

POLI 304: Contemporary Political Theory (Fall 2022)

Location: Davis College 209
Hours: Tuesday / Thursday 6:00pm-7:15pm

Instructor: Prof. Samuel Bagg
Email: samuel.bagg@sc.edu
Office Hours (Gambrell 312): W 11:00am-1:00pm

Objectives

Description from Academic Bulletin: 19th and 20th century political theories

Requirements Fulfilled: Carolina Core (VSR), Founding Documents (FND)

Prerequisites: None

This course examines the origins of the most important dilemmas we face in contemporary political life, through a survey of key political texts from the late 18th century to the present. It is divided into five parts, each of which is organized around *both* a rough historical period *and* a guiding thematic question.

- Atlantic Revolutions (1776-1815): can political orders be founded on terms of freedom and equality?
- Industrial Upheavals (1815-1848): how should societies grapple with rapid industrialization?
- Imperial Transformations (1848-1914): how should different nations, cultures, and peoples interact?
- Civilizational Ruptures (1914-1945): where did humanity go wrong, and how can we fix it?
- Postwar Refoundings (1945-1989): what kind of world should be created from the ashes of the old?

By the end of the course, successful students will be able to:

- Interpret and analyze difficult political and philosophical texts from a variety of historical settings
- Recognize, employ, and critically assess core concepts and arguments from the history of ideas
- Understand how the American founding and subsequent developments fit within a global context
- Trace the historical origins of contemporary political challenges

Requirements

Your grade in the course will be determined by the following combination of factors.

- 20%: Attendance and Participation (through “present and prepared” system explained below)
- 20%: Response Papers (due at 5pm on 9/5, 9/26, 10/17, 11/9, 11/28)
- 40%: Final Exam (set for 7:30pm on 12/8)
- 20%: Final Project (proposal due at 5pm on 11/9, final version due at 5pm on 12/5)

Grading: I understand graded assignments as tools for helping you achieve your own learning goals. My assumption is that most of you want to develop the skills and learn the material we will cover in this course. If you fail to complete the reading, come to class, or finish an assignment on time, this does not indicate to me that you have no interest in doing so; only that you have other demands on your time. Grades thus give you an extra external incentive to do things that you ideally want to be doing anyway—such as completing the reading, attending class, developing analytical writing skills, and solidifying your understanding of the course material.

Materials: all readings are either available for free online (and linked below), or will be made available through Blackboard (B), so you do not need to purchase any separate texts. However, you must have reliable computer and internet access, and must check your email regularly to keep up with deadlines and other details that may change. Make sure you have access to the course on Blackboard and let me know as soon as possible if you do not. For help with technology or software, please contact the Division of Information Technology (DoIT) [here](#).

Attendance and Participation (20%)

Beginning August 23, every student's name will be printed on a slip of paper and laid out at the beginning of class. Assuming you get to class on time (i.e., by 6:05), you may declare yourself "present and prepared" by finding your name and dropping it in a box. During lecture, several names will be drawn randomly from the box, and those whose names are chosen may be called on to answer questions related to the readings.

There are 25 classes between August 23 and the end of term. Each time you put your name in the box, you get one point for attendance and participation, up to a maximum of 20, constituting 20% of your course grade. This means you can miss up to five classes without losing points. Beyond that, you lose one point each time your name is not in the box. (Exceptions to this policy will be made only when required by the University and supported by official documentation. COVID-related absences must be handled through the [Student Ombuds](#).)

If your name is chosen, but your engagement indicates that you are not sufficiently prepared (i.e., your answers are obviously wrong, inappropriate, off-topic, etc...), five points will be deducted from your participation score. In this case, I will contact you privately after class, rather than announcing it publicly, and will allow you to earn back (at least some of) those points by writing an extra response paper (to be graded on the same five-point scale outlined below). If your name is called and you are not present at all, this will be considered academic dishonesty, and ten points will be deducted, which you will not be able to earn back or otherwise make up.

Response Papers (20%)

At the end of each of the first five parts of the course, you will write a 600-800-word response paper. In the last lecture for each part (usually on a Thursday), I will assign several prompts to choose from, and the response paper will usually be due the following Monday (see schedule below for details). Each response will be graded on a 5-point scale, based on whether it: (a) directly answers the prompt; and (b) displays depth and originality; with 1 point deducted for each 24 period it is late (see the full rubric on Blackboard). Your top four scores will be added together, for a maximum score of 20, which constitutes 20% of your course grade). This means you may skip one response entirely; alternatively, if you write all five, I will drop the lowest score.

Final Exam (40%)

The final exam is scheduled for **December 8 at 7:30pm**. It will involve three essay questions (worth 10 points each) and 20 short-answer questions (worth 0.5 points each), totaling 40 points and constituting 40% of your course grade. You will be able to choose which essay prompts to answer from a longer list. The prompts for the response papers will be roughly similar to those you will be asked to address in the essay portion of your final exam, so these are the best opportunity you'll have to practice for the exam and receive feedback.

Final Project (20%)

The format of the final project is up to you, and creativity is encouraged. The only requirement is that you use one or more course texts to demonstrate your proficiency in the final course objective: tracing the historical origins of contemporary challenges. Possible formats include: a dialogue, a policy brief, a party manifesto, a science fiction story, a podcast, a comic strip, a Youtube video, an op-ed, etc.

You will submit a **~500-word proposal** by 5pm on **Wednesday, November 9** but you are also encouraged to discuss it with me beforehand during office hours. The **final version** is due by 5pm on **Monday, December 5**.

It will be evaluated on a 20-point scale, according to a detailed rubric that will be posted on Blackboard along with the assignment, on the basis of whether it creatively explores the historical origins of some contemporary political challenge. Two points from the maximum of twenty will be deducted for each 24 hours it is late (with exceptions only where required by the University and supported by official documentation).

Course Policies

1. Academic Integrity: You are responsible for knowing what constitutes academic dishonesty and for avoiding all forms of it. Violations of the university's academic integrity policy will result in a failing grade for the relevant assignment and referral to the [Office of Academic Integrity](#).

2. Disabilities: Students with disabilities should contact me during the first week of class to ensure that appropriate accommodations are provided. See also the [Office of Student Disability Services](#).

3. Electronics: Use of phones and laptops is prohibited during class, unless you have received special permission from me. Tablets without keyboards may be used to display readings but should not be used for note-taking. Studies show that taking notes by hand improves retention.¹ Moreover, a wealth of human experience reveals that we are weak beings forever subject to temptation, and must be restrained in order to achieve our own best interests.² However, there are exceptions, and if you feel that you are among them, please contact me.

Course Schedule

Aug 18 (Th): Introduction

I: Atlantic Revolutions (1776-1815): can political orders be founded on terms of freedom and equality?

Aug 23 (Tu): *Declaration of Independence* ([link](#)) and *Constitution of the United States* ([link](#))
Publius (Madison / Hamilton), *Federalist Papers* # 1, 10, 15, 48, 51 ([link](#))

Aug 25 (Th): *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* ([link](#))
Thomas Paine, selections from *The Rights of Man* (Blackboard)
Edmund Burke, selections from *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Blackboard)

Aug 30 (Tu): Olympe de Gouges, *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen* ([link](#))
Mary Wollstonecraft, selections from *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Blackboard)

Sep 1 (Th): *Haitian Constitution of 1801* ([link](#))
C. L. R. James, selections from *Black Jacobins* (Blackboard)

Sep 5 (**Mon**): Response Paper #1 due (for Atlantic Revolutions) (**5pm**)

II: Industrial Upheavals (1815-1848): how should societies grapple with rapid industrialization?

Sep 6 (Tu): Adam Smith, selections from *The Wealth of Nations* (Blackboard)

Sep 8 (Th): Alexis de Tocqueville, selections from *Democracy in America* (Blackboard)

Sep 13 (Tu): Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Communist Manifesto*, preamble + chapter 1-2 ([link](#))

Sep 15 (Th): **NO CLASS**—Prof. Bagg at American Political Science Association – read Shelley!

¹ Mueller, Pam A. and Daniel M. Oppenheimer (2014), "The Pen is Mightier than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand over Laptop Note Taking," *Psychological Science*. 25 (6): 1159-1168.

² See, e.g., Homer, (~750 BCE), *The Odyssey*.

- Sep 20 (Tu): Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, Letter 4, Chapters 2-5, 7-8, 10-11 ([link](#))
 Required Background: Wikipedia entry on *Frankenstein*, to get full plot + context ([link](#))
 Recommended: *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (film directed by Kenneth Branagh, 1994)
- Sep 22 (Th): John Stuart Mill, *Chapters on Socialism*, chapter 1 (Blackboard)
 Jane Addams, "A Modern Lear" (Blackboard)
 Recommended Background: Wikipedia entries on King Lear ([link](#)) and Pullman Strike ([link](#))
- Sep 26 (Mon) Response Paper #2 due (for Industrial Upheavals) (5pm)

III: Imperial Transformations (1848-1914): how should different nations, cultures, and peoples interact?

- Sep 27 (Tu): Herbert Spencer, *Social Statics* ([link](#))
 - Chapter XXV ("poor-laws"), sections § 1 and 5-8
 - Chapter XXX ("general considerations"), sections § 1-5
 John C. Calhoun, "Speech on the Reception of Abolition Petitions," revised report ([link](#))
 Wikipedia on *Dred Scott v. Sandford* ([link](#)), intro and section 3 (Supreme Court decision)
- Sep 29 (Th): *NO CLASS – disrupted by Hurricane Ian*
- Oct 4 (Tu): Abraham Lincoln, *Emancipation Proclamation* ([link](#))
 Frederick Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" ([link](#))
 - abridged video version ([link](#))
 Ida B. Wells, "Lynch Law in America" (Blackboard)
- Oct 6 (Th): Andrew Jackson, "Speech on Indian Removal, 1830" ([link](#))
 Elias Boudinot, "Address to the Whites" ([link](#))
 Luther Standing Bear, *My People the Sioux*, ch 13, 14, 18 ([link](#))
- Oct 11 (Tu): Mahatma Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, ch 4-7, 9, 13 (Blackboard)
 Sun Yat-Sen, lectures on "Popular Sovereignty" and "Nationalism" (Blackboard)
- Oct 13 (Th): *NO CLASS – Fall Break*
- Oct 17 (Mon): Response Paper #3 due (for Imperial Transformations) (5pm)

IV: Civilizational Ruptures (1914-1945): where did humanity go wrong, and (how) can we fix it?

- Oct 18 (Tu): Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, selections from *State and Revolution* (Blackboard)
 Benito Mussolini, "The Doctrine of Fascism," abridged (Blackboard)
- Oct 20 (Th): Friedrich Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, ch 2-3 (Blackboard)
 Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, ch 3, 21 (Blackboard)
- Oct 25 (Tu): Hannah Arendt, selections from *Origins of Totalitarianism* and *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (B)
- Oct 27 (Th): *NO CLASS – Prof. Bagg at APT conference – read Césaire / Mao / work on final project!*
- Nov 1 (Tu): Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (Blackboard)

Nov 3 (Th): Mao Zedong, selected writings from *Marxism: Essential Writings* (Blackboard)

Nov 7 (Mon): Response Paper #4 due (for Civilizational Ruptures) (5pm)

Nov 8 (Tu): *NO CLASS – Election Day*

Nov 9 (Wed): Final Project Proposal due (~500 words) (5pm)

V: Postwar Refoundings (1945-1989): what kind of world should be created from the ashes of the old?

Nov 10 (Th): Universal Declaration of Human Rights ([link](#))
Judith Shklar, “The Liberalism of Fear” (Blackboard)
Required Video (20 mins): The Fallen of WWII ([link](#))

Nov 15 (Tu): Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism*, intro, ch 18, conclusion (Blackboard)

Nov 17 (Th): Sharon Statement ([link](#))
Port Huron Statement ([link](#))

Nov 22 (Tu) Vaclav Havel, selections from “The Power of the Powerless” (Blackboard)
- focus on sections § 1-9 (I-IX), 15-17 (XV-XVII), and 20-22 (XX-XXII)

Nov 24 (Th): *NO CLASS – Thanksgiving Holiday*

Nov 28 (Mon): Response Paper #5 due (for Postwar Refoundings) (5pm)

Nov 29 (Tu): Joseph Chan, “Hong Kong, Singapore, and Asian Values: An Alternative View” ([link](#))
Amartya Sen, “Democracy as a Universal Value” ([link](#))

Dec 1 (Th): Wrap-up day (no reading)

Dec 5 (Mon): Final Project due (5pm)

Dec 8 (Th): Final Exam (7:30-10pm)