

PO 291: Introduction to Political Theory

Lectures: Tues. & Thurs. 3:30-5 (CAS 224)

Lecturer: Prof. James Schmidt
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Course Website: http://courseinfo.bu.edu/courses/08sprgcaspo291_a1

Political philosophy attempts to grapple with the fundamental questions of public life. It addresses such issues as the nature of political authority, the relationship of the state to the individual, and the obligations and responsibilities citizens owe one another. This course offers an introduction to the field by examining the way that theorists have tried to make sense of three basic concepts: “authority”, “liberty”, and “justice.” While some of the readings draw upon “classics” in the field — e.g., Aristotle, John Locke, David Hume, and John Stuart Mill — we will also look at writings by present-day moral philosophers and political theorists.

This course serves as the “core course” in political theory for Political Science majors and can be used by those who are not Political Science majors to satisfy College of Liberal Arts distribution requirements for the social sciences.

Course Requirements:

Students are responsible for all of the materials in the readings (whether discussed in class or not) and for all of the points raised in lectures and in discussion sections (whether covered in the readings or not). There will be two tests (on February 21 and April 1) and a final examination on Saturday, May 10 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM. The tests will consist of short questions dealing with the section of the course just completed. The first half of the final exam will consist of short questions on material from the third part of the course; the second half will consist of essay questions covering all the readings in the course.

Active participation in the weekly discussion sections and responses to questions posed in lectures will be a factor in determining your final grade. Questions to consider will be posted on the course website prior to class meetings; use them as a guide for your reading. Assigned materials are to be read *prior* to classes and you should bring copies of the readings to class meetings.

In determining final grades in the course, the two tests will count for 45% of the final grade, the final exam will count for 45% and participation in discussion sections will count for 10%. The grades of students with frequent (i.e., more than 3) absences from lectures and discussions will be lowered. If possible, please contact the instructor in the event of serious illness or other emergencies that require you to be away from class for more than two meetings. Since allowing some students to do extra credit work is unfair to the other students in the course, no extra credit work will be accepted. Makeup tests will be given only in cases of documented illness or serious family emergencies.

The College of Arts and Sciences requests that faculty remind students that the college has a policy against plagiarism (for information see the relevant sections of the CAS Bulletin). It will, of course, be enforced.

Books:

The following books are available for purchase at the Boston University Bookstore:

David Miller, *Political Philosophy, A Very Brief Introduction* (Oxford)
John Locke, *Political Writings* (Hackett)
John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (Hackett)
Jonathan Westphal, ed., *Justice* (Hackett)

Additional readings will be posted on the course website.

Readings and Schedule of Lectures

Readings marked with an asterisk (*) will be available on the course website. Readings marked with a dagger (†) can be accessed from the “External Links” section of the course website.

1/17 Introduction:
Miller, *Political Philosophy* 1-18

I. Authority

1/22 The Idea of Authority: An Overview
Miller, *Political Philosophy* 19-36
Hannah Arendt, “What is Authority?,” in Arendt, *Between Past and Future* 91-142*
R. S. Peters, & Peter Winch “Symposium: Authority,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volumes*, 32 (1958) 207-240†

1/24 Religion and the Foundation of Political Authority
James VI and I, Selections from *The True Law of Free Monarchies* (1598)*
Robert Filmer, Selections from *Patriarcia* (1680) *
The Body of Liberties of the Massachusetts Colony in New England (1641)*
Joshua Green, “Roy and His Rock,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, October 2005*
Mitt Romney, Speech at the George Bush Presidential Library, December 6, 2007.*

1/29 Toleration and Religious Liberty
John Locke, Selections from the *First Treatise* in Locke, *Political Writings* 242-259
John Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration* in Locke, *Political Writings* 390-433
Thomas Jefferson, Selections from *Notes on Virginia* *
James Madison, “Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments”*
John F. Kennedy, address to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association, September 12, 1960.*

1/31 Locke on Political Authority
John Locke, *Second Treatise* §§1-51, §§57-63, §§87-91 in Locke, *Political Writings* 261-286, 288-292, 304-307.

2/5 & 2/7 Locke on Consent and Resistance
John Locke, *Second Treatise* §§95-99, §§120-131, §§134-142, §§211-212, §§221-243 in Locke, *Political Writings* pp. 309-311, 323-327, 328-335, 369-370, 373-387

- 2/12 Rethinking the Social Contract
 David Hume, "Of the Original Contract"*
 Immanuel Kant, "On the Common Saying: That May be Correct in Theory, but it is of No Use in Practice," (Part II: "Against Hobbes")*
- 2/14 Majority Rule and Civil Disobedience
 Miller, *Political Philosophy* 37-54
 Henry David Thoreau, "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience"*
 Martin Luther King, "Letter from Birmingham City Jail"*
 David Lyons, "Moral Judgment, Historical Reality, and Civil Disobedience," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 27 (1998) 31-49.†

2/21 First Test

II. Liberty

- 2/26 Freedom and Liberty: An Overview
 Miller, *Political Philosophy* 55-73
 Benjamin Constant, *The Liberty of Ancients Contrasted with that of Moderns**
 Hannah Arendt, "What is Freedom?" in Arendt, *Between Past and Future* , 143-172*
 Bernard Williams, "From Freedom to Liberty: The Construction of a Political Value," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 30 (2001) 3-26.†
- 2/28 Positive and Negative Liberty
 Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty"*
 Gerald C. MacCallum, "Negative and Positive Freedom," *The Philosophical Review* 76 (1967) 312-334.†
 David Miller, "Constraints on Freedom," *Ethics* 94 (1983) 66-86.†
- 3/4 Mill on Liberty of Thought and Discussion
 John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* pp. 1-52
- 3/6 Mill on Individuality and Liberty of Action
 John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* pp. 53-91
- 3/18 The Limits of Individualism: Mill and His Critics
 James Fitzjames Stephen, Selections from *Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity**
 Willmoore Kendall, "The "Open Society" and Its Fallacies," *The American Political Science Review* 54 (1960) 972-979†
- 3/20 Enforcing Morality
 A. R Louch, "Sins and Crimes," *Philosophy* 43 (1968) 38-50†
 H. L. A Hart, "Social Solidarity and the Enforcement of Morality," *The University of Chicago Law Review* 35 (1967) 1-13†
 I. C. L Ten, "Enforcing a Shared Morality," *Ethics* 82, (1972) 321-329†
 Gerald Dworkin, "Paternalism," *The Monist* 56 (1972) 64-84†

- 3/25 Liberty as a Right to Privacy
 Judith Jarvis Thomson, "The Right to Privacy," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 4 (1975) 295-314†
 H. J. McCloskey, "Privacy and the Right to Privacy," *Philosophy* 55 (1980) 17-38†
 Ronald Dworkin, "Liberal Community," *California Law Review* 77 (1989) 479-504†
- 3/27 The Right to Privacy: Abortion, Sodomy, and Same-Sex Marriages
 Michael J. Sandel, "Moral Argument and Liberal Toleration: Abortion and Homosexuality," *California Law Review* 77 (1989) 521-538.†
 Karen Struening, "Privacy and Sexuality in a Society Divided over Moral Culture," *Political Research Quarterly* 49 (1996) 505-523.†
 Selections from *Lawrence v Texas**
 Selections from *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health* (Mass SJC)*
- 4/1 **Second Test**
- III. Justice**
- 4/3 Distributive and Corrective Justice
 Miller, *Political Philosophy* 74-111
 Aristotle, Selections from the *Nicomachean Ethics* in Westphal, *Justice* 73-94
 Julian Lamont, "The Concept of Desert in Distributive Justice," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 44 (1994) 45-64.†
- 4/8 Justice and Utility
 David Hume, Selections from *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* in Westphal, ed., *Justice* 133-148
 J. S. Mill, Selections from *Utilitarianism*, in Westphal, ed., *Justice* 157-177
- 4/10 Justice as Fairness
 Immanuel Kant, Selections from *The Metaphysical Elements of Justice* in Westphal, ed., *Justice* 149-156
 John Rawls, Selections from *A Theory of Justice*, in Westphal, ed., *Justice* 22-36
 John Rawls, "The Priority of Right and Ideas of the Good," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 17 (1988) 251-276.†
- 4/15 Natural Law and Property
 Lysander Spooner, *Natural Law, or The Science of Jurisprudence**
 Robert Nozick, Selections from *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* in Westphal, ed., *Justice* 7-21
- 4/17 Rights, Ownership, and Utility
 H. L. A. Hart, "Between Utility and Rights," *Columbia Law Review* 79 (1979) 828-846†
 Jeffrey H. Reiman, "The Fallacy of Libertarian Capitalism," *Ethics* 92 (1981) 85-95†
 J. R. Kearl, "Do Entitlements Imply that Taxation is Theft?," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 7 (1977) 74-81.†
 John Christman, "Can Ownership be Justified by Natural Rights?," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 15 (1986) 156-177.†

- 4/22 Defending Slavery
- Aristotle, Selections from the *Politics**
- George Fitzhugh, Selections from *Sociology for the South**
- 4/24 Arguments Against Slavery
- R. M Hare, "What is Wrong with Slavery," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* (1979), †
- Ronald A. Lindsay, "Slaves, Embryos, and Nonhuman Animals: Moral Status and the Limitations of Common Morality Theory," *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal* 15 (2005) 323-346.†
- Joshua Cohen, "The Arc of the Moral Universe," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 26 (1997) 103-121.†
- 4/29 & 5/1 Justice Across Borders
- Miller, *Political Philosophy* 112-132.
- David Miller, "The Ethical Significance of Nationality," *Ethics* 98 (1988) 647-662†
- John Rawls, "The Law of Peoples," *Critical Inquiry* 20 (1993) 36-68.†
- Charles R Beitz, "Social and Cosmopolitan Liberalism," *International Affairs* 75 (1999) 515-529.†
- Final Exam: Saturday, May 10 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM