

EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
DIVISION OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

**REQUEST FOR INCLUSION OF A COURSE IN THE
GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM:
EDUCATION FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY**

DEPARTMENT/SCHOOL: POLITICAL SCIENCE COLLEGE: ARTS AND SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT CONTACT: JOANNA SCOTT CONTACT PHONE: 734/487-0063
CONTACT EMAIL: JSCOTT@EMICH.EDU

1. Subject Code, Number, and Title: PLSC 213 Intro. Political Thought
2. Credit Hours 3
3. Course Description

An exploration of a selection of some major political theorists to examine different approaches to the examination of perennial issues such as justice, liberty, equality, legitimacy and political order.

4. This course is (check one):

- an existing course with no revisions (need not go through the input system)
- an existing course with revisions (attach this form to Request for Course Revision form)
- a new course (attach this form to Request for New Course form)

5. Check the General Education requirement this course is intended to meet. If the course is to be proposed for more than one requirement, submit a separate form for each one.

- Effective Communication**
- Quantitative Reasoning (*QR designation*)**
- Writing Intensive (*WI designation*)**
- Perspectives on a Diverse World**
 - Global Awareness
 - U.S. Diversity
- Knowledge of the Disciplines**
 - Arts
 - Humanities
 - Science
 - Social Science
- Learning Beyond the Classroom (*LBC designation*)**

- Self and Well Being
- Community Service, Citizenship, and Leadership
- Cultural and Academic Activities and Events
- Career and Professional Development
- International and Multicultural Experience
- Undergraduate Research

6. Rationale. Provide a concise, clear, jargon-free explanation of why this is a General Education course and how it fits into this specific area of the program. (The rationale should explain to students why they are taking the course. It should address both why it is part of the General Education program and why it fits into the particular category.) This rationale should appear on the general course syllabus provided here and should be included in specific course syllabi given to students. Note: *The Writing-Intensive courses are designed to provide students with the opportunity to continue to develop their writing through engagement with disciplinary strategies and conventions. Those proposing a WI course should explain in the rationale how and why the course is a writing-intensive course.*

This course fits into the Knowledge of the Disciplines, Humanities section of the General Education requirements by introducing students to the philosophical approach to the discipline of political science. Through careful and exacting readings of primary texts, students are introduced to the body of philosophical thought on politics and governing that has developed over 2500 years, learn how philosophical knowledge of politics is developed and disseminated, and learn to develop their own questions and a method for seeking answers to those questions in the discipline. Through a combination of close readings of the texts and placing the text in the historical context students will gain a basic knowledge of selective works in political philosophy including the ideas or doctrines contained in the practices and approaches used in this long tradition of political reflection.

7. Clearly and concisely explain how this course meets each of the General Education outcomes for the requirement checked in number five (all outcomes should be addressed). To do this, (a) list the General Education outcomes for the requirement and explain how the course meets each outcome; and (b) explain, in general terms, the method(s) of evaluation to be used in the course and how these methods assess the degree to which students have met the General Education outcomes for this requirement.
1. Outcome: Recognize how the humanities cultivate aesthetic appreciation, imagination, and empathic understanding of others.
 - a. There are at least two ways in which this course will help students cultivate aesthetic appreciation. First, students will distinguish aesthetic understanding from other modes of understanding and explanation, and the relationship aesthetic appreciation has to these other modes as they arise in particular texts in political theory. For example, Plato in his *Republic* insists on censoring poetry of all kinds for the moral influence on citizens. Students would use this example of Plato's and the argument he makes to explore the impact of the arts on human personality and the political, and whether politics has a role to play in regulating art. Second, students will come to appreciate not only the logical and rational significance of a

philosophical text but also come to appreciate the beauty of an argument or philosophical system. Philosophical thinking inherently requires imagination. Philosophical thinking requires one to attempt to enter into the thinking of another person. It requires a great deal of imagination to make sense of the often wonderfully complex understanding of the world a theorist may have constructed and the role and character they understand politics to have in this world. This imaginative enterprise that is political philosophy is connected to the cultivation of empathic understanding. In entering into the thoughts of another, one not only learns to suspend one's own commitments but also learns to appreciate the plausibility, thoughtfulness, and integrity of often radically different viewpoints.

- b. Objective examinations, essays, and guided conversations in the classroom are designed to test for these outcomes. In essay and examination questions students will be asked to show how deeply and empathetically they understand the viewpoint and argument of others and to think about and make their own arguments. Specific attention is paid to presenting the theorist's argument and to clearly distinguish when a student is making one's own argument. Exam, essay, and in-class questions may specifically ask about the relationship between poetic imagination and political reflection and action.
2. Objective: Demonstrate basic competency in reading and understanding literary, philosophical, or religious works both in their original historical context and as they inform debate and dialogue today.
 - a. This course deals primarily with literary, philosophical, and religious texts, has a strong emphasis on the historical context giving rise to the sorts of questions different political philosophers have addressed, and explores the value of these works for understanding contemporary politics. This class, though a political philosophy course, engages works beyond those traditionally considered philosophy texts. Students are asked to think about the political through literary works as well such as plays, epic poems, fine art, and novels to name a few. The preponderance of the texts are philosophical, though often they have a strong religious and theological element. For example St. Augustine's *City of God*, St. Paul's letter to the Romans, or the theological-political work John Locke's *Second Treatise on Government* are often used. The historical context is given in lectures introducing each author and is provided in classroom conversations as needed. Students are asked to think about how the historical context might influence the sorts of questions and answers about politics various thinkers have posed. Students are asked to move beyond the historical context as well and to think about how these works are important to us today: how they transcend their own time and place and touch on more universal concerns of human beings, either because the author had those concerns or because of the kinds of questions we can bring to bear on the particular text. For example, a line of discussion might be pursued that moves from Hobbes's concerns with the English Civil war to an analysis of what is political authority and why we today might have an obligation to obey the law. Classroom discussions are designed to help students makes connections like this from the historical concern of the theorist that gave rise to their reflections to the more philosophical ideas they develop that are relevant to the contemporary scene. Whether it is Plato's concern with Athenian democracy that gives rise to his theory of knowledge and how it is the criteria for political rule or Mill's concern with social tyranny that results in an theory of free speech and experiments in living, each theorist both illuminates our underlying assumptions with argumentation and challenges those assumptions.
 - b. Classroom discussions help cultivate reading and understanding, and essays and examinations are designed to evaluate reading comprehension. Examination and essay questions are designed to test both the understanding of the connection to the historical context but also to evaluate the student's ability to connect the thinking and assumptions of various political

philosophers to contemporary political argument and practice. For example, after having read Homer and Pericles' "funeral oration" students might be asked to assess whether Socrates is guilty of the charge of corrupting the young entered against him or whether his defense in the *Apology* is an adequate one, requiring the linking of the charges and defense to the historical context. Students might be asked in classroom discussions or on examinations whether, despite the historically contingent nature of Marx's economic thinking, whether his argument about treating people as commodities continues to challenge our own thinking.

3. Objective: Analyze and write about literary, philosophical, or religious works.
 - a. This class is designed primarily to analyze and write about literary, philosophical, and religious works. Classroom discussions, lectures, and essay assignments are designed to model and walk students through how to analyze works as various as Plato's *Republic*, Machiavelli's *Prince*, and Huxley's *Brave New World* with an eye toward understanding the nature of the political. Students engage in analyzing the role, character and place of politics on the map of the experience of these authors. This analysis often involves situating and analyzing the character of politics in light of other views a thinker has on issues as varied as the nature of God and the cosmic order, the nature of human beings, the ends of society, and the qualities of a good life as they are revealed in descriptive treatises or in imagined futures.
 - b. As a means of evaluation, students are required to write both essays and essay style examinations that reflect their ability to analyze and write about these works. Grading will be largely based on the command of the text and the ability to engage the text in a rigorous way with textual support. In class discussions early in the term emphasize what counts as "evidence" for argumentation in a political theory course.
4. Objective: Demonstrate basic knowledge of the history of literary works, or religious or philosophical ideas.
 - a. This course does not have the pretension of providing "the" history of political philosophy, but rather "a" history of political philosophy by focusing on some of the seminal political ideas, systems, and thinkers across the ages, mostly, but not exclusively, in the Western tradition. The historical context of the selected political philosophers is presented and explored and some of the major historical junctures in political thinking are noted and analyzed. Some themes like justice, liberty, equality, legitimacy, and political order are used as touch stones for the course.
 - b. Knowledge of the various responses by these authors across time is evaluated with objective essays and examinations, often by asking students to compare and contrast various thinkers on questions such as the source of one's obligation to obey government or the nature of liberty. Special attention in grading will be paid to avoiding anachronistic statement and the importation of later views to earlier thinkers. Students are asked in essays and examinations to find the historic progenitors to a thinker's ideas but also to identify how those ideas are different.
5. Objective: Become familiar with the discursive practices particular to the study of the humanities.
 - a. This course both introduces students to the philosophical (at times practical, scientific, and poetic approach) to the study of politics, but also to the wider variety of methods and modes used to reflect on the political order. A recurrent theme in the class is that from Socrates to the present how one goes about studying politics can be quite different. And each manner of reflecting on politics has its value. Students may also be exposed to the distinction between practical political reflection (reflection encountered in the actual practice of politics) and descriptive and explanatory reflections on politics, or between scientific, historical, and philosophical inquiries and explanations.

- b. Students familiarity with the various approaches to the study of politics is measured in objective essays and examinations and in classroom participation by assessing the quality of philosophical response to the various political philosophers, keeping clear the difference between philosophical, scientific, historical, practical/moral, and aesthetic responses in their answers.
6. Objective: Begin to recognize how society influences humanistic thought and how the humanities transform society.
 - a. Students are exposed to multiple ways in which an individual's thought is influenced by one's community and cultural inheritance. This idea might be introduced for example from a discussion of Plato and how his political regime in the *Republic* largely reflects the ethical order or *sittlichkeit* of the Athenians. It might be through a discussion of Marx and how the forces of production condition the relations of production and all other relations, or through an analysis of J.S. Mill's worry about social tyranny that students are introduced and come to appreciate this connection. Through these same works, however, student will recognize how these thinkers and their ideas have altered society, how their ideas were subversive of their contemporaries, but how they may have become the unquestioned assumptions of our own time.
 - b. Student understanding of the dynamic relationship here will be evaluated through objective essays and exams, especially with questions on essays and examinations on authors that focus on this relationship. Students might, for example be asked on an exam or in an essay what gave rise to Rousseau's concern with the source of inequality in his second discourse, but also to know the various ways in which Rousseau's ideas were invoked in the service of the French Revolution, or how his thinking has been appropriated by other thinkers to defend a civil republican view of government.
7. Objective: To become practiced in the interpretation and generation of ideas.
 - a. This course is centrally about the interpretation of texts and the author's ideas embodied in those texts. Students will become practiced in interpretation through many avenues and requirements in this course. Interpretation is modeled in class by the instructor. Students are asked to read and interpret primary texts and respond with those interpretations verbally and in essays and on examinations. They must defend those interpretations by reference to the data or evidence, which in political theory is the text. Students must be able both to articulate what the author's meaning and argument is and to respond to that argument with one of their own. Classroom discussions and feedback on papers and examinations are carefully constructed to guide students toward relevant considerations in interpretation, what counts as a good argument, and, hence, how to generate an argument of one's own.
 - b. Evaluation of the ability to interpret and generate ideas is through participation in classroom discussions and through objective examinations and essays. Essays and examinations are graded on both the ability to interpret the chosen texts but also on the ability to critically respond to those texts and the arguments in those texts with arguments of one's own.
8. Attach a syllabus (1-inch margins and 10-12 pt. font). The syllabus must include the rationale from #6 above and clearly reflect the outcomes and methods of evaluation detailed in #7 above.

Please submit all materials in electronic form.

Action of the Department/College

1. Department

Request for Approval of a General Education Course (continued)

Vote of department faculty: For 16 Against 0 Abstentions 0

Signed copy on file
Department Head

3/12/2007
Date

2. College

College Dean

Date

Action of General Education Advisory Committee

Vote of General Education Committee: For _____ Against _____ Abstentions _____

Chairperson, General Education Advisory Committee

Date

Approval

Associate Vice-President for Undergraduate Studies and Curriculum

Date

SAMPLE SYLLABUS: INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL THOUGHT

Dr. Eric S. Kos

PLSC 213 (10144)
Fall 2006
T/Th 9:30-10:45
420 Pray- Harrold

Phone: 734/487-0063
E-mail: ekos@emich.edu
Office: 601H Pray-Harrold
Hours: T/Th 12:15-2:00, Th
3:15-5:00, & by appt.

Description:

This course offers an introduction to the philosophical study of politics that meets the Knowledge of the Disciplines, Humanities section of the General Education requirements by introducing students to the philosophical approach to the discipline of political science. Through close readings of primary sources, students are introduced to the body of philosophical thought on politics and governing that has developed over 2500 years, learn how philosophical knowledge of politics is developed and disseminated, and learn to develop their own questions and a method for seeking answers to those questions in the discipline. Through a combination of close textual reading and historical contextualization students will gain a basic knowledge of selective works in political philosophy including the ideas or doctrines contained in those works and the discursive practices or methodological approach used in this long tradition of political reflection.

In studying the history of political thought we enter into a long-standing conversation on the nature of political life. What is the character and aim of political activity and of governing? What is the source of political authority? What does it mean to be free and to what extent can that freedom be legitimately curtailed? How do responses to these questions reflect our assumptions about human beings and the world? By entering into a dialogue and becoming conversational partners with some notable political thinkers of the past and with each other, we can help to make our own thoughts clearer on these fundamental questions of political life and respond more critically to the limits and possibilities of our own politics.

REQUIREMENTS:

READINGS: Reading is a critical part of this course. Reading the course material prior to the day we are to discuss it on the syllabus is critical to doing well in the course. One requirement is that you come to class prepared to discuss the readings for that day.

EXAMS: There will be two examinations during the term and a final examination. Exams will not be rescheduled and failure to take an exam, save for a documented emergency, will result in failure of the exam and the course. Exams will be of the short answer and essay format.

WRITING: There will be five (5) paper assignments. These papers will be short (2-3 page) response papers to the reading for that day. I shall be handing out possible topics to write on along the way. More about these short papers in class.

PARTICIPATION: The best way to understand and learn from this course is to stay engaged. That means attending class and participating in discussions.

GRADE WEIGHTS: Papers - 20%, Participation - 10%, Exam 1 - 20%, Exam 2 - 20%, and Final Exam - 30%.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: There are few rules at the university you should take more seriously than those connected with academic integrity. Cheating and plagiarism will be treated with the gravity they deserve: offenders will fail the particular assignment/exam and the matter will be submitted to Student Judicial Services. Consult the Student Conduct Code, or me, if you have any questions about these practices.

READINGS: THE FOLLOWING REQUIRED BOOKS ARE AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE AT THE BOOKSTORE:

- Plato. *The Trial and Death of Socrates*. Hackett Publishing.
- Plato. *The Republic*. Basic Books. Bloom Trans.
- Machiavelli, Niccolo. *The Prince*. U. Chicago Press. Mansfield Trans.
- Locke, John. *Second Treatise*. Hackett Publishing.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Rousseau's Political Writings*. W.W. Norton.
- Mill, John Stuart. *On Liberty*. Hackett Publishing.
- Huxley, Aldous. *Brave New World*. Harper and Row.

Additionally, there are required readings available on electronic reserves. These readings are indicated by “ERes” in brackets on the reading schedule. To access them go to <http://reserves.emich.edu>. Click on the course and enter the password (plsc213).

Schedule

- I. September 7th: Introduction
- II. September 12th & 14th: Homer *Iliad* and Pericles’ “Funeral Oration” in Thucydides *The Peloponnesian War* [ERes]
- III. September 19th & 21st: Plato *Apology* and *Crito* in *The Trial and Death of Socrates*
- IV. September 26th & 28th: Plato *Republic* Books 1-2

Paper 1 due by September 28th

- V. October 3rd: Plato *Republic* Books 3-4
- VI. October 5th: Plato *Republic* Book 5, Book 6 (487a-489d, 504a-end), Book 7 (through 521d, 529a-end), Book 8 (555a-end), Book 9 (through 577d)
- VII. October 10th: St. Augustine *City of God* [ERes], St. Paul *Romans 13* [ERes]
- VIII. October 12th: Machiavelli *The Prince*

Paper 2 due by October 12th

- IX. October 17th: **EXAMINATION 1**
- X. October 19th: Machiavelli *The Prince* continued
- XI. October 24th & 26th: Locke *Second Treatise*

Paper 3 due by October 26th

XII. October 31st & November 2nd: Rousseau *Discourse on Inequality* in *Rousseau's Political Writings*

XIII. November 7th, 9th, & 14th: Rousseau *Social Contract* in *Rousseau's Political Writings*

Paper 4 due by November 14th

XIV. November 16th: **EXAMINATION 2**

XV. November 21st & 28th: J.S. Mill *On Liberty*

XVI. November 30th: Marx *German Ideology* [ERes]

XVII. December 5th: Arendt *Origins of Totalitarianism* [ERes]

Paper 5 due by December 5th

XVIII. December 7th: Huxley *Brave New World*

XIX. December 12th: Review

XX. Tuesday, December 19th, 9:00-10:30a.m.: **FINAL EXAMINATION**