

# Political Science 410

## Political Theory I

### **Professor Information:**

Dr. Jeffrey C. Herndon  
Ferguson Social Science Building, 160  
[Jeffrey.Herndon@tamuc.edu](mailto:Jeffrey.Herndon@tamuc.edu)  
Office Hours: 8:00-9:30 a.m., Monday-Thursday  
And by appointment

### **Required Texts:**

Aristotle, *The Politics and Constitution of Athens*, ed. Stephen Everson. New York. Cambridge University Press. [ISBN: 9780521484006]

------. *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Martin Ostwald. New York. Pearson. [ISBN: 9780023895302]

Aquinas, St. Thomas. *The Political Ideas of St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Dino Bigongiari. New York. Free Press. [ISBN: 9780684836416]

Augustine. *Political Writings*, trans. Michael W. Tkacz and Douglas Kries. Indianapolis. Hackett Publishing. [ISBN: 9780872202100]

Plato, *The Last Days of Socrates*, ed. Christopher Rowe. New York. Penguin Books. [ISBN: 9780140455496]

------. *The Republic*, ed. G.R.F. Ferrari, trans. Tom Griffith. New York. Cambridge University Press. [ISBN: 9780521484435]

The Bible (any edition, any translation—Old and New Testament)

In addition to the above books, you will be given handouts from time-to-time for which you will be responsible and you will have to make a trip to the library to read at least one article. Your instructor reserves the right to include additional readings as required by the exigencies of the course.

**Course Description:** The course is an examination of some of the primary texts in the Western tradition of political philosophy.

**Course Objectives:** The general education objectives of this course are for you to develop critical thinking skills and improve your ability to convey your ideas in your writing. You will also learn how to interpret complex textual material to better understand its meaning. In addition, you will gain a greater understanding of the place of political philosophy in the shaping of Western civilization.

Specifically, in this course, students:

Will be able to discern between relevant and irrelevant information, recognize bias in source material, and critically examine a diversity of source material. (Critical Thinking)

Will communicate following conventions of grammar and syntax appropriate to the audience, purpose and message. (Communications)

Will understand their role in their own education. (Personal Responsibility)

Will demonstrate awareness of societal and/or civic issues. (Social Responsibility)

**Attendance:** Attendance will be taken daily and you would be well-advised to attend every class—if for no other reason than the fact that experience demonstrates that you will not do well if you are not here.

Of course attendance is more than merely being in your seat on time. You are expected to come to class prepared for class. Readings assigned for particular dates should be completed prior to coming to class. From time to time, quizzes will be given over the readings and those scores will be factored into your grade. Missed quizzes cannot be made up.

Once you are in class be prepared to stay until class is dismissed. If you must use the facilities please do so before or after class—not during. If you do have to leave during class, please be sure you take your belongings with you as you will not be readmitted to the class after you have made your exit.

Do not be late to exams. Students who arrive after the exam has been distributed may not be given the opportunity to take the test. This can have a negative effect on your grade, so be on time for tests.

**Electronics Policy:** We are fortunate to live in a technologically advanced time. With that said, the following guidelines must be observed. First, laptop computers are wonderful things and I highly recommend their use in upper division classes. With that said, it is disrespectful to the class for you to cruise the internet, check your email, or engage in electronic conversations while class is in session. You will get one warning if you are engaged in such activities during class. After that, you will be asked to leave your computer at home.

The rule regarding text messaging extends to the other ubiquitous electronic marvel, the cellular telephone. One person in this class has permission to have his telephone on—and it is not you. Your phone should be off during class. Under no circumstances allow it to ring, vibrate, etc., or otherwise annoy me. Phones that ring during class may be answered by your professor (and trust me, you do not want that to happen). Repeat violations of this simple rule will result in confiscation of the offending instrument.

**Conduct:** “All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment.” We shall, as much as possible, attempt to engage in constructive discussion of the texts used and the issues raised by them. You are expected to be civil, even in the face of heated disagreements.

At the appropriate time you will be given a handout explaining the requirements for the writing assignments you will do for this course. You are expected to adhere to the assigned texts. Furthermore, you are expected to avoid the grave academic sin of plagiarism. Plagiarism is a

form of theft—it is the theft of someone else’s work and ideas and the attempt to pass it off as your own. The consequences for this kind of academic dishonesty can be quite severe—up to expulsion from the university. In other words, do not do it. Do not copy something from a book, article, or the internet and claim it as your own. I will be happy to help you through the process of writing your papers. If you choose to violate this dictum you will fail this class—no appeals will be entertained.

**Grading:** Your grade will consist of the following elements:

Reaction Papers:	30%	Midterm Exam:	30%
Quizzes/Participation	10%	Final Exam:	30%

### Readings Calendar

This calendar represents our best estimate of the material to be covered in the course of the semester, however, this is a class based on discussion and the interplay of complex ideas. What this means is that the specific dates for particular material to be covered in class will be somewhat flexible, but you are expected to keep up with the readings as assigned.

June 8—Introduction to the course

*Politike episteme*

June 9

The Trial of Socrates? The Trial of Athens?

Reading: Plato, *Apology*, *Phaedo*

June 10

Obligation in the face of injustice

Reading: *Crito* and *Antigone* (to be provided by professor)

June 11

The *Republic* and the “City in Speech”

Reading: Plato, *Republic*, Book I, Book II and Book III

June 15

The Ruling Principle and Principled Ruling; Vision, Light, and Truth—Plato’s Epistemology

Reading: Plato, *Republic*, Book IV, Book V and Book VI

June 16

The Allegory of the Cave; The Typology of Regimes and the Character of the Citizen

Reading: Plato, *Republic*, Book VII and Book VIII

June 17

Happiness and Character; Socrates and the Poets

Reading: Plato, *Republic*, Book IX and Book X

June 18

Aristotle and the Life Proper to Human Beings

Reading: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books I-IV

June 22

Justice and Human Excellence

Readings: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books V-VII

June 23

Why Can't We Be Friends?

Readings, Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books VIII-X

June 24

—Midterm examination

June 25

Citizenship and the Primacy of the Polis

Reading: Aristotle, *Politics*, Books I-III

June 29

The State and Revolution

Reading: Aristotle, *Politics*, Books IV-V

June 30

The End of Political Regimes and an Education for Happiness

Reading: Aristotle, *Politics*, Books VI-VIII

July 1

Meanwhile—in the Roman Province of Judea.....

Readings TBA

July 2

Introduction to St. Augustine and *The City of God*

Reading: Augustine, 1--57

July 6

Christianity, Politics, and War

Reading: Augustine, 202-256

**OR**

Philosophy, Truth and the Christian Dispensation

Reading: Augustine, 130-201

July 7

Aquinas' Treatise on Law

Reading: Aquinas, *Summa*, 3-91

July 8

The Christian Monarch

Reading: Aquinas, *De Regimine Principium*, 173-195

July 9

Final Exam

**Desiderata:** Your professor reserves the right to edit or change this syllabus based upon the exigencies of the class. You will be notified in the event of any changes that are required.

**Students with Disabilities:** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

Texas A&M University-Commerce

Gee Library, Room 132

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

[StudentDisabilityServices@tamu-commerce.edu](mailto:StudentDisabilityServices@tamu-commerce.edu)