

# PT219 Concepts of the Political

Seminar Leader: Jeffrey Champlin  
Course Times: Wed & Fri 10:45-12:15  
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Office Hours: Fri 17:30-18:30 and by appointment

## Course Description

This course offers a historical introduction to political theory as it struggles to appropriately model common action and political representation. We begin with Aristotle on the polis (Greek city-state) as the place of collaboration with a view to the good life, and the different constitutional forms this takes. Next, we examine how Augustine responds to a new challenge to worldly authority in Christianity by reconciling the divine and human city. As the basis of modern political theory's focus on legitimacy, we then study the roots of the social contract tradition in Hobbes and Rousseau. We conclude with thinkers from the 19th century to the present who inject the momentum of history into the core of their critiques of power (such as Marx, Arendt, Fanon, and Spivak).

## Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the staunchest regard for academic integrity and expects good academic practice from students in their studies. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section III Academic Misconduct.

## Requirements

We will make the most of the liberal arts seminar format by developing ideas and analysis through a process of discussion and writing. Toward that end, each student will contribute a short presentation and write a midterm and final paper. Overall class participation is also essential, and will be evaluated based on consistently preparing the readings and class engagement.

## Attendance

Attendance at ALL classes is expected. Since the class meets once a week, more than one absence in the semester will significantly affect the participation grade for the course. Please consult the Student Handbook for regulations governing periods of illness or leaves of absence.

**Class presentations:** Students will present on one text as per a sign-up sheet. Each presentation of about 15 minutes will examine key passages of your choice as guided by a commentary handout that I will provide. In turn, you will provide your own handout for the class that focuses your reading of the text. You are encouraged to write your **midterm or final papers** on the text that you present on. In this manner, your essay can expand on the insights and questions that arose from your class contribution and the discussion that follows your readings.

## Writing Assignments

Students will write two papers. The first will be focused on one author and the second will develop a longer comparative analysis of two texts we have studied in the class. The midterm paper will be 2,000 words, the final will be 3,000 words.

## Policy on Late Submission of Papers

From the Student Handbook: *essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than C. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.*

## Grade Breakdown

Class participation (quality and quantity): 25%

Presentation: 20%

Midterm essay (2000 words): 25%

Final essay (3000 words): 30%

## Course Materials

The course will have a reader that all students should purchase. In addition, you will need the following books. The texts marked with an (\*) are available at the library for students on financial aid and then on a first come, first served basis. The Arendt and Fanon should be purchased, along with other books as needed based on the library's holdings.

Aristotle, *The Politics*, 0140444211; 9780140444 (\*)

Arendt, *On Violence* (New York, Harcourt Brace, 1970) [Any edition is ok.]

Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 9780872201781 (\*)

Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, ) 0802141323. [Please try to get this specific translation.]

Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, 1853267813;9781853267819(\*)

The following texts will be provided in the course reader or provided in class:

Augustine, *City of God*, book 19  
Derrida, "Cosmopolitanism"  
Marx, Karl and Engels, Friedrich. "Communist Manifesto"  
Rancière, "Ten Theses on Politics"  
Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In: *Marxism and The Interpretation of Culture* ( Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1988)

## Schedule

January 30  
Welcome, *Antigone*

February 1  
*Antigone*

February 6  
Aristotle, *Politics*, books 1-2

February 8  
Aristotle, *Politics*, books 3-4

February 13  
Aristotle, *Politics*, books 5-6

February 15  
Aristotle, *Politics*, books 7-8

February 20  
Augustine, *City of God*, book 19

February 22  
Augustine, *City of God*, book 19, continued

February 27  
Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Introduction, Part I

March 1  
Hobbes. *Leviathan*, part 2.

March 6  
Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, book 1

March 8

Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, book 2

March 13

Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, book 3

March 15

Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, book 4

### Midterm Paper Due

March 20

Marx and Engels, "Theses on Feuerbach"

March 22

[Midterm Grades Due]

Marx and Engels, "Communist Manifesto"

March 27

Arendt, *On Violence*

March 29

Arendt, *On Violence*

April 3

Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

April 5

Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

April 10

Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?"

April 12

Mbembe, "Provisional Notes on the Postcolony"

April 17, 19 SPRING BREAK

April 24

Mbembe, continued

April 26

Derrida, "On Cosmopolitanism"

May 1 FEDERAL HOLIDAY NO CLASS

May 3  
Derrida, "On Cosmopolitanism"

May 8  
Rancière, "Ten Theses on Politics"

May 10 Conclusion and sharing student work  
**Papers due for graduating students**

May 15, 17 Completion Week  
**Papers due for non-graduating students**  
(Final grades for senior students - 16 May 2019)