
POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY in Fall 2020 (PL2003)

Course Code	PL2003	Professor(s)	Steven Ekovich
Prerequisites	None	Office Number	G-L11
Class Schedule	M: 12:40-14:15 in C-104 R: 18:10-19:45 in C-104	Office Hours	After class or by appointment
Credits	4	Email	sekovich@aup.edu
Semester	Fall 2020	Office Tel. Ext.	583

Course Description

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Political philosophy forms that branch of philosophy that reflects on the specificity of the political. Why are humans, as Aristotle argued, political animals? How are they political? What are the means and ends of the political, and how best does one organize the political with such questions in mind? We will study the age-old themes of political philosophy through an intellectual history of the contributions of its major philosophers.

Course Learning Outcomes

mastery of key concepts

Development of rigorous, critical thinking about the political

Competence in written and oral exposition of philosophical and political concepts

(Philosophical reading and argumentation) Reconstruct, step by step, a philosophical argument concerning one of the themes of this course from premise to conclusion

(Written expression) Write a philosophy essay, focusing on the clear presentation of a critical analysis of a primary text so as to produce an argument that answers a philosophical question.

General Education

[PLEASE REMOVE THIS SECTION IF THE COURSE DOES NOT FULFILL ANY GLACC REQUIREMENT]

GLACC

The Global Liberal Arts Core Curriculum (GLACC) degree requirements include the following categories of courses:

- Integrative Inquiry (coded CCI)
- Experiential learning (coded CCX)
- Research, Interpretation, and Writing (coded CCE)
- Digital Literacy and Communication (coded CCD)
- Disciplinary Research Methods and Writing (coded CCR)
- Quantitative Reasoning (coded CCM)
- Experimental Reasoning Course with Lab (coded CCS)
- Expression Française (coded FR)
- AUP Capstone (coded CCC)

This course can be used to fulfill the [INDICATE THE REQUIREMENT(S) FULFILLED BY THE COURSE] requirement and as such has the following learning outcomes:

[INDICATE THE GENERAL EDUCATION LEARNING OUTCOMES]

Course Outline

OUTLINE:

Political philosophy asks questions about the fundamental nature of politics. In all searches for fundamentals this leads necessarily to different views and controversy, to doubt and uncertainty, to ambiguity.

As Socrates famously said: “The only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing.”

Without going that far, we can say that a persistent pursuit of fundamentals leads to a renewed state of productive “confusion,” a higher state of mastered perplexity, or at best a state of provisional certainty.

And for Carl von Clausewitz: “Although our intellect always longs for clarity and certainty, our nature often finds uncertainty fascinating.”

Or, back to Socrates: “The unexamined life is not worth living.”

Fundamental Questions and Themes

The fundamental questions and themes that political philosophy regularly addresses include:

What is political philosophy? How does it differ from other ways of studying politics?

Ontology, epistemology and ethics in political philosophy.

What is a political community? Who are its members? Who should be its members?

What are the origins of the political community?

What is the state?

What is the best state?

What is sovereignty?

What is political power?

What is liberty?

What is justice?

Why should we obey? When should we disobey?

Political philosophy and ideology.

Political philosophy and religion.

Political philosophy and the economy

Political philosophy and history.

Political philosophy and war.

The course will address all of these questions and issues, but not in this order. The course is organized as an exercise in “dialectics” – so we will pursue and organize our work together from week to week. However, we will largely, though not exclusively, follow the history of political philosophy, while drawing out its classic themes.

Textbooks

This course doesn't have any textbook.

Attendance Policy

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Students studying at The American University of Paris are expected to attend ALL scheduled classes, and in case of absence, should contact their professors to explain the situation. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of any specific attendance policy that a faculty member might have set in the course syllabus. The French Department, for example, has its own attendance policy, and students are responsible for compliance. Academic Affairs will excuse an absence for students' participation in study trips related to their courses.

Covid-19 temporary amendments:

-

Students studying at The American University of Paris are still expected to attend ALL scheduled classes. Due to special circumstances related to the Covid-19 pandemic, students will have the option of attending some classes online either in a synchronous or asynchronous format. In general, students are expected to attend at least one class a week in a synchronous format by either being physically present or logged in via the TEAMS online platform during class. It is still the student's responsibility to be aware of any specific attendance policy that a faculty member might have set in the course syllabus.

Attendance at all exams is mandatory.

In all cases of missed course meetings, the responsibility for communication with the professor, and for arranging to make up missed work, rests solely with the student.

Whether an absence is excused or not is ALWAYS up to the discretion of the professor or the department. Unexcused absences can result in a low or failing participation grade. In the case of excessive absences, it is up to the professor or the department to decide if the student will receive an "F" for the course. An instructor may also recommend that a student withdraw, if absences have made it impossible to continue in the course at a satisfactory level.

Students must be mindful of this policy when making their travel arrangements, and *especially during the Drop/Add and Exam Periods*.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY STATEMENT: As an Anglophone university, The American University of Paris is strongly committed to effective English language mastery at the undergraduate level. Most courses require scholarly research and formal written and oral

presentations in English, and AUP students are expected to strive to achieve excellence in these domains as part of their course work. To that end, professors include English proficiency among the criteria in student evaluation, often referring students to the university Writing Lab where they may obtain help on specific academic assignments. Proficiency in English is monitored at various points throughout the student's academic career, most notably during the admissions and advising processes, while the student is completing general education requirements, and during the accomplishment of degree program courses and senior theses.

Grading Policy

GRADING:

Class PowerPoint presentation	20%
Term paper	20%
Short assignments and quizzes	20%
Attendance and participation	15%
Final Exam	25%

Class Presentation

A fifteen-minute PowerPoint presentation of a topic assigned by the professor. Students are free to volunteer for one of the topics suggested by the professor. An additional ten minutes for questions and discussion.

Term Paper

The term paper (3000 words) will be a reflective analysis on the theme of obedience. As a basis for this reflection you will compare and contrast the following two works:

Henry David Thoreau, *On the Duty of Civil Disobedience* (1849)

<https://www.ibiblio.org/ebooks/Thoreau/Civil%20Disobedience.pdf>

Etienne de la Boétie, *The Discourse of Voluntary Servitude* (1576)

<https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/boetie-the-discourse-of-voluntary-servitude>

The above translation is in the public domain.

A version with an Introduction by Murray N. Rothbard is on non-circulating reserve at the University Library.

[*The Politics of Obedience: The Discourse of Voluntary Servitude*](#)

La Boe'tie, Estienne de, 1530-1563, author; Rothbard, Murray N., 1926-1995, writer of introduction.

Short Assignments and Quizzes

There will be regular short assignments and quizzes. All quizzes will be announced ahead of time.

Attendance and Participation

Regular attendance and active participation are expected of everyone. Excessive absences inevitably lead to a poor grade.

All work MUST be handed in on the date due. All due dates are negotiated with the class.

Final Exam

Essay exam. We will design the final exam together at least a week before the final exam date (December 21)

Other

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

SHORT VERSION

-
1. Philosophical Reading: Ability to read with care philosophical texts.
 2. Philosophical and Political Analysis: Analysis of concepts and their discursive organizations.
 3. Reflective Orientation: Use of conceptual analysis to frame issues. Creativity in developing original views.
 4. Historical Contextualization: Knowledge of relation between philosophy and history.
 5. Interdisciplinary Imagination: Ability and knowledge to work across disciplinary borders.
 6. Written Expression: Well-organized, coherent and well-researched arguments.
 7. Oral Expression: Ability to speak with high consistency and lucidity.

ARTICULATED VERSION:

1. Philosophical Reading: Read with care philosophical texts, differentiate genres of philosophical writing, and distinguish the authors' own points from those of interlocutors and ideas they engage with.
2. Philosophical Analysis: Identify, comprehend and differentiate philosophical concepts, definitions, theses, and arguments paying attention to their discursive organization via careful reading.
3. Reflective Orientation: Use conceptual analysis to articulate a problem or question that arises within an academic discipline or a social practice
4. Historical Contextualization: Sketch the historical context of a philosophy and position it accurately within the history of philosophy
5. Interdisciplinary Imagination: Capacity to build bridges between philosophy and other academic disciplines, and to bring philosophy to bear on extra-philosophical objects

-
6. Written Arguments: Write a structured and persuasive analytic argument that develops an enquiry in the genre of an academic essay
 7. Lucid Speech: Capacity to clearly articulate and defend a philosophical position orally whilst maintaining correct syntax and an appropriate lexicon