

Introduction to Political Thought

Eastern Michigan University

Fall 2017

Political Science 213

TR: 11:00-12:15 p.m.

Marshal 117

Professor: Ebrahim K. Soltani

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Office Hours: Tue. & Thu. 8:30-10:00 a.m. & by appointment

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Course Description:

Political theory is a systematic critical reflection about the nature of political life. It addresses deep questions regarding the foundations of states and their normative justifications. The purpose of this course is to acquaint the students of political theory with these questions and with the various answers proposed by political theorists. It does so by pursuing four overarching and interconnected issues: first, the nature of political authority; second, the meaning of justice; third, the meaning and scope of liberty; and fourth, the meaning and extent of equality. The course ends with an analysis of some of the most important issues within the realm of applied political philosophy, i.e. deliberative democracy, immigration, and global justice. I have selected the issues of political theory that have proved permanently important.

Course Requirements:

Attendance (10%): You are expected to attend each class and arrive on time. Attendance is essential for success in this class and is *mandatory*. Lectures will critically reinforce and supplement readings. I take attendance at the beginning of each class. If you miss a class session, then your final grade will be penalized. However, this penalty will be waived, if you write an adequate one page response to the assigned reading for the class session you missed and submit this response by the next class session. However, A student who is absent for any reason from **more than three classes** per semester may be not allowed to sit for the exam and receive an “F” for the course.

Participation (10%): I intend to devote a significant proportion of class time to discussing the assigned texts, and expect active participation from all students. This includes listening attentively to other students when they are speaking.

Mid-term, Final Exams (20%, 25%): There will be two in-class exams that will require you to identify the author of a given passage, interpret a given passage, define key concepts, and write short essays.

Papers (15%, 20%): You will be responsible for writing two papers (1 mid-semester paper 3-5 pages and 1 final paper 4-6 pages long) over the course of the semester. In these papers, you are expected to draw on the course readings to make an argument. A sample list of possible paper topics can be provided for those who may need help in developing their own research topics.

Your papers should be typed using a standard 12-point font (such as Times New Roman). The body should be double-spaced with 1-inch margins all around. Please don't forget to use page numbers. Late papers will lower your grade by a third of a letter per day late.

Grading Criteria:

Assignment	When	Percentage
Attendance	All the time	10%
Participation	All the time	10%
Midterm Exam	October 17	20%
Midterm Paper	October 31	15%
Final Paper	December 12	20%
Final Exam	December 14	25%

Academic Dishonesty:

The EMU Code of Student Conduct forbids plagiarism. Students should be familiar with the Code: <http://www.emich.edu/policies/policy.php?id=124>. Any assignment that is plagiarized will receive a score of zero, and may be referred to the EMU Office of Student Conduct. Similarly, cheating on exams is forbidden and will also result in a zero score on the exam. For more detailed information on what plagiarism is and how to avoid it, see: <http://www.emich.edu/library/help/integratingsources.php>

Claims of ignorance and academic or personal pressure are unacceptable as excuses for academic dishonesty. Students must learn what constitutes one's own work and how the work of others must be acknowledged.

Required Text:

Matt Zwolinski, Second Edition (2014), ***Arguing About Political Philosophy***;
Routledge,
ISBN: 978-0415535823

Introduction

Thursday, Sep. 7:

What is Political Theory?

Political Authority

Tuesday, Sep. 12:

Political Authority, in Zwolinski, pp. 3-6

Axelrod, The Evolution of Cooperation, in Zwolinski, pp. 23-40

Thursday, Sep. 14:

Hobbes, The State of Nature as a State of War, in Zwolinski, pp. 3-22

Tuesday, Sep. 19:

Locke, The State of Nature and the Law of Nature, in Zwolinski, pp. 41-50

Thursday, Sep. 21:

Hume, Of the Original Contract, in Zwolinski, pp. 51-58

Rothbard, Society Without a State, in Zwolinski, pp. 59-69

Obedience to Authority

Tuesday, Sep. 26:

Plato, Crito, in Zwolinski, pp. 109-118

Thursday, Sep. 28:

King, Letter from a Birmingham Jail, in Zwolinski, pp. 129-137

Smith, Is There a Prima Facie Duty to Obey the Law? in Zwolinski, pp. 138-152

Human Rights and Property Rights

Tuesday, Oct. 3:

U.N., Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in Zwolinski, pp. 153-161

Nickel, Making Sense of Human Rights, in Zwolinski, pp. 162-172

Thursday, Oct. 5:

Locke, Property, in Zwolinski, pp. 355-366

Nozick, Libertarian Rights, in Zwolinski, pp. 173-179

Political Economy

Tuesday, Oct. 10:

Marx and Engels, The Communist Manifesto, in Zwolinski, pp. 289-308

Marx, Critique of Gotha Program, in Zwolinski, pp. 309-317

Thursday, Oct. 12:
Midterm Review

Tuesday, Oct. 17:
Midterm Exam

Thursday, Oct. 19:

- **Movie (Professor attends ASMEA Conference)**

Justice

Tuesday, Oct. 24:
Sandel, The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self, in Zwolinski, pp. 239-252
Gaus, The Moral Foundations of Liberal Neutrality, in Zwolinski, pp. 273-288

Thursday, Oct. 26:
Hume, Justice as Convention, in Zwolinski, pp. 181-193
Mill, Justice and Utility, in Zwolinski, pp. 194-210

Tuesday, Oct. 31:
Midterm Paper
Rawls, Justice as Fairness, in Zwolinski, pp. 253-272

Thursday, Nov. 2:
Rawls, A Theory of Justice, in Zwolinski, pp. 211-237

Tuesday, Nov. 7:
Nozick, The Entitlement Theory of Justice, in Zwolinski, pp. 389-407
George, The Injustice of Private Property in Land, in Zwolinski, pp. 408-415

Thursday, Nov. 9:
Cohen, Why Not Socialism, in Zwolinski, pp. 416-430
Van Parijs, A Basic Income for All, in Zwolinski, pp. 431-442

Freedom

Tuesday, Nov. 14:
Mill, Liberty, in Zwolinski, pp. 443-462

Thursday, Nov. 16:
Berlin, Two Concepts of Liberty, in Zwolinski, pp. 463-487

Tuesday, Nov. 21

- **Movie (Professor attends NMUN Conference)**

Thursday, Nov. 23:

- **Thanksgiving Recess**

Tuesday, Nov. 28:

Roosevelt, The Four Freedoms, in Zwolinski, pp. 488-489

Pettit, Republican Political Theory, in Zwolinski, pp. 490-504

Immigration

Thursday, Nov. 30:

Huemer, Is there a right to immigrate?, in Zwolinski, pp. 620-649

Miller, Immigration: The Case for Limits, in Zwolinski, pp. 650-661

Global Justice

Tuesday, Dec. 5:

Singer, The Life you can save, in Zwolinski, pp. 663-682

Thursday, Dec. 7:

Pogge, World poverty and human rights, in Zwolinski, pp. 683-689

Lomasky, Liberalism beyond borders, in Zwolinski, pp. 690-710

Tuesday, Dec. 12:

Final Review; Final Paper

Thursday, Dec. 14:

Final Exam, 11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.