

Course Syllabus in English

Course Description	<p>This course offers an introduction to key thinkers and major debates in the history of Western political philosophy. We will read, interpret, and evaluate some classic texts in ancient and modern political thought. Through the careful and attentive reading and critical analysis of these texts, we will study common political concepts, questions, and problems across our texts and explore central themes, such as justice, liberty, equality, human nature, democracy, property, violence, and political authority. While we will attend closely to the ideas and arguments of these thinkers in their own contexts, we will also consider the validity or value of their ideas more generally: What do they have to teach us about the nature of political interaction and political inquiry? Do the thinkers' similarities or differences make them more or less appealing or relevant to you, as a 21st-century reader with your own political values, commitments, and experiences? Do they teach you anything new about politics?</p>
Course Requirements	<p>1. Reading: Read the texts diligently and come to class prepared to discuss them. Close reading entails entering into an authentic conversation with the author, a conversation in which you are both trying to get to the heart of the political problems we confront as human beings. You are trying to listen well to what they are trying to tell you, and to arrive at a judgment about why you find them persuasive, or where you disagree with them. In order to arrive at that judgment, you have to be confident that you have understood what they are trying to say.</p> <p>2. In-Class Discussion and Participation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">(1) Come to class every week, having read the text carefully and with questions or critical reactions in mind.(2) Try your best to arrive in class on time – late arrivals can disrupt your classmates' learning.(3) The class will be a combination of lecture and discussion. Sometimes we will break into small-group discussions during which you should participate actively in discussions with your peers to help develop and challenge your understandings.(4) Comments should be constructive and respectful even if you disagree with a classmate's interpretation; aim at raising questions that we can discuss in class. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect where all members of our community can express themselves, engage with each other, and respect one another's differences. The University does not condone discrimination or harassment against any persons or communities.(5) Attendance will be taken irregularly. An absence without a previously approval by the instructor will incur a deduction in the final participation grade. If you have to miss a class, please inform the instructor at least 2 hours BEFORE the class starts; any requests for an excused absence later than the said due time will not be processed.(6) Occasionally, we will also have short on-the-spot writing exercises or quizzes in class. No make-up writings or quizzes are possible unless students' absence is approved by the instructor.

	<p>3. Lateness Policy: Late assignments will be penalized at the rate of 5% per day of lateness, including weekends. All assignments that are submitted after the deadline will immediately incur a penalty of 5%. AFTER 1 WEEK, NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED. If you are having trouble meeting a deadline, it is essential that you reach out to the instructor at least 2 days BEFORE the assignment is due. Unless there are verified, documented, and justifiable reasons, extensions are not granted. Any extension requests that do not follow the course policy will not be processed.</p> <p>4. Academic Honesty: Cheating and plagiarism are serious offenses against academic integrity and are subject to disciplinary action by the University. Plagiarism will NOT be tolerated and any form of plagiarism will incur severe consequences including failing this course.</p> <p>5. Use of AI NOT Permitted: Any use of generative technologies is prohibited in this course. Using any form of generative AI for research or writing is considered an academic offense.</p> <p>6. Use of Cellphones/Smartphones NOT Permitted in Class: Cellphones/smartphones should not be used during class. Those using smartphones during class, even quietly, may be asked to stop. Those awaiting urgent phone calls should seat themselves near an exit; put their phones on vibrate; and excuse themselves from the lecture hall if they receive an alert requiring the use of a phone.</p> <p>7. Email Protocol:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) When emailing the instructor, please include the course name in the subject line. You are welcome to communicate in English or Mandarin in all email correspondence. (2) Please use your University email (@ntu.edu.tw) (3) Please consult the syllabus and the course webpage before asking questions that are answered there. (4) The instructor will usually respond within 2 business days (i.e. not including weekends or public holidays) whenever possible. Emails sent on weekends, public holidays, or after 5 pm on weekdays will NOT be read. Students are responsible for leaving adequate time for a response and contacting the instructor in a timely manner, especially in asking for an approved absence or an extension. (5) Norms of politeness apply. All communication with anyone in the course should be respectful. While ordinary questions are welcome, hectoring or harassing emails are not appropriate and may incur consequences.
Course Objectives	<p>The main objective of the course is to gain an understanding of some of the most pressing debates in the history of Western political thought through a close reading of canonical texts. This course is meant to teach students to see each reading as politically and philosophically interesting in its own right and in its own historical context. Another major aim of this course is to encourage students to judge for themselves which ethical and political perspectives and arguments are persuasive or compelling to them and which aren't.</p>

Learning Outcomes	<p>Students will learn to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) critically engage (in writing and discussion) some of the best-known texts in the history of political thought (2) grasp the overall thrust of a text's argument and articulate an elaborate account of the key concepts theorized by the thinkers under study (3) identify key passages in a given text and unpack their meaning by relating them to other parts of the text and cognate themes or concepts in other thinkers and texts (4) identify major ethical and political questions and concepts that are important to the tradition of political theory and reflect on the implications of the ideas (5) interpret the primary texts and then use them as evidence in formulating and supporting your arguments (6) develop and articulate a more sophisticated understanding of your own political stances by analyzing and comparing terms and concepts in their various uses and the merits and shortcomings of different arguments (7) write argumentative essays that analyze, interpret, or compare relevant texts (8) critically evaluate and further develop your own political values and commitments, including reflecting on contemporary political institutions or practices and finding resources that help stimulate political imaginations in facing the challenges of our current world
Required Readings	<p>Plato. 1992. <i>Republic</i>. Trans. G.M.A. Grube, Rev. C.D.C. Reeve. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett.</p> <p>Aristotle. 1998. <i>Politics</i>. Trans. C.D.C. Reeve. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett.</p> <p>Christine de Pizan. 2018. <i>The Book of the City of Ladies</i>. Ed. Sophie Bourgault and Rebecca Kingston. Trans. Ineke Hardy. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett.</p> <p>Machiavelli, Niccolò. 1994. <i>Selected Political Writings</i>. Trans. David Wootton. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett.</p> <p>Hobbes, Thomas. 1994. <i>Leviathan</i>. Ed. Edwin Curley. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett.</p> <p>Locke, John. 1980. <i>Second Treatise</i>. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett.</p> <p>* Attention: There are many different editions and translations of these texts. It is very important that you acquire these editions so that we can refer to them in lectures (using the same translations of the texts with the same pagination) and so that you can cite them in your assignments.</p>
Grading	<p><u>Assignments (Passage-Interpretation): 60%</u></p> <p>Six take-home assignments worth 10% each.</p> <p>You will write one assignment for EACH of the SIX thinkers we study during this term. To complete these assignments and earn marks, you MUST follow these instructions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. You will submit one (and only one!) assignment for EACH of the six thinkers. Since we will spend two weeks on each of the thinkers, you can choose

which week to submit an assignment for. For example, when studying Plato, you can choose to write one for EITHER the first week of Plato OR the second week of Plato. This means that if you submit an assignment for the first week of Plato, you don't have to submit an assignment for the second week of Plato. But if you do not submit an assignment in the first week of Plato, you MUST submit one in the second week of Plato.

2. It is essential that students submit an assignment for EACH of the thinkers. For example, you cannot submit two assignments on Plato and skip Aristotle. If you submit more than one assignment (e.g. two) for one thinker, only the EARLIEST submission will be graded and count towards your final marks (note: only the earliest submission will be graded; it is NOT the case that both submissions will be graded with the higher-graded one being counted).
3. All assignments MUST be submitted to the NTU COOL course page NO LATER THAN 2 PM the day BEFORE the class in which we'll be discussing the assigned reading (i.e. no later than 2 pm on Wednesday, the day BEFORE class).
4. Late assignments will be penalized at the rate of 5% per day of lateness, including weekends. All assignments that are submitted after the deadline will immediately incur a penalty of 5%. AFTER 1 WEEK, NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED. Please plan to submit your work on time and do your best to meet the set deadlines—if you miss one thinker and do not submit one assignment WITHIN ONE WEEK after the second week of that thinker, you will receive a 0% for that thinker. YOU WILL NOT PASS THIS COURSE IF YOU MISS SUBMITTING ASSIGNMENTS FOR 4 THINKERS (since 4 assignments are worth 40% in total).
5. To write the assignment (Passage Interpretation), you will:
 - a. Choose a passage from the assigned reading of between 1 and 5 sentences, and copy it at the top of your assignment, with a page reference to the text.
 - b. Write a short essay (250-500 words, excluding the cited passage; 800 words maximum; essays will be penalized for exceeding the maximum word limit at the rate of 2 points per 100 words over the limit). In the essay, you will: (1) explain the MEANING of the passage (identifying the central concept in the passage, particular terms or ideas or conceptual puzzles that the passage provides either within the passage, or in relation to another passage, or invocation of the same term or idea within the work); (2) reflect more broadly on the SIGNIFICANCE of the passage (explaining how the passage fits into the broader argument of the text and of the author; how the passage offers further insight or challenge to the main lines of argument in the text); (3) offer a brief ASSESSMENT of the main claim put forward by the author in the passage (articulating why you found the passage especially convincing, wrong-headed, original, or confusing. How does the passage connect to what you understand as important problems of politics in our own time? How does it make you think differently about the limits, possibilities, or purposes of politics?) You don't have to answer all of these questions in your assignment. Instead, focus on articulating the reasons why you found the passage interesting and why you think others should find it interesting, too.
6. Generally, these assignments will be graded on a simplified scale: "check-plus" (A), "check" (B), or "check-minus" (C).

<p><u>Final Exam: 30%</u> In-person during the final exam period.</p> <p><u>Attendance and Class Participation: 10%</u> Including but not limited to: attendance, in-class short writings or quizzes, comments or questions raised in class, and small-group discussions.</p>			
Course Schedule			
Week	Date	Topic	Lecturer
Week 1	February 20th	Course Introduction	
Week 2	February 27th	Plato (I)	
Week 3	March 6th	Plato (II)	
Week 4	March 13th	Aristotle (I)	
Week 5	March 20th	Aristotle (II)	
Week 6	March 27th	Christine de Pizan (I)	
Week 7	April 3rd	No Class (Public Holiday)	
Week 8	April 10th	Christine de Pizan (II)	
Week 9	April 17th	Machiavelli (I)	
Week 10	April 24th	Machiavelli (II)	
Week 11	May 1st	Hobbes (I)	
Week 12	May 8th	Hobbes (II)	
Week 13	May 15th	Locke (I)	
Week 14	May 22nd	Locke (II)	
Week 15	May 29th	Review and Reflection	
Week 16	June 5th	Final Exam	