

**Alexander Kirshner**

Office: 204K / Political Science Dept--Gross Hall

Office Hours: Mon and Weds, 4:30-5:20

TF: Jonathan Schwartz

TF: Samuel Bagg

What is the aim of politics? What form of government is best? Why obey those with whom you disagree? When is it a good idea to do a bad thing?

These are a few of the questions we will address in this course. To think through these questions, we will read and discuss challenging works of political philosophy, works whose lessons have been debated for hundreds, if not thousands of years. The authors and texts we will encounter continue to exert significant influence over the study and the practice of politics.

The course will provide students with a theoretical and historical introduction to the main line of western political thought. Students will acquire the tools necessary to think through and argue about some of the most important works of political philosophy.

Not a bad way to spend your time, if you ask me.

## **REQUIREMENTS**

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- Three five-page papers. Questions will be distributed 10 days before the papers are due. Appropriate references are required. Students are strongly encouraged to write drafts of the essays and to utilize Duke's resources, such as the Duke Writing Program.
  - The papers are due at **NOON** on
    - **September 27**
    - **October 25**
    - **November 15**
  - Email the papers to your teaching fellows.
- Class and section attendance. Active and informed participation in the sections is an essential element of the course. Informed participation requires that you read the relevant works before your section.
- On time arrival to class and section is expected. Also, please turn your phones off when you are in class.
- A final exam.

## GRADING

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- Each paper is worth 20 percent of the course grade.
  - **Late papers will be marked down by a third of a grade (from an A to an A-, for example).**
  - **For every 24 hours the paper is late, an additional third of a grade will be deducted. For example, papers handed in a day late will lose two thirds of a grade (from an A to B+).**
- Participation in your discussion sections is worth 20 percent of the course grade. More than one unexcused absence from a section will automatically reduce your section grade by a whole grade (from an A- to B-, for example).
- The final exam is worth 20 percent of your course grade.
- Don't plagiarize or cheat. The punishments are improbably terrible. All Duke policies apply.

## COURSE TEXTS

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- A few readings are available on Sakai.
- Required course books are available at the Duke University Bookstore. Please purchase the correct edition if you choose to purchase the books elsewhere.
  - Plato, *Trial and Death of Socrates* (Hackett)
  - Plato, *Republic* (Hackett)
  - Aristotle, *The Politics* (U. Chicago-Carnes Lord)
  - Machiavelli, *The Prince* (Bedford/St. Martin's)
  - Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Cambridge)
  - Locke, *Two Treatises on Government* (Hackett)
  - Rousseau, *Social Contract and the First and Second Discourses* (Yale)
  - Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays* (Oxford)

## CLASS SCHEDULE

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Class 1: What is political philosophy? Why should you care? Why study it in this way? (Aug 26-Mon)

Class 2: Plato: Apology of Socrates (Aug 28-Weds)

Class 3: Plato: Crito (Sept 2-Mon)

Class 4: Plato: Republic Book I (Sept 4-Weds)

Class 5: Plato: Republic II-III (Sept 9-Mon)

Class 6: Plato: Republic IV, V, VIII, IX (Sept 11-Weds)

Class 7: Aristotle: Politics I, II (1-5) (Sept 16-Mon)

Class 8: Aristotle: Politics III, IV (1-5) (Sept 18-Weds)

Class 9: Aristotle: Politics VII (Sept 23-Mon)

Class 10: Machiavelli: The Prince Chapters 1-12 (Sept 25-Weds.)

**—First Paper Due—Friday—September 27**

Class 11: Machiavelli: The Prince Chapters 13-26 (Sept 30-Mon)

Class 12: Hobbes Leviathan Letter Dedicatory, Author Introduction, Chapters 5, 6, 11 (Oct 2-Weds.)

Class 13: Hobbes Leviathan 13-18 (Oct 7-Mon)

Class 14: Hobbes Leviathan 19-21, 26, 29-30, Review and Conclusions (Oct 9-Weds)

**—Fall Break**

Class 15: Locke Second Treatise 1-5 (Oct 16-Weds)

Class 16: Locke Second Treatise 7-12, 14 (Oct 21-Mon)

Class 17: Locke Second Treatise 19 (Oct 23-Weds)

**—Second Paper Due—Friday—Oct 25**

Class 18: Rousseau Discourse on Inequality (Oct 28-Mon)

Class 19: Rousseau Social Contract I-II (Oct 30-Weds)

Class 20: Rousseau Social Contract III-IV (for book IV—focus on chapters 1-3) (Nov 4-Mon)

Class 21: Locke A Letter Concerning Toleration (Nov 6-Weds)

Class 22: Federalist Papers 10, 51 (Nov 11-Mon)

Class 23: Jeremy Bentham-selections—available on Sakai (Nov 13-Weds)

**—Third Paper Due—Friday—Nov 15**

Class 24: J.S. Mill On Liberty 1,4 (3 optional) (Nov 18-Mon)

Class 25: J.S. Mill On the Subjection of Women—1-2 (3-4 optional) (Nov 20-Weds)

Class 26: Free Speech and Pornography—Readings to be made available on Sakai (Nov 25-Mon)

**—Thanksgiving**

Class 27: State Secrecy and the Case of Edward Snowden—Readings to be made available on Sakai (Dec 2-Mon)

Class 28—Final lecture / Exam Discussion (Dec 4-Weds)