

Syllabus
PLS 212: Introduction to Political Theory
Fall 2009

Instructor: Dr. Earl Sheridan
Office Hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, & Thursday 10-11 am;
Other Times By Appointment
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Texts

An Introduction to Political Theory by Fowler and Orenstein (course pack) and Political Thinking by Tinder.
We will also utilize film to illustrate certain issues.

Course Objectives

To introduce the student to normative political theory (political philosophy) and examine some of the basic questions and issues of political philosophy, questions such as: what is the proper relationship between the individual and the state, what is human nature, what is the best state, is revolution justified and if so when? What is justice? We will examine these and many other questions through the eyes of selected political philosophers. Upon completing the class, you should be able to think and express yourself critically on basic aspects of normative political theory.

Course Requirements

Three exams. The exams will be short answer and essay. The first two exams will count 100 points. The final exam will be 50 points, 50 points will also be assigned based on classroom participation. (which includes attendance, participation in class discussions, discussing assigned readings, possible pop tests) The final and participation grades will be added for a possible total of 300 points, which will be averaged by 3. Make-up exams will be given on Reading Day, only with an acceptable written, official excuse. Academic dishonesty (see Honor Code in Student Handbook) will not be tolerated and will be dealt with harshly. Turn off cell phones during class – no texting during class, laptops are allowed but must be attuned to PLS 212 material.

Grading

90-100=A, 80-89=B, 70-79=C, 60-69=D, below 60=F. There will be no + - grading.

Attendance

I take attendance. You have three unexcused absences. For each unexcused absence over three, 5 points will be deducted from your participation grade. Excused absences are granted for serious illness or other serious occurrences for which I will need written verification such as a doctor's note.

You also need to be in class on time and are expected to be in class the whole period unless it is an emergency or you have gotten prior permission from me. If you are late to class it is your responsibility to make sure you are counted present that day. While in class you should be focused only on PLS 212 work.

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Course Outline

What is Political Theory?

Orenstein and Fowler, Chapt. 1; Tinder, Chapt. 1; "Whither Political Theory" by Terence Ball (on reserve).

Human Nature and Politics

Orenstein and Fowler pp. 18-20; Tinder, Chapt. 2, pp. 103-111, excerpts Sigmund Freud
Movie – Unforgiven

The Public Interest

Orenstein and Fowler pp. 221-23; Federalist #10
(Madison) on reserve

The Role of the Individual in the Community

Orenstein and Fowler pp. 23-32, Chapt. 3 & 4; excerpts from Amitai Etzioni, Tinder, Chapt. 5

Movie -- Witness

First Exam

Justice

Orenstein and Fowler, Chapt. 5; reserve readings and handout material; Tinder, Chapt. 6;
Movie – Judgment at Nuremburg

Equality

Orenstein and Fowler, Chapt. 7; Tinder, Chapt. 3

Freedom

Orenstein and Fowler, Chapt. 6; Selected reserved readings

Second Exam

Political Obligation and Disobedience

Orenstein and Fowler, Chapt. 8 & 9; On reserve -- (*Crito*) by Plato (4) in Stewart; (*Apology*) by Plato (on reserve) (*On Civil Disobedience*) by Henry David Thoreau; (*Letter From a Birmingham Jail*) by Martin Luther King; selections by Malcolm X and Frantz Fanon; handout from Arnhart pp. 15-19; 207-209, Tinder pp. 123-131

Movie -- TBA.

Political Theory and Politics

Orenstein and Fowler Chapt 10; Tinder Chapt. 7.

Political Theory and Democracy

Orenstein and Fowler Chapt 11; tinder 116-120

The Future of Political Theory

Orenstein and Fowler Chapt. 13; Pojman Chapt. 9 & 10 (on reserve)

Final Exam

Tuesday, December 4th (3:00-6:00pm)

Other Important Dates

October 5th – No Class (Fall Break)

October 7th – No class (Political Science Days)