HU4701 – Political Philosophy

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Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 1:00 – 2:00 and by appointment

Course Description:

This course is a broad introduction to political philosophy. The word political derives from the Greek word *polis*, 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. Gradually, political theorists became concerned primarily with the “rule of law.” This notion dominated much of Roman and European Medieval political thought. Questions such as what is the foundation of law? What is the relation between human and divine law? Etc. dominated these thinkers concerns. After the classical period and into the modernity the questions in some ways stayed the same and in some ways changed significantly. For example, modern political philosophy asked questions such as: How does the state come about? Why do people submit themselves to the authority of the state? 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)?

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:

There will be three exams throughout the semester. Each will cover approximately one-third of the material for the class. That is, the first exam will cover the first third of the course, the second exam will cover the second third, and the third exam will cover the last third. The exams will consist of essay questions and will be an hour and fifteen minutes in length. On a regular basis I will give short quizzes at the beginning of class to determine whether or not you are doing the assigned reading. If you have done the reading you should have no problems doing fine on the quizzes. 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
make-up exams will be given except in cases of officially excused absences with the prior approval of the instructor at least a week before the exam or for documented illnesses.

Grading:

The breakdown for grading purposes is as follows:

Exams: 25% a piece for a total of 75%
Quizzes: 15%
Class participation and attendance: 10%

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.

Classroom Courtesy:

Please be courteous and respectful to everyone within the classroom. This includes, but is not limited to: Turning off cellphones before coming to class, not talking with others during class, not reading newspapers or other material during class, not doing online business during class, not eating during class, etc., etc. Come to class ready to participate and pay attention and remember that your fellow students are trying to do the same.
## Course Itinerary:

### January
- **15th**: Introductions/Syllabus

#### Classical Ancient and Medieval Theories of Political Philosophy
- **17th**: Plato's *Apology*, pp. 1-4, 31-89
- **22nd**: Plato's *Apology*, pp. 89-129
- **24th**: No Class
- **29th**: Aristotle, *Politics*, pp. 129-169
- **31st**: Aristotle, *Politics* (continued)

#### February
- **5th**: Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, pp. 173-184
- **7th**: Winter Carnival Recess
- **12th**: Aquinas (continued)
- **14th**: First Exam

#### Modern Political Philosophy and Social Contract Theory
- **19th**: Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince and Discourses*
- **21st**: Machiavelli (continued)
- **28th**: Hobbes (continued)

### March
- **6th**: Locke (continued)
- **11th**: Spring Break
- **13th**: Spring Break
- **20th**: Rousseau (continued)

#### The American “Experiment”
- **27th**: Second Exam

#### Economic Political Philosophy: Capitalism, Communism, and Class
- **April 1st**: Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, pp. 331-349
- **3rd**: Adam Smith (continued)
- **8th**: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, pp. 406-436
- **10th**: Marx and Engels (continued)

#### Contemporary Debates
- **17th**: Rawls (continued), Robert Nozick (*Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, pp. 492-507)
- **22nd**: Nozick (continued)
- **24th**: Third Exam