**POLS 502: Political Theory**

**Version 2 October 18, 2023**

**WEDNESDAYS 16:40 - 19:30**

**Instructor: Ahmet Evin** aevin@sabanciuniv.edu

**Office Hours: W 14:00 – 15:00 and by appointment[[1]](#footnote-1)**

**Course description and content**

This course will introduce graduate students of political science to some of the essential texts of political thought from antiquity to modern times. It will begin with a brief discussion of the classical and medieval antecedents of modern political thought and then focus on major thinkers and salient texts from the early modern period through the nineteenth century. It will also consider, throughout the semester, the nature of political theory and its emergence as an academic discipline in the twentieth century.

**Modality of the learning process**

The learning process involves reading essentially of primary sources, gaining an insight into ideas, interpretations, and arguments offered by prominent thinkers, on the basis of which to obtain a clear perspective on the development of political theory (political philosophy, political economy, political sociology, and government) as an intellectual discipline. The momentum of this process is maintained by means of class discussions.

Given that time will not permit to read original sources from the classical and medieval antecedents of modern political thought, those periods will be covered by means of select secondary sources as well as lectures. Short lectures will also be provided on the historical background and cultural milieu in which the major texts were written to consider them in their context.

To ensure maximum participation, at each session there will be short presentations with questions for discussion (maximum 15-20 minutes) by students on an assigned topic. Students are encouraged to bring up any outstanding questions that need further discussion or clarification. Where additional time may be required to address such questions, additional meetings (actual or virtual) will be scheduled as needed.

**Course requirements:**

The course requirements are: (i) attendance of all sessions; (ii) active participation in class discussions; (iii) presentations and leading discussions in class; (iv) written summary of the presentations and the questions raised; (v) two response papers; (vi) comprehensive outline of the final paper; (vii) a final paper (ca. 8,000 words); and (ix) a final take-home assignment.

**Grading**

In determining the final grades, Participation, Presentation, and the submission of the Written Work (response papers, summaries, presentations, outlines, etc.) will count 40 percent; Final Paper 30 percent; and Final Assignment 30 percent.

**Readings**

The course uses secondary as well as primary texts. Primary texts are to be found in

* Steven M. Cahn, ed., *Classics of Modern Political Theory* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997),
* Mitchell Cohen, ed., *Princeton Readings in Political Thought*, 2nd ed., Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2018).

Two of the secondary sources are

* George H. Sabine, *A History of Political Theory*, 3rd ed., (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961),
* Gianfranco Poggi, *The Development of the Modern State*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1978).

The foregoing items can be downloaded. Other assigned reading material will be found under Resources at the SU Course+ site, including the following:

* Janet Coleman, A History of Political Thought (Oxford, Blackwell, 2000): Plato, Republic, 84-114 (especially pp. 84-95 & pp. 104-114).
* Gabriel Almond, “Political Theory and Political Science” *The American Political Science Review*, v.60 n.4, 1966, 869-879
* Isaiah Berlin, “Does Political Theory Still Exist?” *Political, Philosophy and Society*, ed. P. Lasslett & W.G. Runciman, Basic Blackwell, 1962
* Michael Freeden, “What should the ‘Political’ in Political Theory Explore?” *Journal of Political Philosophy*, v.13, n.2, 2005, 113-134
* Sheldon Wolin, “Political Theory as a Vocation” *The American Political Science Review*, v.63, n.4, 1969, 1062-1082
* Isaiah Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty,” in Isaiah Berlin*, Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958).

**Assignments**

**Week 1 – October 4**

**Introduction & Classical Antecedents**

* Janet Coleman, *A History of Political Thought* (Oxford, Blackwell, 2000): Plato, *Republic,* 84-114 (especially pp. 84-95 & pp. 104-114).
* Aristotle and Cicero: Cohen, 96-109.
* Gabriel Almond, “Political Theory and Political Science” *The American Political Science Review*, v.60 n.4, 1966, 869-879.

**Week 2- October 11**

**Machiavelli, the Renaissance, Reformation**

* Cahn, 4-77.
* Cohen, 167-175.

**Week 3 – October 18**

**The Medieval Order**

* St Augustine, St Thomas Aquinas: Cohen, 115-130.
* Poggi, 16-85
* Sabine, 198-222.

**Week 4[[2]](#footnote-2) – October 25**

**Medieval Outlook: Law, Custom, Legitimacy, and Universalism**

* Sabine, 224-304.

**Week 5 - November 1**

**Hobbes**

* Cahn, 80-196.

**Week 6 – November 8**

**Spinoza and Locke**

* Cahn, 197 - 291.

**Week 7[[3]](#footnote-3) - November 15**

**Montesquieu and the American Revolution**

* Cohen, 250-259; 388-410.
* Cahn, 601 – 664.

**Week 8 – November 22**

**Rousseau**

* Cahn, 420 – 485.
* Isaiah Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty,” in Isaiah Berlin*, Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958).

**Week 9[[4]](#footnote-4) - November 29**

**Hume, Adam Smith and Kant**

* Cahn, 486 – 552; 571 – 600.
* Cohen, 355 – 359.

**Week 10 – December 6**

**Burke, Bentham, and Mill**

* Cohen, 336 – 341; 365 – 368.
* Cahn, 665 – 732.

**Week 11 – December 13**

**John Stuart Mill**

* Cahn, 930 – 1006.

**Week 12[[5]](#footnote-5) - December 20**

**Hegel**

* Cahn, 736 – 835.
* Sabine, 620-647.

**Week 13 – December 27**

**Hegel (con’t), Marx, and Perspectives on Political Theory**

* Cohen 428 – 454.
* Isaiah Berlin, “Does Political Theory Still Exist?” *Political, Philosophy and Society*, ed. P. Lasslett & W.G. Runciman, Basic Blackwell, 1962.
* Michael Freeden, “What should the ‘Political’ in Political Theory Explore?” *Journal of Political Philosophy*, v.13, n.2, 2005, 113-134.
* Sheldon Wolin, “Political Theory as a Vocation” *The American Political Science Review*, v.63, n.4, 1969, 1062-1082.

**Week 14 – January 3, 2024**

**Evolution of Contemporary Political Thought: Mosca, Michels, Max Weber, Leo Strauss, Habermas. Foucaılt, John Rawls, Jan-Werner Müller**

* Cohen, 493 – 518; 592 – 602; 665 – 676; 685 – 708; 758 – 761.

1. **Zoom Link:**

   Ahmet Evin's Personal Meeting Room

   https://sabanciuniv.zoom.us/j/5648896888?pwd=bUVMd25ZR0J2djhNenZBK1VCeUloZz09

   Meeting ID: 564 889 6888

   Passcode: 6VZrfH [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Deadline for proposing a paper topic for approval. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Sources for your term paper. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Draft outline due. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Outline with topic sentences due. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)