Course Description:

This course is a broad introduction to political philosophy. The word political derives from the Greek word ἐλευθερία (eleuthería), meaning "the city." In the Greek world there were properly no states as we now understand them, rather everything revolved around the city, e.g., Athens, and the territory it controlled. Thus, political philosophy was first envisioned as the philosophy of the city. Thus, the questions that political philosophy in its inception concerned itself with included (though was not limited to): what makes for a just city? How should the city be organized? Who should rule (i.e., have authority) in the city? What makes for a good citizen? Etc. After the classical period when states arose the questions in some ways stayed the same and in some ways changed significantly. For example, modern political philosophy asked questions such as: What is justice within a state? What grounds the authority of the state? What is the relation between the individual and the state? Is the individual or the state more fundamental? Even later, economic political philosophy became a significant focus – an issue which is with us to this very day. However, one must not overemphasize this as questions of property rights were a burning issue for modern political philosophy. Having said that, new questions arose, such as: What is the relation between socio-economic conditions and the political superstructure of the state? What role should government and the state play in the economic life of its people? Etc. Finally, two issues (among many) dominate contemporary debates in political philosophy. One being: Does justice consist in equality, and in what way, or does justice consist in fairness (giving each his or her due)? A second issue is: Given “postmodern” critiques of political structures, can we save deliberative democracy? In this course, we will touch on each of these issues.

Course Objectives:

By the end of the course students should have a working knowledge of many of the key issues of political philosophy, be acquainted with the views of both contemporary and historical political philosophers, and be able to think philosophically about the issues raised by political philosophy.

Required Texts:


Course Requirements:

You will be required to do two short papers (~ 4 pages) and a term paper (~ 10 pages) in this course. Topics for these papers will be distributed in class when the time comes. For the term paper you may doing a topic of your choosing with the prior approval of the instructor (me). For a helpful guide on writing philosophy papers, go to this web page: http://info.nwmissouri.edu/~rfield/guide.html. On a regular basis you will also be required to turn in two substantial questions regarding the assigned reading. By “substantial” question I mean one that is not merely a question of clarification. These will be graded pass/fail. The due dates for these questions are indicated on the course itinerary with an “*”. Finally, you will be graded on participation, i.e., asking questions which generate class discussion and participation in those discussions, and attendance. Excessive absences will be guaranteed to negatively affect your grade. Promptness is expected as a general rule. If you are consistently late to class your grade will be negatively affected. No late papers will be accepted without prior approval of the instructor (again, me) at least a week before the due date or for documented illnesses.
Grading:

The breakdown for grading purposes is as follows:

Two short papers: 20% a piece for a total of 40%
Questions on readings: 10%
Class participation and attendance: 10%
Term paper: 40%

Academic Honesty:

Students are absolutely required to adhere to the Academic Integrity Policy of Michigan Tech, copies of which are available at student affairs. Any violation of this policy will be forwarded to the dean of students. Plagiarism, especially from the Web, is of particular concern. Anything you copy directly or paraphrase from another source, whether that source be electronic, paper, or flesh and blood, that source must be cited. If you have any questions or doubts in a particular case I would be more than happy to discuss that case with you and to clarify what counts as a violation of academic integrity.
Course Itinerary:

January
10th Introductions/Syllabus

Classical Theories of Political Philosophy
12th Plato's Apology, pp. 1 - 4, 31 - 89
17th * Plato's Apology, pp. 89 - 129
19th Plato's Apology (continued)
24th * Aristotle, Politics, pp. 129 - 169
26th Aristotle, Politics (continued)

Modern Political Philosophy and Social Contract Theory
31st First paper due at the beginning of class
   * Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, pp. 214 - 242
February
2nd Hobbes (continued)
7th * John Locke, Second Treatise of Government, pp. 243 - 273
9th Winter Carnival Recess
14th Locke (continued)
16th * Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Discourse on the Origin of Inequality, pp. 274 - 293.
       Of the Social Contract, pp. 293 - 321
21st Rousseau (continued)
23rd * Comparison of classical and modern theories of political philosophy

The American “Experiment”
28th * Alexander Hamilton and James Madison, The Federalist Papers, pp. 350 – 376
March
2nd Hamilton and Madison (continued)
7th Spring Break
9th Spring Break

Economic Political Philosophy: Capitalism, Communism, and Class
14th Second paper due at the beginning of class
   * Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations, pp. 331 - 349
16th Smith (continued)
21st * Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, pp. 406 - 436
23rd Marx and Engels (continued)

Contemporary Debates
28th * John Rawls (A Theory of Justice, pp. 472 - 492)
30th Rawls (continued)
April
4th * Robert Nozick (Anarchy, State, and Utopia, pp. 492 - 507)
6th Nozick (continued)
11th * Michel Foucault, Power/Knowledge, pp. 508 - 524.
13th Foucault (continued)
18th * Jürgen Habermas, Three Normative Models of Democracy, pp. 524 - 534
20th Habermas, The Rule of Law and Democracy, pp. 534 - 541

Term Paper Due: Tuesday, April 25th by 4:30 PM (Put in my mailbox on the third floor of Walker Hall)