

POLS 3361: Western Political Theory from Middle Ages to the Renaissance 1

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Spring 2025 (TTh 9:30a) CAS 258

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Office Hours: M 10a-11:30a (Zoom),
W 10a-11:30a (CAS 123) and by appointment

MEDIEVAL POLITICAL THEORY: THE BRIDGE TO MODERNITY

This course is designed to give the student a basic understanding of the philosophical foundations of Western attitudes toward politics and political order. The early Christian response to the ancient Western view of politics was to relegate politics to the earthly realm. In this course, we will trace that development and see how Machiavelli turned it on its head, emphasizing politics for its own sake and ushering in an early modern conception of political life. We will consider different perspectives on human nature, justice, virtue, the consequences and responsibilities attending to power in both its spiritual and secular forms, and how our conversations about politics continue to be shaped by these early considerations.

Brief Course Outline:

The course and our discussion will proceed in three units or “modules.”

Module 1: Political Authority and the Christian Synthesis

Module 2: Beyond the Church—Law and Self-Governance

Module 3: Rethinking Power, Authority, and Political Order

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: Students will learn how to read their political environments critically using the insights of classical political thinkers. Reading assignments, discussions, and written assignments will familiarize the student with various approaches to problems of political community and governance through medieval and early modern political theory, discovering how these attitudes shape our own. The format of the class is lecture and discussion. All discussion and written work in the class is intended to develop students' critical thinking, reading and writing skills. As you do the classwork, that is, as you read, write essays, study, and prepare for class discussions, you should keep in mind that the assigned work in this class is intended to help you develop your skills in the following ways:

- 1) Recognizing IDEAS/FACTS**, that is, develop the ability to recognize key ideas and facts.
 - key *terms* and their *meanings* (including how those meanings differ across periods and thinkers)
 - who* wrote *what*
 - what it *says*
- 2) Making CONNECTIONS**, that is, develop the ability to see connections between and among ideas and the ability to see *how* an author says what s/he says:
 - recognition of the *structure* of the author's discussion (what steps are involved in the way s/he tries to explain his or her position or persuade the reader?)
 - recognition of the *assumptions* that inform the development of ideas
 - recognition of the relative *weight* of ideas (e.g., what is the main *idea*? what are the supporting *ideas*?)
- 3) Using EXTENSIONS**, that is, develop the ability to extend the ideas beyond their context, that is, to make use of them in your own thought without distorting them or violating their meaning.
 - what are the implications of the author's position and the way s/he makes the argument?
 - what did the author leave out?
 - what value may we derive from the author's discussion?

The development of a critical voice means attending to each of these—IN ORDER. *You cannot critique an argument unless and until you can make and defend it on its own terms.* A concerted effort at understanding is the minimum requirement of a student of political theory and the mere baseline of what you will be asked to do in this course.

POLS 3361: Western Political Theory from Middle Ages to the Renaissance 2

TEXTBOOKS: This edition of this text was carefully chosen and is required for the course. Students choosing to use a different or earlier edition are solely responsible for any reconciliation of differences.

--Bailey, et.al., editors, *The Broadview Anthology of Social and Political Thought, Volume One: From Plato to Nietzsche* (Broadview Press, 2008)

--Required readings available on Canvas: (1) Tannenbaum and Schultz, "Political Philosophy: Introducing the Challenge" from *Inventors of Ideas*, pp. 1-15 and "Early Christianity and Politics" pp. 71-75. (2) excerpts from Christine de Pizan, *Book of the City of Ladies* from Losco and Williams, editors, *Political Theory: Classic and Contemporary Readings, Volume 1* (Los Angeles: Roxbury, 2003), 280-302.

CANVAS: All written and graded assignments will appear on Canvas. Assignments can be found under the "Syllabus," "Assignments," and "Modules" tabs on the Course page. All written and graded work will be submitted via Canvas. Students will also find supplementary handouts and readings on Canvas. All modules, essays, and attendance/participation grades are weighted as part of your final grade.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Grading is done on a 10-point scale: A = 90-100; B = 80-89; C = 70-79, etc. The formal requirements of the course and their relative impact on your final grade are as follows:

1) Class Attendance/Participation 5%

Political theory necessarily involves discussion, and, in that vein, discussion involves taking cues from gestures, tone of voice, etc. To serve this end, you are expected to attend our class meetings regularly and to participate in our class discussions. Bring your understanding of the readings, your questions, your answers, and your insights to our class meetings and be ready to articulate and discuss them.

(2) Modules: Readings and Assignment Worksheets Modules (2 x 20% each and 1 x 15%) = 55%

The course is divided into 4 units or modules. You can find the modules under the "Modules" tab on the course's Canvas page. Each module consists of several reading assignments (listed below in the syllabus). Each module is also divided into worksheet assignments. Each worksheet assignment refers to specific readings and includes an *Assignment Worksheet* that must be completed in the week that it is assigned. *These assignments cannot be made up.*

The Assignment Worksheets consist of three (3) Analytical Questions about the readings. You will be asked to read the assigned texts and answer the accompanying questions. **USING ONLY THE TEXTS YOU READ and in your own words**, respond to each question in a coherent, comprehensive paragraph (no lists!) of neither more nor less 100 words each. Be clear, comprehensive, and don't waste words). *Missed worksheets cannot be made up.*

(3) Midterm Essay and (15%) and Final Essay (25%) 40%

Students will be asked to write analytical essays on some aspect of the class material using specific works we have read. These WILL NOT be research papers. Students are expected to limit themselves to the material we have read and discussed and to demonstrate their own substantial analytical abilities. The midterm essay will be neither more nor less than 2 pages, uploaded to Canvas as a Word doc (double-spaced, 12-point font, Times New Roman, etc.) and the final essay will be comprehensive and 2-3 pages in length (Word doc, double-spaced, 12-point font, Times New Roman) uploaded to Canvas. See the assignments for further instructions. Below are some guidelines for writing your essays:

POLS 3361: Western Political Theory from Middle Ages to the Renaissance 3

WARNING: IGNORE THE FOLLOWING PAPER GUIDELINES AT YOUR PERIL:

(1) DO NOT try to avoid addressing the issues by talking about the author's writing style, difficulty, etc. In this class, as in all of your classes in political science, *you are considered a professional willing to work to understand difficult material.* You can always ask the teacher for help, too, but do it BEFORE the day you turn in your paper.

(2) Write in reasoned, professional terms. Use your best English: there is no excuse for misspellings; make sure all of your sentences have subjects, verbs, and objects; make sure they match in number; do not use contractions; write in paragraphs (change to a new *but related* thought = new paragraph) above all, do not write the way you speak! Write like a professional.

(3) Focus on one or two ideas or issues that are common to all the readings. Do not simply rehearse the argument of the author—in the space allotted, you do not have the time! Your task is to discuss the readings in terms of the one or two most important ideas or issues that you have identified. As a start, consider the issues raised in our discussions in class and where this author/idea fits. *Add your own insights where appropriate. Raise questions and critical issues—do not rant.*

(4) These are NOT research papers. Limit yourself to the texts before you. The assignment is designed to get you to read closely, carefully, and analytically. Resist the urge to run to the internet. Force yourself to deal with the text, come to some understanding of the issues raised, and, craft your own argument.

Required Statement on Artificial Intelligence and this Course

UT Tyler is committed to exploring and using artificial intelligence (AI) tools as appropriate for the discipline and task undertaken. We encourage discussing AI tools' ethical, societal, philosophical, and disciplinary implications. All uses of AI should be acknowledged as this aligns with our commitment to honor and integrity, as noted in UT Tyler's Honor Code. Faculty and students must not use protected information, data, or copyrighted materials when using any AI tool. Additionally, users should be aware that AI tools rely on predictive models to generate content that may appear correct but is sometimes shown to be incomplete, inaccurate, taken without attribution from other sources, and/or biased. Consequently, an AI tool should not be considered a substitute for traditional approaches to research. You are ultimately responsible for the quality and content of the information you submit. Misusing AI tools that violate the guidelines specified for this course (see below) is considered a breach of academic integrity. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in UT Tyler's Academic Integrity Policy.

The use of AI is NOT PERMITTED in this course. I expect all the work students submit for this course to be their own. I have carefully designed all assignments and class activities to support your learning. Doing your own work, without human or artificial intelligence assistance, is best for your efforts in mastering course learning objectives. For this course, I expressly forbid using ChatGPT or any other artificial intelligence (AI) tools for any stages of the work process, including brainstorming. **Any instance of the following constitutes a violation of UT Tyler's Honor Code and academic honesty values:** a student has another person/entity do any portion of a graded assignment, which includes purchasing work from a company, hiring a person or company to complete an assignment or exam, using a previously submitted assignment and/or using AI tools (such as ChatGPT).

POLS 3361: Western Political Theory from Middle Ages to the Renaissance 4

SYLLABUS/READING SCHEDULE

READINGS: *Students are expected to come to class having read the reading assigned for that day's class. STUDENTS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL MATERIAL IN THE READINGS—WHETHER THERE IS EXPRESS DISCUSSION OF IT IN CLASS OR NOT—AND THE LECTURES/DISCUSSIONS. Questions about all material are always welcome and should form the lion's share of our experience in this course.*

GRADED ASSIGNMENTS: *Students are responsible for turning in assignments on-time. All assignments may be found on Canvas and may be accessed through either the "Modules" link, the "Assignments" link, or the "Syllabus" link. Work for each module will be turned in on Canvas. PAY CAREFUL ATTENTION TO DUE DATES AND TIMES. Most Worksheets are due by the end of the week (Sunday at 11:59pm) they are assigned. Assignments will be closed thereafter. Students are strongly encouraged to read ahead and to turn in their Worksheet Assignments before the Sunday deadline.*

MODULE 1: Political Authority and the Christian Synthesis

- 14 Jan T Introduction: Political Philosophy—What and Why?
--HANDOUT from Tannenbaum and Schultz, "Political Philosophy: Introducing the Challenge"; "Early Christianity and Politics" from *Inventors of Ideas* (St. Martin's, 1999), pp. 1-15; 71-74.
--Augustine, *City of God*, Introduction (Bailey, et. al., pp. 263-267)
- 16 Jan Th Augustine
From *City of God*, Preface, Book 1: ch. 1; 1:8; 2:21 (pp. 267-271)
- 21 Jan T Augustine
From *City of God*, 19:1; 19:6; 19:7; 19:11; 19:12; 19:15 (pp. 271-277)
- 23 Jan Th Augustine
From *City of God*, 19:16; 19:21; 19:23; 19:24 (pp. 277-281)
- 28 Jan T Augustine
--From *City of God*, 19:16; 19:21; 19:23; 19:24 (pp. 277-281)
- 28 Jan Th Aquinas
--Introduction and from *Summa Contra Gentiles* (pp. 302-308)

Augustine Worksheet Due, Sunday, February 2 @ 11:59pm

- 4 Feb T Aquinas
--From *Summa Theologiae*, Questions 90, 94, 95 (pp. 309-322)
- 6 Feb Th Aquinas
--From *Summa Theologiae*, Questions 90, 94, 95 (pp. 309-322)
- 11 Feb T Aquinas
--From *Summa Theologiae*, Questions 90, 94, 95 (pp. 309-322)

Aquinas Worksheet Due, Sunday, February 16 @ 11:59pm

POLS 3361: Western Political Theory from Middle Ages to the Renaissance 5

MODULE 2: Beyond the Church--Law and Self-Governance

- 13 Feb Th Marsilius of Padua
--Introduction and from *Defender of the Peace* (pp. 323-329)
- 18 Feb T Marsilius of Padua
--Introduction and from *Defender of the Peace* (pp. 323-329)
- 20 Feb Th Christine de Pizan
--On CANVAS: from Christine de Pizan, *Book of the City of Ladies* (pp. 280-302)
- 25 Feb T Christine de Pizan
--On CANVAS: from Christine de Pizan, *Book of the City of Ladies* (pp. 280-302)
- 27 Feb Th Christine de Pizan
--On CANVAS: from Christine de Pizan, *Book of the City of Ladies* (pp. 280-302)

MIDTERM ESSAY DUE, SUNDAY, March 2 @ 11:59pm.

- 4 Mar T Christine de Pizan
--On CANVAS: from Christine de Pizan, *Book of the City of Ladies* (pp. 280-302)
--From *The Book of the Body Politic* (pp. 332-337)
- 6 Mar Th Christine de Pizan
--From *The Book of the Body Politic* (pp. 332-337)

Marsilius and Christine Worksheet Due, Sunday, March 9 @ 11:59pm

MODULE 3: Rethinking Power, Authority, and Political Order

- 11 Mar T Machiavelli
--Introduction and from *The Prince*, Dedication and Chapters 5-8 (pp. 343-353)
- 13 Mar Th Machiavelli
--From *The Prince*, Chapters 9-14 (pp. 353-361)
- 18 Mar T-
20 Mar Th SPRING BREAK (March 17-21)**
- 25 Mar T Machiavelli
--From *The Prince*, Chapters 15-21 (pp. 361-370)
- 27 Mar Th Machiavelli
--From *The Prince*, Chapters 22-26 (pp. 370-375)
- 1 Apr T Machiavelli
--From *The Prince*, Chapters 22-26 (pp. 370-375)

POLS 3361: Western Political Theory from Middle Ages to the Renaissance 6

3 Apr Th Machiavelli
--Introduction and from *Discourses on Livy* (pp.375-383)

Machiavelli's *Prince* Worksheet Due, Sunday, April 6 @ 11:59pm

8 Apr T Machiavelli
--Introduction and from *Discourses on Livy* (pp.383-389)

10 Apr Th Machiavelli
--Introduction and from *Discourses on Livy* (pp.383-389)

15 Apr T Luther
--Introduction and from *Temporal Authority* (pp. 390-399)

17 Apr Th **(NO CLASS—LeBlanc at WPSA)** Luther
--Introduction and from *Temporal Authority* (pp. 390-399)

Machiavelli's *Discourses* and Luther Worksheet Due, Sunday, April 20 @ 11:59pm

22 Apr T Luther
--Introduction and from *Temporal Authority* (pp. 390-399)

24 Apr Th Conclusion and Review (optional)

27 Apr Su FINAL ESSAY DUE Sunday, April 27 on Canvas by 11:59pm

IMPORTANT: This syllabus reflects the minimum requirements of our professional relationship over the course of this semester. By staying in this class, you signify that you understand the contents of this syllabus and you agree to these terms and conditions stated herein.

Notes on Classroom Etiquette or THE RULES

--Class starts promptly. Be here on time. After the first week or so of the semester, you WILL be denied entry if you arrive more than 5 minutes late. Late arrival is disruptive to the classroom experience of your classmates and, perhaps even your professor. In any case, it works against the mission of the classroom. To this end, I suggest you not drive from class to class—gas is too expensive, and we could all use the exercise.

--The format of the class is lecture and conversation. The classroom is a safe place to ask questions. But they should be questions that derive from work with and in the material and NOT because you did not do the assignment.

--You will not read other materials, including web sources, textbooks, or study for other classes while in this class. If you do so, you will be asked to leave—and in no uncertain terms.

--Turn all cellphones and other electronic devices off (or set to vibrate) for the duration of class. You are not to accept calls or engage in text messaging during class. If you do so, I will confiscate your device. If you are awaiting a call or message of extreme importance, I suggest you skip class and accept the consequences.

--You may use a laptop, but only for the purpose of taking notes. If I catch you surfing the web, playing games, or engaged in some other activity not related to the work of the class, you will lose your laptop privileges.

--You are responsible for any material you miss due to absence. I suggest you exchange notes with other responsible students in any case, but particularly if you have to miss. I am happy to answer questions about this material but will not rehearse my lectures or our class discussions.

--Some semesters, life gets in the way. Should you have one of these semesters, I am more than happy to talk to you about what to do. But if the trauma is too great, I strongly suggest you drop one or all your courses. Your education is vitally important, but there are things that outrank even education sometimes—and *you must make that call when it is necessary*. I cannot grade you on how well or poorly you deal with your life at given moments. Your grades reflect your performance in class—not how well you are dealing with other things. I wish all of us a semester in which these things aren't issues.