aquinas' purposes and aims of society and government
 - e. Forms of government
 - f. Eternal law and natural law
 - g. Justice and civil disobedience
3. Modern political philosophy: models of political justification: Machiavelli and Hobbes
 - a. Machiavelli's republics vs. principalities
 - b. Use of political power and why Virtue is never virtue
 - c. Hobbes concept of state of nature
 - d. The social contract
 - e. Concept of the leviathan and defense of monarchy
4. Models of political justification: Locke and Rousseau
 - a. Locke's state of nature, natural law, natural rights, civil society, state
 - b. The social contract
 - c. Concept of the separation of powers
 - d. The labor theory of value
 - e. Concept of the common good
 - f. Rousseau and the social contract
 - g. Rousseau's state of nature, direct democracy, and freedom
 - h. Concept of the general will
5. Models of political justification: Bentham and Mill
 - a. Bentham's utilitarian concept of the state
 - b. Hedonism, justice, and utility
 - c. Critique of natural law and natural rights
 - d. Critique of social contract
 - e. The role of government, civil disobedience
 - f. Mills' concept of utilitarianism
 - g. Justice as the basic moral and political objective
 - h. The meaning of justice
 - i. Mill's form of government
6. The Historicist theory of the state: Hegelian philosophy
 - a. Hegel's metaphysics
 - b. Hegel's dialectic
 - c. Moral and political institutions

- d. Abstract right, morality, and ethical life
- e. The family, civil society, and the state
- f. Hegel's concept of democracy and constitutional monarchy
- g. Hegel's philosophy of right
- 7. The Historicist theory of the state: Marxian philosophy
 - a. Marx's philosophy of history
 - b. Marx's historical and dialectical materialism
 - c. The concept of the state
 - d. The concept of the labor theory of value
 - e. The concept of alienation and freedom
- 8. Contemporary political philosophy: Antonio Gramsci's contribution to Marxist theory
 - a. The concept of historical bloc in Gramsci
 - b. Gramsci's refinement of superstructural elements in Marx
 - c. The role of ideology and politics in Gramsci's theory
 - d. Concept of hegemony and counter-hegemonic struggle in Gramsci

Anzaldúa. [Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza](#).

Arendt. [The Human Condition](#).

Aristotle. [Politics](#).

Brown. [In the Ruins of Neoliberalism or Manhood and Politics](#).

Butler. [Gender Trouble](#).

Davis. [Women, Race, and Class](#).

Du Bois. [The Souls of Black Folk](#).

Federici. [Revolution at Point Zero](#).

Gramsci. [Prison Notebooks](#).

Marx. [Selected Writings](#).

Plato. [The Republic](#).

Rawls. [A Theory of Justice](#).

Articles on philosophers on library reserve.

Lab Content

Not applicable.

Special Facilities and/or Equipment

When taught via Foothill Global Access, ongoing access to computer with email software and hardware; email address.

Method(s) of Evaluation

Methods of Evaluation may include but are not limited to the following:

15 page critical analytical research paper on assigned philosopher
 Oral presentation
 Development of research paper topic, thesis, and outline, utilizing the scientific method
 Active and substantial participation in class discussions, demonstrating knowledge of literature
 Ability to compare and contrast central themes in philosophers' works, both orally and in writing

Method(s) of Instruction

Methods of Instruction may include but are not limited to the following:

Formal weekly lectures on modules
 Oral presentations by students on assigned philosopher
 Class discussions
 Group meetings with instructor to develop plan, organize topic, themes, and PowerPoint presentations

Representative Text(s) and Other Materials

Ball and Dagger. [Ideals and Ideologies: A Reader](#). 2019.

Anthology and/or college-level introduction to political theory or political philosophy textbook (example listed above).

Original works of philosophers on library reserve, for example:

Types and/or Examples of Required Reading, Writing, and Outside of Class Assignments

1. Weekly reading assignments, of 200-300 pages, and written notes on central themes and ideas of philosopher
2. Library research on assigned philosopher for oral presentation
3. Development of research paper topic, thesis, and outline, utilizing the scientific method

Discipline(s)

Political Science