

## SYLLABUS

**Instructor:**

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**Course Description:**

Debating political priorities and challenging the norms that justify them is central to political life. This is as true today as it was centuries ago. Indeed, much of what passes as new and innovative—or what we tend to regard as dangerous or evil—turns out to be a rediscovery of what earlier thinkers had argued. What lessons—if any—can be learned from revisiting their works? Can we gain a deeper and more critical understanding of the issues of the day by viewing them in the light of political philosophy? To a large extent, politics is talk; what politicians, citizens and diplomats say is always a mixture of facts and values. Can political philosophy help us to better discern how values inform our understanding of what counts as “facts”? Is “fake news” a mirror of the values of those who either manufacture or denounce them? Can political philosophy help us to be more discerning in this regard?

These are the questions this course is designed to raise. The course is organized chronologically, starting with Ancient Greece, and continuing up to today’s writings. But this is not to say that it goes from the least relevant to the most relevant ideas. Reading influential philosophers from the past is often a way to better appreciate the historical and cultural contexts in which contemporary discussions of “democracy” and other key concepts make sense. Sometimes the past is totally foreign to us; but sometimes it forces us to rethink our convictions: have we misunderstood the thinkers to whom we appeal to justify our values? Are we repeating errors against which earlier thinkers wished to warn their readers? Is there progress in politics?

**Texts:**

Roberts, Peri and Peter Sutch. 2012. *An Introduction to Political Thought*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Other texts are available on **Canvas**.

**Assignments:**

Essay (2,500 words; 10 pp. double-spaced):	40%
Mid-term Exam:	20%
Final Exam:	30%
Participation <sup>1</sup>	10%

*Due Dates:*

Mid term:	6 March
Essay:	27 March

**Learning Goals:**

Students will acquire

- A basic familiarity with the ideas and writings of prominent and influential political philosophers, and an ability to “decode” political rhetoric.
- Analytical skill useful for discussing materials used in other Political Science courses.
- Historical knowledge relevant to the discussion of current affairs.

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<sup>1</sup> The participation grade is based on a) an oral presentation and the subsequent submission of a short (800+ words) written follow-up, b) active participation in tutorial discussions.

## READING LIST

All readings (NOT including chapters from the textbook) are available on Canvas or online.

NOTE: make a real effort to read the primary sources, and not just the textbook.

### 9 Jan. Introduction: Objectives of the Course

Read:

Roberts & Sutch, Introduction.

### 16 Jan. Plato: Is There a Universal Moral Order?

Read:

Roberts & Sutch, ch. 1

Plato, *The Republic*, Books I, IV & VII

<https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/lib/sfu-ebooks/detail.action?docID=295397>

(click on “show subsections”)

### 23 Jan. Aristotle: Is Politics Natural?

Read:

Roberts & Sutch, ch. 2

Aristotle, *Politics*, Book I chapters i to iii, v & vi; Book II chs, I & v; Book IV, chs. viii & ix; Book VII, chs. ii & iii (on Canvas look for file Aristotle\_The Politics.pdf)

**NOTE:** Aristotle’s text is challenging—some ideas are definitely outdated, and his arguments are often oblique or circuitous; in other words, read the text attentively but also *critically*.

### 30 Jan. Machiavelli & the Republican Tradition

Read:

Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chs XV to XVII & XXV (on Canvas look for file THE\_PRINCE.pdf)

Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Book I, chs. 2, 4 & 5 (on Canvas look for files Machiavelli-Discourses\_excerpts.pdf)

*Recommended:* D. Vujaninovic, “Machiavelli’s Republican Political Theory” (on Canvas look for file Vujadinovic\_Machiavelli-republicanism.pdf)

**NOTE:** Reading only *The Prince* gives an incomplete perspective on Machiavelli’s thought. Question to ask yourself: does Machiavelli’s admiration for Roman republicanism compatible with his praise of power in *The Prince*?

### 6 & 13 Feb. Hobbes & Locke: Two visions of “the social contract”

Read:

Roberts & Sutch, pp. 69-72 & 103-116.

T. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Introduction & chs. 13 to 15 (there is an on-line version available from the SFU Library; and a pdf file on Canvas).

J. Locke, "Concerning the True Original Extent and End of Civil Government" (*Second Treatise*), Book II, chs. 2, 3 & 5 (on Canvas look for the file Locke-government.pdf. It contains both the First and the Second Treatises—the Second Treatise starts on p. 105)

**20 Feb.:**                    **Holiday/no class**

**27 Feb.                    Rousseau: Nostalgic Republicanism & Romantic Idealism**

Read:

Roberts & Sutch, pp. 92-101 & 116-124.

J.-J. Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, Second Part. (on Canvas, find it in file Rousseau- Writings.pdf)

J.-J. Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Book I, chs. VI to VIII & Book II, chs. I to VII (on Canvas, find it in file Rousseau- Writings.pdf)

**6 March.                    MID-TERM EXAM<sup>2</sup>**

**13 March.                    Socialism: Utopian & Revolutionary**

Read:

Roberts & Sutch, ch. 5

K. Marx, *Communist Manifesto* chs. I & II (an online version is available on the SFU Library website)

K. Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Preface (on Canvas look for file marx-preface2contrib.pdf).

**20 March.                    Utilitarianism: From Bentham to Mill**

Read:

Roberts & Sutch, ch. 6

J.S. Mill, *On Liberty*, chs. 1 to 3 & 5 (several versions are available/downloadable from the SFU Library website)

*Recommended* J.S. Mill, *The Subjection of Women*, chs. 1 & 3

<https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/lib/sfu-ebooks/detail.action?pq-origsite=primo&docID=435846>

**27 March                    Rawls vs Nozick: Reform Liberalism vs Libertarianism**

Read:

Roberts & Sutch, ch. 7

J. Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, Part I §6 to 11, and part II §13 to 17 (on Canvas look for files Rawls...pdf).

R. Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, ch. 7 section I (on Canvas, file Nozick.pdf)

**3 Apr.                    The Feminist Challenge**

Read:

Roberts & Sutch, ch. 11.

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<sup>2</sup> Briefly answer ten questions (e.g., definitions of important concepts)

I.M. Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, ch. 6 (on Canvas look for file Iris-Marion-Young-Justice-and-the-Politics-of-Difference\_ch.6.pdf)

Kathy Ferguson, "Feminist Theory Today" (on Canvas look for file Ferguson-Feminism\_annurev-polisci.pdf)

**10 Apr.**

**Holyday/no class**

## Advice about Writing the Essay

### A/ Getting familiar with the issues

You will be provided with a list of essay questions. Once you've selected the one that interests you most, you should look for relevant sources. **Start with primary sources.** That is to say if, for instances, the question consists of a comparison between Hobbes and Rousseau's uses of the concept of a "social contract," then you should begin by (re-)reading the excerpts of Hobbes' *Leviathan* and Rousseau's *Social Contract* that are listed in this syllabus. You would be well advised to read a little more from each of these works. Then look for secondary sources, such as the textbook and references therein; and of course, there's always Google... Make sure, however, that the sources are legitimate academic sources. If you find a relevant journal article, download it from the SFU Library. If the Library does *not* have it, there is good chance that the article was published in a non-reputable (not properly peer-reviewed) journal and should be avoided.

How many secondary sources should you use and cite? It all depends on the amount of time you can devote to working on this paper. Use common sense. Using only one secondary source may not allow you to take a critical distance from that source. Therefore, two or three sources that present somewhat different interpretations would be more advisable.

CITATIONS: I do not require a specific style; you can use footnotes or in-text shorter "callouts" with a corresponding full title, etc. in a list of references at the end of the paper. The important thing is to **always** place direct quotations between quotation marks. This **also goes for paraphrased text**: at the end of the paraphrase ["according to so and so... ], insert the source [for example write: (see Author Date, and page range)]. In other words, always give credit where credit is due.

### B/Writing the Essay

A very important to organize your essay clearly and logically. In fact, the main justification for assigning a grade above or below a B+ is that essay was indeed well or poorly organized.

The essay should start with an *introduction* that explains why the question you address is important both in the context of the history of political philosophy and with respect to contemporary politics. At the end of the introduction, you should *announce how the rest of the paper unfolds*. The rest of the paper should be structured around *explicitly numbered and titled sections* (not more than 3 or 4). The *conclusion* should provide a recap of the argument and an assessment: if much of the paper consists of a

discussion of the pros and cons regarding a particular thesis (e.g., a social contract is/is not a useful metaphor), then in the conclusion you should “get off the fence,” as it were and state your position.

**Make sure you proofread your text:** too many spelling mistakes and poorly constructed/hard to understand sentences can justify a lower grade.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: YOUR WORK, YOUR SUCCESS

SFU’s Academic Integrity web site <http://www.sfu.ca/students/academicintegrity.html> is filled with information on what is meant by academic dishonesty, where you can find resources to help with your studies and the consequences of cheating. Check out the site for more information and videos that help explain the issues in plain English.

Each student is responsible for his or her conduct as it affects the University community. Academic dishonesty, in whatever form, is ultimately destructive of the values of the University. Furthermore, it is unfair and discouraging to the majority of students who pursue their studies honestly. Scholarly integrity is required of all members of the University. <http://www.sfu.ca/policies/gazette/student/s10-01.html>