



Deborah Kass. 1988. *Social Contract*. Oil and enamel on canvas.
https://library.artstor.org/asset/LARRY_QUALLS_10311715156.

Introduction to Political Theory

Course description: We will explore major texts in the history of the ‘Western’ political theory canon while building the skills of a political theorist. Critical reading, engaged writing, and analytical thinking are applicable beyond political theory – this class is open to anyone who wants to explore the development of political ideas over time and better understand the concepts and themes that shape our discourse today.

Learning objectives:

- Engage, put into question, and critique the ‘Western’ canon
- Develop reading, writing, and analysis skills through a variety of assignments and exercises
- Equip each student with the tools needed to explore the relevance and applications of political theory to contemporary political challenges

Assignments:

One response paper per unit (total of 5): 50% (10% each)

Section participation: 20%

Final paper: 30%

Required texts:

The Two Treatises, by John Locke, edited by Peter Laslett, Cambridge University Press

All other readings will be available on Canvas at least a week before

Student hours: Two hours available each week for students to come to my office and discuss course material, questions, or anything you’d like to ask about. Sign up available on Calendly.

Attendance: I expect that you will attend lecture, and be on time. Section attendance is required.

Participation: There will be numerous occasions throughout the semester for you to participate in lecture — whether that is by answering questions, discussing with your neighbor, or another activity. In section, be prepared to discuss the texts we are reading in depth with your peers, engage the themes of the course, and interrogate the concepts that shape and ground political science and our politics. Section participation is 20% of your overall grade. I appreciate that not everyone is comfortable participating in every environment. Please note that quality of your interventions in discussion is often more meaningful than quantity. If you have any concerns about participation, how to work on your participation, or what section entails, please be in touch.

Response papers: one response paper is due for each unit of the course. Response papers should be 2-3 pages, no longer than 800 words. A successful response paper will take up *one* idea, theme, concept, passage and explore it further. You must organize your response paper with an argument, and use evidence from the readings. My guidance is to go deep/narrow, not broad. It is possible to receive full credit on a response paper by discussing only one reading. Each response paper is worth 10% of your overall grade. I recommend you submit your response paper by the first day of the next unit. We will not accept response papers for units that have not begun — you may not submit a response paper for unit 3 before MONTH, DAY, when we plan to begin the unit. Please see below for more information on deadlines. We will also discuss response papers in greater depth in the first two weeks of the course.

Final paper: choose one of three Supreme Court cases, read the whole decision, and then write an argument about whether you think the case is about authority, dissent, freedom, or equality. You must use the readings from the course to support your argument, but you can use any of the readings, from any unit, no matter your ultimate conclusion about the primary theme of the case.

Cases:

- *Shelby v. Holder* (2013)
 - Should the federal government continue its oversight of jurisdictions that historically have had restrictive voter suppression policies on racial lines?
- *Zivotofsky v. Kerry* (2015)
 - Who has the power to determine foreign policy, as it manifests in the recognition of the capital of Israel? Congress or the President?
- *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby* (2014)
 - Does the Religious Freedom Restoration Act require that closely-held for-profit companies, like Hobby Lobby receive the accommodation that religious non-profits that object to covering some or all contraception receive under the ACA's birth control coverage rule?

Due dates and late work policy: this course only has two formal deadlines. One at the conclusion of the third unit, on MONTH, DAY. And one at the conclusion of the semester, on MONTH, DAY. Your response papers for units 1, 2, and 3, are due by MONTH, DAY. You may hand them in anytime before, on whatever schedule works for you. The same goes for response papers 4, 5, and the final paper for the second deadline, on MONTH, DAY.

You may find that the earlier you submit work, the sooner you receive feedback and are able to improve and grow as a reader and writer. This may incentivize you to spread out when you submit your response papers.

If there are circumstances that require accommodation or extension, please be in touch *as soon as possible*. We will discuss each student's needs privately and on a case-by-case basis.

Submitting work: Please only submit your work via Canvas. Work sent via email, unless there is a prior agreement between you and your TA, will not be accepted.

Style and formatting: Please submit all work in Times New Roman, 12 point font, double-spaced, and with pagination (page numbers). Please include your name, the name of the assignment, and a title, on the top of the first page. Please do not submit a cover page. If possible, please submit your assignments as .doc or .docx., .pdf only if necessary. Google Docs will not be accepted.

Citations: In this course, we will use Chicago Style citations — including footnotes, not in-text citations. If you have any questions about how to use Chicago Style, please review the Chicago Manual of Style. You may also use a citations manager like Zotero to generate your citations in Chicago Style.

Academic Integrity: See college/university policy.

Introduction: Reading and rereading (five weeks)

- Jill Frank, “Prologue: Learning to Read,” from *Poetic Justice*
- Sheldon Wolin, “Political Theory as a Vocation”
- James Tully, “Political Theory as Critical Activity”
- Leo Strauss, “Persecution and the Art of Writing”
- Locke’s *Second Treatise*, Ch. 1-4
- Locke’s *Second Treatise*, Ch. 5-9
- Locke’s *Second Treatise*, Ch. 9-14
- Locke’s *Second Treatise*, Ch. 14-19
- “‘This man is my property’: slavery and political absolutism in Locke and the classical social contract tradition”, Johan Olsthoorn, Laurens Van Apeldoorn
- “What is Liberalism”, Duncan Bell
- “Evangelical Toleration”, Teresa M. Bejan

Authority (two weeks)

- Locke’s *Second Treatise*, Ch. 1-4, 14
- *Leviathan*, Hobbes, Ch. 14-18
- *Emergency Politics*, Ch. 4, Bonnie Honig
- Sophocles, *Antigone*
- Hannah Arendt, “Authority in the Twentieth Century”

Dissent (one week)

- Locke's *Second Treatise*, Ch. 15, 18-19
- CLR James, *Black Jacobins* (excerpts)
- Marx, *18th Brumaire*
- *The Apology*, Plato

Freedom (two weeks)

- Locke's *Second Treatise*, Ch. 2-4, 7-9
- J.S. Mill, *On Liberty* (excerpts)
- Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, Chapter 1
- Mary Parker Follett, *The New State: Group Organization The Solution of Popular Government* (excerpts)

Equality (two weeks),

- Locke's *Second Treatise*, Ch. 5-6, 11-12, 16-17
- Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*
- Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (excerpts)
- Juliet Hooker, "Black Lives Matter and the Paradoxes of US Black Politics"

Last week of class:

- Discussion of cases for final paper