

PL115 Foundations of Political Theory

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Office Hours: Wed & Fri 14:00-16:00 and by appointment

Course Description

This course explores the central ideas and problems of political theory from historical and global perspectives. We will undertake close readings of influential texts that explore the foundational concepts and practices that inform political behavior and institutions today. While taking account of the historical complexities and stylistic conventions of each text, the course will highlight the recurrent themes that animate these influential writings and continue to shape analyses of political phenomena. Using a dialogic approach, the course will explore ideas about nature and history, autonomy and authority, liberty and slavery, empire and race, state and violence, rule and contestation, liberalism and fascism, democracy and dictatorship.

The course has three major goals. First, students should gain substantive understanding of the major texts, schools of thought, and lines of argument within the distinctive traditions of political and social thought. Second, students should gain proficiency in reading and analyzing political categories and concepts that are proposed and challenged by a variety of authors and texts. Third, students should take from this course a substantive familiarity with the contested meanings and practices of democracy as the central problem of political theory.

Course Requirements

Students are expected to complete readings, attend class sessions, participate in discussions, and submit timely assignments. Performance will be assessed on the following basis:

- (1) **Active participation** in class discussions and group activities constitute an important component of the course. This course is designed as a collaborative and shared enterprise.
- (2) The course is **reading-intensive**. Students will demonstrate familiarity with the readings by means of (a) comments on weekly readings, (b) in-class presentation on selected reading, and (c) class discussions.
- (3) The course is **writing-intensive**. Throughout the semester, students will undertake regular writing assignments, including weekly comments, reflection papers, and analytical essays. You are encouraged to utilize the tutorial services at the Learning Center for assistance with your essays.

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Accessibility

Bard College Berlin is committed to inclusion and providing equal access to all students; we uphold and maintain all aspects of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and Section 3 of the German Disability Equality Act of April 27, 2002 (Federal Law Gazette I p. 1468). If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, Atticus Kleen, (accommodations@berlin.bard.edu) to request an official accommodation.

Requests for longer-term accommodations should be made as early as possible to ensure adequate time for coordination and planning. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and may require advance notice to implement.

If you have already been approved for accommodations with the Disability Accommodation Coordinator, please arrange to meet with me outside of class so that we can develop an implementation plan.

Students may face extenuating circumstances related to various personal or external factors, which impact their academic performance. While these circumstances often do not fall within the legal framework of Disability Accommodations, Bard College Berlin is committed to supporting students experiencing such circumstances. A student needing a short extension or a replacement assignment because of an extenuating circumstance is encouraged to make arrangement directly with instructors if possible. If further support is needed, please visit the Bard College Berlin Accessibility page.

Questions about this process can be directed to James Harker (j.harker@berlin.bard.edu) or Maria Anderson-Long (m.andersonlong@berlin.bard.edu).

Attendance Policy

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. A maximum of two excused absences during the semester may be granted to account for minor circumstances. Further absences are granted under exceptional circumstances, and require supporting documentation. No unexcused absences are permitted. Unexcused absences will adversely affect participation grade in the course. In case of authorized absences, students are responsible for making up any missed work. Bard College Berlin does not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

Assessment & Grade Breakdown

Student performance and final grades are evaluated on the basis of timely and satisfactory completion of course requirements. The main components of assessments are listed below, and further guidelines will be provided during the semester:

- **Class Participation & Weekly Comments (30%).**
- **Class Presentations (20%).**
- **Preparatory Assignment I: 500 word Essay Proposal (5%)**
- **Preparatory Assignment II: Textual Analysis of 1,500 words (15%)**
- **One Analytical Essay of 4,000 words (30%).**

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

All assignments must be submitted by the assigned deadlines. Essays that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded up to one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example)

Course Materials

All course readings are available in the *PL115 Course Reader*.

PL 115 Foundations of Political Theory
Schedule of Topics and Readings*

1a. September 3 Why Political Theory

Leo Strauss, "What is Political Philosophy?" in *What is Political Philosophy*, Excerpts.
John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, Ch 11-12.
Leo Strauss, "What is Liberal Education?" in *Liberalism: Ancient and Modern*, 3-8.

ANCIENT & MEDIEVAL THOUGHT: POLITICAL NORMS AND TECHNIQUES

1b. September 5 Democracy and Oligarchy

Thucydides, "Pericles' Funeral Oration," *The Peloponnesian War*, Book II, §§ 34-46.
The Old Oligarch/Pseudo-Xenophon, *The Constitution of the Athenians*, 15-20; 24-25; 28-29.
Friedrich Nietzsche, 'The Greek State,' *On the Genealogy of Morality*, 164-173.

2a. September 10 Politics and Constitutions

Aristotle, *The Politics*, Bk I (Ch 1-2); Bk III (Ch 1-13 (pp. 92-136), Notes optional).

2b. September 12 Virtues and Rites of Governing

Kǒngzǐ (Kong Qiu), *The Analects of Confucius*, Bk II; Bk XII-XIII (Book IV optional).
Mòzǐ, *The Mozi*, selections.

3a. September 17 Law and Human Nature

Hánfēizǐ, *The Hán Fēizǐ*, selections.
Xúnzǐ, *The Xúnzǐ: Complete Text*, selections.

3b. September 19 The Perfect State

Al-Farabi, "Selected Aphorisms (Aphorisms of the Statesman)," in *The Political Writings*.
Al-Farabi, *The Perfect State*, selections.

4a. September 24 History and Politics

Ibn Khaldun, *Al Muqaddimah*, selections.

4b. September 26 Accidents and Politics

Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, selections.
Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Discourses of Livy*, selections.

EARLY MODERN AND ENLIGHTENMENT THOUGHT: NATURE AND GOVERNMENT

5a. October 1 Nature and Sovereignty

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Ch 13-17.

5b. October 3 Nature and Consent

John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government*, Ch 2-5, 9.
Immanuel Kant, *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose*, 41-53.

* Subject to minor revisions.

6a. October 8 History and Alienation

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, Part II.
Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Of the Social Contract*, Book I.

6b. October 10 Representative Government in America

Hamilton, Jay, Madison, *The Federalist Papers*, VI-X.
The Anti-Federalist Papers, *The Anti-Federalist Papers*, selections.
Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, selections.

7a. October 15 Slavery in America

Fredrick Douglass, "What To the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" in *Fredrick Douglass Reader*.
Alexis de Tocqueville, "On the Three Races that Inhabit America" in *Democracy in America*.
W. E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folks*, Ch 1-2.

7b. October 17 Liberalism Before Democracy

John Stuart Mill, *Considerations of Representative Government*, selected chapters.
Bernard Manin, *The Principles of Representative Government*, selected pages.

8a/8b. October 22 & 24

FALL BREAK

MODERN POLITICAL THOUGHT IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

9a. October 29 Revolution and Democracy

Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, in Robert Tucker (ed.), *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 473-83.
Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 594-617.

9b. October 31 Liberalism and Exclusion

Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Introduction, Ch 1, 2.
Harriet Mill & John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women*, Ch 1.
Saba Mahmood, "Feminism, Democracy and Empire, in Herzog & Braude (eds.), *Gendering Religion and Politics*, 193-215.

10a. November 5 Liberalism and Empire

Aimé Césaire, *Colonialism and Anti-Colonialism*, selections.
W. E. B. DuBois, "The Souls of White Folks," in *Darkwater*, 29-52.
Mohandas Gandhi, *Indian Home Rule*, Ch IV-VI.

10b. November 7 Modern State and Legal Violence

Max Weber, "Politics as Vocation," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, 77-79.
Walter Benjamin, "The Right to Use Force," in *Selected Writings Vol I*, 231-233.
Walter Benjamin, "Critique of Violence," in *Selected Writings Vol I*, 236-252.

11a. November 12 Nations and Nationalisms

Étienne Balibar, "The Nation-Form: History and Ideology," in E. Balibar & I. Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, 87-105.
Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Community*, Ch 1-2.

11b. November 14 Colonial State and Violence

Frantz Fanon, "On Violence," *The Wretched of the Earth*, 1-26.
Martin Luther King, *A Testament of Hope*, selected chapters.

12a. November 19 Empire and Democracy

L. T. Hobhouse, *Democracy and Reaction*, Ch II, VI-VII.
George Julian Harney, "Letters of L'Ami du Peuple," *The Red Republican*, June 22, 1850, 1-2.

LIBERALISM AND DEMOCRACY IN THE LONG TWENTIETH CENTURY

12b. November 21 Crises of Parliamentarism

Carl Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, selections.
Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, selections.

13a. November 26 Liberalism and Electoral Democracy

Hans Kelsen, *The Essence and Value of Democracy*, selected pages.
Joseph Schumpeter, "Another Theory of Democracy," 269-282.

13b. November 28 Liberal Democracy and Dictatorship

Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology*, Ch 1.
John Ferejohn & Pasquale Pasquino, "The Law of Exception," *I.CON* 2:2 (2004) 210-239.

14a. December 3 Democracy and Revolution

Hannah Arendt, "The Meaning of Revolution," in *On Revolution*, 28-35.
Sheldon Wolin, "Fugitive Democracy," in *Fugitive Democracy and Other Essays*, 100-113.
Pierre Rosanvallon, "The Political Theory of Democracy," in ... Ch 2.

14b. December 5 Social Democracy

Iris Marion Young, *Justice and Politics of Difference*, Ch 3.
Linda Gordon & Nancy Fraser, "Contract versus Charity: Why is There No Social Citizenship in the United States," *Socialist Review*, 45-68.
Adam Przeworski, *Social Democracy*, Ch 1. (Optional/Background)

15a. December 10 Democratic Socialism

Lane Kenworthy, *Would Democratic Socialism Be Better?* Ch 17.
Gary Dorrien, *American Democratic Socialism*, selections.

15b. December 12 Democracy and Participation

Carol Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory*, Ch 2.
Judith Butler, "Bodies in Alliance and the Politics of the Street," *Notes Towards a Performative Theory of Assembly*, 66-98.
Andrew Lamas et. al. (eds.), *The Great Refusal*, selected pages.

16a/16b. December 17 & 19 COMPLETION WEEK