



Cincinnati Christian University

PHIL 240 – Political Theories (3 Semester Credit Hours)

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Spring Semester 2019

MW 1:30pm – 2:45pm
Office: Presidents Hall Room 258

Course Syllabus

DESCRIPTION: An introduction to political theories, aimed at providing a foundation in politics for the study of justice, law, and civic responsibility.

RATIONALE: To understand the philosophical premises that structure modern politics, students must be made aware of the differing programs of thought that compete for primacy within today's governmental and civil landscapes.

OBJECTIVES: The student will...

- Practice skills of historical analysis and interpretation
- Identify issues and problems in the past, recognize factors contributing to such problems, identify and analyze alternative courses of action, formulate a position or course of action, and evaluate the implementation of that decision.
- Acquire knowledge of historical content in U.S. history in order to ask large and searching questions that compare patterns of continuity and change in the history and values of the many peoples who have contributed to the development of the continent of North America.
- Develop historical understanding through the avenues of social, political, economic and cultural history and the history of science and technology.
- Develop an understanding of civic life, politics, and government, so as to explore the origins of governmental authority, recognize the need for government; identify the crucial functions of government; evaluate rules and laws; differentiate between limited and unlimited government; and appreciate the importance of limitations on government power.
- Explore American democracy, including the American idea of constitutional government, the impact of distinctive characteristics of American society on our government, the nature of the American political culture, and the values and principles that are basic to American life and government.
- Understand how the U.S. government operates under the constitution and the purposes, values and principles of American democracy, including the ideas of distributed, shared and limited powers of government; how the national, state and local governments are organized; and the place of law in the system.
- Understand the relationship of the U.S. to other nations and world affairs.
- Become aware of the full range of opportunities to participate as citizens in the American democracy and the responsibilities for doing so.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

1. Wolff, Jonathan. An Introduction to Political Philosophy. Oxford University Press. New York, NY. 2006.
ISBN – 019929609X

2. Wood, Gordon. Revolutionary Characters. Penguin Group. New York, NY. 2006. ISBN – 014312082
3. Zinn, Howard. A People’s History of the United States: 1492-Present. Harper Collins Publishing. New York, NY. 2003. ISBN – 0060838655
4. West, Cornel. Democracy Matters. Penguin Group. New York, NY. 2005. ISBN - 0143035835

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. Attendance – Absences are strongly discouraged. Excessive absences will result in the lowering of the student’s grade.
2. Take notes on all class lectures and participate in classroom discussions and activities.
3. **Free Writes** – At the beginning of class every Monday, a political topic or question will be presented on the board. The student is to answer and expound upon that topic or question on a piece of notebook paper. The student is allotted ten minutes to write and must write the entire ten minutes. These take place every Monday and those free writes that students miss cannot be made up, absent some extenuating circumstance. The student may be asked to present what he or she wrote to the class and will serve as a discussion-starter. These are 1 percentage point a piece and in order to receive the full point, the student must write for the entire 10 minutes and must show a reasonable attempt to answer the question or expound on the topic. There are 15 free writes in all and each are worth one percentage point. Total points this semester = 15%.
4. **Summaries** – The summaries will be taken from the book, An Introduction to Political Philosophy. On the first day of class, the student will be assigned two sections of the material to cover. These are to be one page summaries. No less, no more. At the top of each summary page, the student is to formulate a thesis statement concerning the main point of the assigned section. These theses are to be no less than 15 words and no more than 23. The thesis is to be in **bold** and underlined, and is to be separate from the body of the paper. The paper itself is to support the thesis statement. Both the thesis and the body of the paper are to be a summary of the assigned section. This means three things: 1. This is NOT an outline of the section but a summary, so the paper should take paragraph form. There should be no lists or bullet points. 2. There are to be no quotations from the book. This is entirely the student putting the section in his or her OWN words. 3. There should be no opinions in this paper. It is to be purely the student’s understanding of the section written out. The student may or may not be asked to share his or her summary with the class. There are two section summaries, each worth 10% - collectively 20% - of the final grade.*
5. **Book Responses** – The book responses will be taken from two books: Revolutionary Characters and People’s History of the United States. These responses are to be 1-2 pages in length and **should follow the same instructions for the thesis as the Summaries**. The first half of the paper should be a summary of the assigned chapter from the book. The second half should be the student’s own personal response. The personal response section should answer the following three questions: 1. How does this chapter influence your perception of U.S. history? 2. What concepts or events from the chapter particularly moved you and why? 3. What lessons can we today take from this chapter and why? There are to be 4 book responses in all, one from Wood, and 3 from Zinn. They are worth 10% a piece – 10% from Revolutionary Characters and 30% from People’s History of the United States collectively – of the final grade.
6. **Reaction Paper** – The student is to read Democracy Matters in its entirety and is to write a 4-5 page reaction to the book. At least three pages should be devoted to summarizing the major points of the book and at least one page of personal response. The personal response should include an analysis of both the books strengths AND weaknesses. This is not to be so optimistic that it is an all-out praise of the book and should not be so pessimistic so as to not take anything good from its content. This represents 20% of the final grade.

7. **Final Presentation** – On the first day of class the professor will divide the class into two parts and will assign each half with a different political philosopher. Each half will be divided into three groups: Researchers, Presenters and Debaters. Each group will be selected by the professor. The Researchers will be in charge of gathering all the needed information about the assigned philosopher and will be the chief supplier of information to the Presenters and Debaters. On the day of the presentation, the Researchers will also submit all the information that was provided to the group to the professor. These are to take the form of a 3-5 page paper. The Researchers may work together on this paper. The paper does not need to follow standard rules of writing, but needs to be coherent and must give the sources of their findings. The Presenters are in charge of coming up with a unique and creative way of presenting the information that was found by the Researchers to the entire class. The Presenters are to give a 15-20 minute long presentation to the class. The Debaters will be in charge of learning the information supplied by the Researchers inside and out, capable of recalling the information and embodying the political philosopher during the debate. The debate will be 20-25 minutes in duration. The professor will moderate the debate, ask prodding questions, and generally lure the debaters into an all-out brawl. Time to work on this will be allotted during class, but it is expected that the majority of the work will be done on the student's own time. The Researchers will be graded on their submitted information, the Presenters will be graded on their presentation and the Debaters will be graded on their ability to embody the philosopher and recall important elements of the philosopher's thought. This assignment is worth 5% of the final grade.

*All papers are to be double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12pt. font, standard margins.

GRADING PROCEDURE: Letter grades will be determined in accordance with the percentages listed in the college catalog. Individual grades will be based on the following criteria:

a.	Free Writes	15%
b.	<u>An Introduction to Political Philosophy</u> Summaries (2)	20%
c.	<u>Revolutionary Characters</u> Response	10%
d.	<u>People's History of the U.S.</u> Responses (3)	30%
e.	<u>Democracy Matters</u> Reaction Paper	20%
f.	Final Presentation	5%

Academic and Disability Services:

The Evan Bolejack Learning Center: Students in need of academic coaching or tutoring should contact the learning center at learning.center@ccuniversity.edu to schedule an appointment. All services are free to current students.

Accommodations: Students who require academic accommodations due to a documented physical, psychological, or learning disability may request assistance from the Student Services Department. Students are encouraged to complete this process within the first two weeks of the semester. The Student Services Department is located on the upper level of Presidents Hall. You may also contact the office by phone at 244-8150.

Course Schedule:

January:

23rd – Go over syllabus. Assign readings.

28th – Free Write Discussion #1

30th – Introduction to Political Theories

February:

4th – Free Write Discussion #2

6th – Machiavelli

11th – Free Write Discussion #3

13th – **Intro to Political Philosophy summaries due.**

18th – Free Write Discussion #4

20th – John Locke

25th – Free Write Discussion #5

27rd – Thomas Hobbes & Jean-Jacques Rousseau

March:

4th – Free Write Discussion #6

6th – **Revolutionary Characters response due.**

11th – NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK

13th – NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK

18th – Free Write Discussion #7

20th - Romanticism and Zeitgeist

25th – Free Write Discussion #8

27th – Watch Film

April:

1st – Free Write Discussion #9

3rd – Adam Smith, Ayn Rand, Austrian School

8th – Free Write Discussion #10

10th – Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Frankfurt School

15th – Free Write Discussion #11

17th – **People's History of the U.S. responses due.**

22nd – Free Write Discussion #12

24th – Art and Politics

29th – Free Write Discussion #13

May:

1st – Art and Politics

6th – Free Write Discussion #14

8th – **Democracy Matters reaction paper due.**

13th – Free Write Discussion 15, FINAL PRESENTATION

15th – FINAL PRESENTATION