

PLSC 314: Contemporary Political Thought
Monday/Wednesday/Friday 11:30 – 12:20
Fall Semester 2016

Professor: Gary V. Wood
Office: Buller Hall 128
Hours: M/W 2:00-4:00, T/R 3:30-5:30 or by appointment
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Course Description and Objectives:

This course provides an overview of the history of political philosophy from the nineteenth century to the present. It will examine such thinkers as Mill, Nietzsche, Camus, Heidegger, Leo Strauss and Harry Jaffa. Central topics include the abandonment of natural right; the turn to history as a standard of right; and the subsequent self-destruction and recovery of reason (and revelation) in late modern political thought. The hope is that students will come away with at least some understanding and appreciation of the magnitude of the questions we shall ponder.

Required Texts:

John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good & Evil*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1989).

Albert Camus, *The Stranger*, trans. Mathew Ward (New York: Vintage Books, 1989).

Course Requirements:

1. Exams: There will be three exams as indicated in the class schedule. Students will bring a blue book and a pen to the exams. All three exams will be essay. The two midterm exams will be worth 50 points each and the final exam will be worth 75 points. The exams are not cumulative.
2. Term Paper due **Wednesday, November 30, 2016** (100 points): There will be a handout on the 12page paper the second week of the term.

3. Reading Journal: Students are expected to maintain a journal regarding their assigned reading. In this journal the student is to write two 8-10 line entries for each assignment (please identify the entries by the specific assignment pages). The first entry must summarize important information or statements in the reading assignments; the second entry must give the student's response to the reading, raising questions, making comments, or expressing any other interactions. Students may respond to whatever aspect or aspects of the reading that inspires a reaction; in the second entry they should not feel they have to write about the entire assignment. Students are expected to bring their journal to class each day, for they may be asked to read aloud their entry for that day's assignment. The entire journal for each section of the class is to be turned in to the teacher on the dates indicated in the syllabus. A maximum of 10 points will be given for each journal entry.

4. Class Participation. Students are expected to attend class on a regular basis, to be current in the readings, and to contribute to classroom discussion. The instructor will assume that you have completed reading assignments before class, and will feel free to ask questions of individual students about them. More than three (3) absences will result in the forfeiture of the 10% participation component, as will excessive tardiness, early departure, un-preparedness, disruption, and inattention. A portion of most class periods will be devoted to Socratic questioning regarding reading assignments. Students will be questioned randomly and will receive five points for substantive responses; 5 points will be deducted if the student is not present or is unable to give a substantive response. Each student will receive a grade based on the percentage of substantive responses they gave in relation to the total number of questions they were asked during the semester.

Grading:

Mid-Term Exams:	100 points	40%
Term Paper	100 points	25%
Final Exam	75 points	25%
Reading Journal	300 points	5%
Participation		5%

Grading Scale:

A 93-100%, A- 90-92%, B+ 87-89%, B 83-86%, B- 80-82%, C+ 76-79%, C 70-75%, C- 65-69%, D 55-64%

Missed Exams and Late Assignments:

In fairness to other students, late exams will be given only in the event of documented medical disability or a death in the student's immediate family. Present such documentation the first time you broach the subject with the teacher. Conflicts with work schedules, school schedules, vacations, or non-emergency family matters are not valid reasons for missed exams. Late papers will be accepted, but penalized one letter grade per day late.

Extra Credit Work:

The student's time and energy should be devoted to meeting the requirements of this course. For this reason, extra credit assignment will not be offered.

Disability Accommodation:

If you qualify for special assistance under the American Disabilities Act, please see the instructor as soon as possible so that accommodations can be made.

Assignment Schedule

The following is a tentative schedule. Reading assignments and dates may be adjusted, but assigned material should be read prior to class.

Aug. 22: Introduction

24: Nietzsche, 1-56

26: Continued

29: Nietzsche, 57-94

31: Continued

Sept. 02: Continued

05: Labor Day - Holiday

07: Nietzsche, 95-141

09: Continued

12: **Reading Journal Due**

14: Continued

16: Nietzsche, 145-198

19: Continued

21: Continued

23: Nietzsche, 201-245

26: Continued

28: Continued

30: Review

Oct. 03: **Exam 1**

05: Camus. *The Stranger*

07: Continued

10: Columbus Day – Holiday

12: Strauss, “Progress or Return?”

14: Continued

17: Continued

19: **Reading Journal Due.**

21: Continued

24: Continued

26: Continued

28: Jaffa, “Graglia’s Quarrel with God”

Nov. 31: Continued
02: Continued
04: Review

07: **Exam 2**
09: Mill, 5-55
11: Continued

14: Mill, 56-115
16: Continued
18: NO CLASS

21: Heidegger: "Only a God Can Save Us: *Der Spiegel's* Interview with Martin Heidegger"
23: NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING BREAK

28: Continued
30: **Term Papers Due.** Course Summary and Review for Final Exam

FINAL EXAMINATION: TUESDAY DECEMBER 6, 10:30-12:30