POLS 335: History of Political Thought
Political Theory and Popular Culture

Course Time: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 11:30 AM – 12:20 PM
Location: Saunders 637

Katie Brennan
Email: kpjb@hawaii.edu
Office: Saunders 627
Office Hours: Wednesday 12:30 – 1:30 PM, and by appointment

Course Overview:

This semester we will explore the history of political thought using a combination of primary texts, popular culture pieces, and current events. We will focus on some of the “important dead white guys” that are seen as part of the canon: Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Mill, Hegel, Marx, and Nietzsche. We will begin, however, with two 20th Century theorists, Hannah Arendt and Michel Foucault, who will help frame our approach to the canon.

This is a survey course of the western history of political thought. As we journey through this history we will stage a series of encounters with each of the thinkers that we cover. These thinkers are extremely complex, and can be interpreted in many ways. We will briefly situate each of the thinkers in his (or her) original context, examine the issues that he (or she) was dealing with at the time, and then discuss and analyze one interpretation of the political theory that the particular thinker is known for. We will identify the central ideas in each theorist’s work, what the motivations were, what assumptions are in play, and so on. We will also look at the relevance of their work and ideas to our world today. We will ask how each thinker would deal with the current events that we are confronted with.

We will also examine how these thinkers constructed their arguments. Language is not only used to describe the world, but also to make it. What rhetorical tools do these thinkers use? What role do their metaphors play in shaping our perception of the world? What interpretations of the world are silenced by these thinkers? What do they not talk about?

We will use a series of popular culture texts (TV shows, movies, and short stories) as sites for further exploring the ideas of these political thinkers. Some of these texts show worlds or narratives in which the ideas of a particular thinker are demonstrated, while other examples are kind of straw men that can be critiqued by one or more of the thinkers we cover. One of the reasons these popular culture texts are included in a class on political theory is to demonstrate that politics and political theory are everywhere. Political theory is the study of the world: how we learn to work together (or not), how we fight each other, why we form groups, why we submit to governance, etc. The stories in the political theory we will read like the stories in the popular culture texts we will examine not only tell the story of our world, but also shape that world.
Information you need to know:

All cell phones and pagers must be off during class. It’s aggravating and insulting to both myself and your fellow students when your electronic devices disrupt the class. Similarly, while laptops are allowed for note taking, it is easy to tell when you are using it for other purposes and that is very distracting for the entire class.

Plagiarism. Plagiarism is a very straightforward and simple concept: if you present someone else’s words or ideas as your own then you are plagiarizing them. Plagiarism is a form of theft and academic dishonesty. Some examples include doing any of the following without proper citation: cutting and pasting text from a website, paraphrasing another person’s ideas, directly copying words from any source (book, journal, script), etc. Doing any of the above is cheating and will result in serious consequences. Any work that is deemed to include plagiarized material will be failed.

I understand that generally people resort to plagiarism when they are under pressure for various reasons: work, family, relationships, or simply not understanding the material. Please talk to me if you are having trouble with the work. We will work something out together that will be much better than cheating and failing.

If you have any questions about the plagiarism policy of the school please see the UHM Student Conduct Code: www.hawaii.edu/ail/students/plagiarism.html

Services to students with disabilities. If you have any kind of disability and you are concerned about access to the course or completing the required work, I encourage you to contact KOKUA. The KOKUA program is located on the ground floor of the Student Services Center and can also be reached by phone at 956-7511.

Computer Labs. Computer labs are available in both the Sinclair and Hamilton libraries for all students. The College of Social Sciences has additional computer labs in Saunders and Crawford Halls. You can find the exact locations and hours on their websites:

http://www.hawaii.edu/itslab/index.htm
http://www2.soc.hawaii.edu/pages/tech/lab.html

Writing Center. If you are concerned with the level of your writing or you are looking for additional assistance the English Department has a writing center. It is really important to plan in advance if you want to use the writing center because their available appointments can fill up quickly. For more information you can check out their website:

www.english.hawaii.edu/writingcenter/

Required Reading:

• Jene M. Porter, Classics in Political Philosophy, 3rd edition (2000)
• A selection of other texts that will be available through Laulima

Assignments:

All assignments should be typed, double-spaced, 12 point font, with proper grammar, spelling, and sentence structure. For assignments turned in electronically please make sure that your files are word documents (the file ending should be .doc or .docx).

1. You are required to do the assigned reading before coming to class. When reading material for class you should be reading actively, which means underlying
or highlighting passages that seem important, writing notes in the margin, marking passages that you have questions about, and so on. Reading your texts closely in this way will help prepare you to participate in class.

2. **Everyone is expected to participate in class.** There are a variety of ways to participate in class: being an active part of class discussions by asking and answering questions; speaking in small group discussions; presenting your own work; contacting me directly either by email or in my office; and by being an engaged listener. *(Note that attendance and participation are worth 20% of your final grade)*

3. **You are required to complete a blog post each week by 5PM on Thursday, and to comment on a classmate’s blog post from the previous week.** The point of these blog posts is for you to engage with the readings beyond the classroom. Each week I will post 2 to 3 questions, and you will then choose 1 question to answer. Your answers should be 1 to 2 paragraphs in length, and must include at least 1 quote from the primary texts we covered that week. You can also bring in external material (current events, popular culture texts, etc.) if it helps you answer the question. You are also required to comment on someone else’s post each week. For example, the first blog post is due by 5pm on 1/17, and so you should comment on someone else’s 1/17 post by the following Thursday (1/24). Your comments should be at least 3 sentences long, and should include some content. So, don’t just write “good post!” as that won’t be enough. *(Your blog grade which covers your posts and your comments is worth 20% of your grade)*

4. **You will also complete a number of small assignments through out the semester.** I will give you more information on these as they come up. *(This category of assignments will count towards 5% of your final grade)*

5. **You will be working on a series of papers through out the semester.** These papers will be graded on both content and style.
   a. **Paper 1 is due by Midnight (the end of the day) on February 8th.** This paper should be 4 to 5 pages long (plus a works cited page). In this paper you can choose from one of the political theorists that we’ve covered to this point (Arendt, Foucault, Socrates, Plato, or Aristotle), and apply that theorist’s ideas to a current event of your choosing. You should submit this assignment via the drop box on Laulima. *(This is worth 10% of your grade)*
   b. **Paper 2 is due by Midnight on March 8th.** This paper should be 4 to 5 pages long (plus a works cited page). In this paper you can choose from one of the political theorists that we’ve covered since the first paper deadline (Augustine, Aquinas, Machiavelli, or Hobbes), and apply that theorist’s ideas to a current event of your choosing. You should submit this assignment via the drop box on Laulima. *(This is worth 10% of your grade)*
   c. **Paper 3 is due by Midnight on April 12th.** This paper should be 4 to 5 pages long (plus a works cited page). In this paper you can choose from one of the political theorists that we’ve covered since the second paper deadline (Locke, Mill, Hegel, or Marx), and apply that theorist’s ideas to a current event of your choosing. You should submit this assignment via the drop box on Laulima. *(This is worth 10% of your grade)*
   d. **Everyone will be required to share their final paper topic with the class in a 3 to 5 minute presentation.** No power point slides!! Looking ahead to your final paper you will choose one of the three papers you already turned in to expand upon. This presentation gives you a chance to explain your
ideas verbally, which can help you clarify your argument. It also gives you a chance to get feedback from your peers. These presentations will take place during class time on April 26th, April 19th, and May 1st. (This presentation is worth 5% of your final grade)

e. Your final paper is due by Midnight on May 6th. You need to turn the paper in electronically via the drop box on Laulima. This paper should be 8 to 10 pages in length (plus a works cited page). As noted above in the presentation description, your final paper is an expanded and revised version of one of the three papers you already turned in. For the final paper I expect you to add a second theorist, bring more depth to your discussion of your chosen current event, and double the length. (The final paper makes up 20% of your grade)

Further explanation of your papers. Each of the three initial papers is meant to focus on the ideas of one theorist, and how those ideas apply to a current event. Your final paper is a revised and expanded version of one of your three earlier papers, and should include the work of two theorists. All of these papers should include quotes from the primary texts as well as sources related to your current event. Everything must be cited appropriately.

Late assignment policy. You can turn in Paper 1, Paper 2, and Paper 3 within a week of each deadline for half credit, but I will not accept any late final papers without prior arrangement. The blog postings and comments must be posted on schedule for credit: late postings will not be graded. Also, the miscellaneous assignments must be turned in on time to receive credit.

Summary of assignments and grading:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attendance and Participation</th>
<th>Blogs</th>
<th>Various Assignments</th>
<th>Presentation on paper</th>
<th>Paper 1</th>
<th>Paper 2</th>
<th>Paper 3</th>
<th>Final Paper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>Weekly (Th. @ 5PM)</td>
<td>Throughout the semester</td>
<td>4/26—5/1</td>
<td>2/8</td>
<td>3/8</td>
<td>4/12</td>
<td>5/6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bonus Opportunity: You have the option to do an extra blog post explaining how a science fiction piece of your choosing (TV show, movie, short story, etc.) made you think differently about politics. The post should be at least 250 words. You can neither post on something that someone else has already posted about, nor something that you read or watched for an assignment in this class. The deadline will be by Midnight on 5/3.
Class Schedule:

I. **Introduction:** What constitutes “the history of political thought”? Who is included, and who is excluded? Why use science fiction and other popular culture texts in a class on political theory?
   - **M 1/7:** Going over the syllabus and introducing the class

II. **Political Theory and Narrative**
   - **W 1/9**
     - i. **Reading:** Lisa Disch, chapter 1 of *Hannah Arendt and the Limits of Philosophy*
     - ii. **Reading:** Hannah Arendt, extract from *The Human Condition*
   - **F 1/11**
     - i. **Reading:** Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces”

III. **The Classics**
   - **M 1/14:** Socrates
     - i. **Reading:** *The Apology*
   - **W 1/16:** Plato
     - i. **Reading:** *The Republic*, Books 1-5, pp. 2-62
   - **F 1/18**
     - i. *The X-Files: “Pilot”*
   - **M 1/21:** NO CLASS (MLK Jr. Day)
   - **W 1/23:** Plato
     - i. **Reading:** *The Republic*, Books 6-10, pp. 63-100
   - **F 1/25**
     - i. Paper expectations and guidelines
   - **M 1/28:** Aristotle
     - i. **Reading:** *Nicomachean Ethics*, pp. 102-119
     - ii. **Reading:** *The Politics*, Books 1-3, pp. 120-143
   - **W 1/30:** Aristotle
     - i. **Reading:** *The Politics*, Books 4, 5, and 7, pp. 144-173
   - **F 2/1:** Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle
     - i. *Star Trek Voyager: “Deathwish”*

IV. **Christianity and the Middle Ages**
   - **M 2/4:** St. Augustine
     - i. **Reading:** pp. 174-202
   - **W 2/6:** St. Thomas Aquinas
     - i. **Reading:** pp. 203-224
   - **F 2/8**
     - ii. **Due:** Paper 1

V. **Renaissance**
   - **M 2/11:** Niccolo Machiavelli
i. **Reading:** *The Prince*, pp. 225-246

- **W 2/13:** Niccolo Machiavelli
  i. **Reading:** *The Prince*, pp. 247-263

- **F 2/15**
  i. *Futurama:* “Mother’s Day”

**VI. Modernity, Secularism, and the Rise of Liberalism**

- **M 2/18:** NO CLASS (President’s Day)
- **W 2/20:** Catch-up Day: The Transition to Modernity
- **F 2/22**
- **M 2/25:** Thomas Hobbes
  i. **Reading:** *The Leviathan*, first part, pp. 265-299
- **W 2/27:** Thomas Hobbes
  i. **Reading:** *The Leviathan*, second part, pp. 299-328

- **F 3/1**
  i. Clips from *Land of the Dead*
  ii. Inductive and Deductive reasoning

- **M 3/4:** John Locke
  i. **Reading:** *Second Treatise of Government*, pp. 329-352

- **W 3/6:** John Locke
  i. **Reading:** *Second Treatise of Government*, pp. 353-380

- **F 3/8**
  i. *The Walking Dead:* “Guts”
  ii. **Due:** Paper 2

- **M 3/11:** John Stuart Mill
  i. **Reading:** pp. 503-543

- **W 3/13**
  i. *Serenity*

- **F 3/15**
  i. *Serenity*

**VII. The Dialectic of History of Class Struggle**

- **M 3/18:** Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel
  i. **Reading:** *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, “Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: Lordship and Bondage,” pp. 438-445
  ii. **Reading:** On-line lecture on Hegel by Kathy Ferguson

- **W 3/20:** Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel
  i. **Reading:** Choose either *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, pp. 446-480 or *Philosophy of Right*, pp. 482-502

- **F 3/22**
  i. Scenes from *Doctor Who:* “The End of Time” (parts 1 and 2)
  ii. **Due:** Cartoon rendition of Hegel’s master/slave dialectic

- **M 3/25 – F 3/29:** NO CLASS (Spring Break)
• M 4/1: Karl Marx
  i. **Reading:** *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*, pp. 568-586

• W 4/3: Karl Marx
  i. **Reading:** *Engel's Speech at the Graveside of Karl Marx*, p. 546
  ii. **Reading:** *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, pp. 547-557

• F 4/5
  i. Scenes from *Juan of the Dead*

• M 4/8: Karl Marx
  i. **Reading:** *The German Ideology*, pp. 558-567

• W 4/10: Karl Marx
  i. **Reading:** *Critique of Political Economy*, p. 587
  ii. **Reading:** *Capital*, pp. 589-596

• F 4/12
  ii. Due: Paper 3

VIII. The Death of God and the Challenge to Foundations

• M 4/15: Friedrich Nietzsche
  i. **Reading:** *Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense*, pp. 599-610
  ii. **Reading:** *The Gay Science*, pp. 611-619

• W 4/17: Friedrich Nietzsche
  i. **Reading:** *Will to Power*, pp. 648-655

• F 4/19
  i. *Star Trek: The Next Generation:* “Darmok”

• M 4/22: Friedrich Nietzsche
  i. **Reading:** *The Genealogy of Morals*, pp. 632-647
  ii. **Reading:** *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, pp. 620-631

• W 4/24: Wrap-Up and Paper workshop

IX. Presentations

• F 4/26
• M 4/29
• W 5/1

**Final Paper due on 5/6**