Political Science 212: Contemporary Political Theory

Winter 2016, MWF 10-1050, Tory Lecture B1, University of Alberta

Course website: eclass.srv.ualberta.ca

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Policy about course outlines can be found in Section 23.4(2) of the University Calendar.

Course description and goals

This course is an introduction to some of the major themes and methods of contemporary political theory—the study of the ideas and concepts that inform how we organize and structure our lives together. Political theory looks at the implicit and explicit arguments that justify particular arrangements of power—in international relations, within the state, between ethnic groups, within the family, within our psychic lives etc. The course offers a taster of some of the key ideas and thinkers in contemporary political theory that connect to the research interests of the senior faculty teaching it, and is a complement to POL S 211, which is a historical course.

This section of the course is collaboratively team-taught by three professors and six graduate teaching assistants. We hope that the presence of a range of intellectual interests, research expertise, and teaching styles will make the course more engaging and introduce you to some of the teachers you might take upper-level courses with.

If you do the work of the course and participate consistently we expect you to meet our course goals:

1. Become able to make sound and informed arguments about the topics we are discussing in the course;
2. Become more articulate talking about political issues in general by applying the general themes we discuss to new contexts;
3. Understand how to get behind your own assumptions and see how they can limit your perspective;
4. Learn to write short polemical essays;
5. Learn to participate in a reasoned deliberative discussion about politics.
Weekly breakdown

Getting the readings: Many readings are hyperlinked from this syllabus and the rest can be downloaded from eclass.srv.ualberta.ca. Please access the readings well in advance of the deadlines for discussing them in class, so that you can get help if you need it, and still have time to read them.

The structure of each week: Class will meet from January 4 to April 8 every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 1000 to 1050. Exceptions are Reading Week February 15-19, and Easter long weekend Friday March 25 and Monday March 28. Monday and Wednesday classes will always be a lecture, held in TL B1, and starting on Friday January 15 Friday class will be a discussion section led by a TA. You will be assigned to a discussion section and a classroom in the first week of the course.

Week 1 | What is political theory? | January 4-8
Readings/videos (for use in class):

- James Tully, *Reconciliation here on earth*. [on eClass] While we want you to read the article, you may also be interested in seeing it as a video of the talk:
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OGzGvxyHz2o
- David Roberts, “Climate change is simple,”
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A7ktYbVwr90&sns=tw

Week 2 | Doing political theory | January 11-15

Reading:

James Tully, *Reconciliation here on earth* [on eClass].

Week 3 | Civil liberties I: freedom of speech and the university | January 18-22

Readings:

  http://laws.justice.gc.ca/PDF/CONST_E.pdf#page=69

Week 4 | Civil liberties II: public and private | January 25-29

Readings:

Week 5 | Human rights I | February 1-5

Readings:

- *United Nations Declaration of Human Rights*
  http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Pages/Language.aspx?LangID=eng

First working paper (on civil liberties) due on February 5.

Week 6 | Human rights II | February 8-12

Reading:

  http://libcom.org/library/against-human-rights-zizek

First participation self-evaluation due on February 12 by 11 am, using electronic form that will be provided.

February 15-19: Reading Week

Week 7 | Democratic participation and social change I | February 22-26

Readings:

- “We want democracy, but we don’t have the theory or skill to do it: an interview with Astra Taylor,”
  http://grist.org/people/we-want-democracy-but-we-dont-have-theory-or-skill-to-do-it/
- David Roberts, “What critics of the Keystone campaign misunderstand about climate activism,”

Second working paper (on human rights) due on February 26.

Week 8 | Democratic participation and social change II | February 29-March 4

Readings:

- Christopher Zumski Finke, “Staying human in a time of climate change”

Week 9 | Punishment and control | March 7-11

Reading:

- Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* “The Body of the Condemned” and “Panopticism” [on eClass].

Third working paper (on democratic participation) due on March 11.
Week 10 | Punishment and control | March 14-18

Reading:

- Angela Davis, “Are Prisons Obsolete?” [on eClass].

Week 11 | Colonialism I: Lived experience | March 21-23

Reading:

- Frantz Fanon, excerpts from Black Skin, White Masks. Grove Press, 1952 [on eClass]. Also available on Library reserve: GN 645 F313 2008.

Fourth working paper (on punishment and control) due on March 25. Note no section on holiday Friday March 25.

Week 12 | Colonialism II: Reconciliation, Resentment, Indigenous Politics | March 30-April 1

Readings:


Week 13 | Closing discussions | April 4-8

No reading.

Second participation self-evaluation due by 11:00 on April 8, using electronic form that will be provided.

Fifth working paper (on colonialism) due on April 8.

NO FINAL EXAM.
Course requirements and evaluation

Grade breakdown

- 25% Participation
- 15% Quizzes on readings
- 60% Four 500-word essays (top 4 out of 5 count)

Note that in all but exceptional situations, all components of the course must be completed to receive a passing grade. Policy regarding missed term work is outlined in Section 23.4(3) of the University Calendar.

The class is graded to a standard of merit, not on a curve (i.e. it’s possible for everyone to get an A—or a D!). (The partial exception to this is the quizzes: we’ll look at the overall class performance before finalizing where to draw the lines between letter grades.) Note that if this class performs typically, the average grade will track the U of A historical mean for a 200-level course, which is 2.8 on the four-point scale; the median letter grade is typically B.

If you have any concerns about your ability to meet the course requirements don’t hesitate to contact one of the professors as early in the term as possible.

Participation—25%

Political theory is learned by doing: asking questions, articulating your position, listening to others’ positions, and working things through together. There’ll be chances for this in the large classroom, and even more chances in your Friday section meetings.

Half of your participation grade will be for showing up for your section meetings (arriving on time, and staying to the end). The other half will be for the quality of your participation in plenary and in group work in your Friday section; quality of participation in the large classes may also factor in.

As part of the evaluation process for participation you will submit a ‘Participation Self-Evaluation’ on February 12 and on April 8 in section: you’ll give your own reading of how well you’ve met the following criteria for participation and what grade you deserve. Your TA will make a judgment about this and tell you. Your input will help your TA recognize your best participation.

Good, B-range participation (3.0/3.3) requires that you:
- Show up for all classes and sections (unless you’ve communicated with your TA about extenuating circumstances)
- Take part in whole-section and small group discussions, without dominating
- Offer contributions that relate to what’s being talked about, and connect with course themes
- Show awareness of the week’s readings in your contributions, and refer to them from time to time

The A range denotes ‘Excellent’. Excellent participation (more than 3.3):
- **Mobilizes a strong understanding of course readings and themes**: you’re not showing off about what you know, but are bringing in nuances from the week’s and the term’s readings where these help to focus or advance conversation.
- **Is critically complex**: you’re connecting with nuances of core issues in the course and advancing your own view with an awareness of strong arguments on different sides.
Is attuned to what others are saying and helps to draw connections with course themes: your contributions show that you’ve listened well, and you help to clarify, focus, and move the conversation forward.

You probably merit 2.7 or less if you have missed classes without making arrangements in advance; dominated discussions in ways that prevent others from having a say; repeatedly dragged things off topic; and so on. Remember that 2.7 still means “Good,” 1.7-2.3 means “Satisfactory,” and 1.3 means “Poor.”

Classroom behaviour:

- Please arrive by the start time of class; it disrupts things for others if you arrive late.
- Please don’t start packing up until the end time of class; we’ll be sure to end on time so that you can then pack up and get to where you need to be.
- Please restrict your use of electronic devices to things necessary to take part well in class: save Facebook, texting, etc., etc. for another time. There’s research evidence that surfing during class not only detracts from your own learning but that of people seated near you.

Quizzes on readings—15%

Because this is a participatory class, everyone’s experience depends on everyone else having done the readings with care. (Few classroom experiences are more frustrating than trying to have a productive conversation with someone who hasn’t done their best to understand the material.)

We know, though, that you’re super-busy with classes and work and other things; you’re doing triage all the time to decide what you really need to do and what you can gloss over. This element of the grade is designed to put careful reading into the category of something you really need to do leading up to the first class every week.

In the first class of each week for which there’s an assigned reading (Weeks 2-12), there’ll be a short quiz at the very start of that class. These quizzes will be designed to reward careful reading, and punish not reading.

Each quiz will receive a grade of 1 (“trouble”), 2 (“OK”), or 3 (“great”). We’ll look across the class’ performance on quizzes at the end of the term and translate quiz performance into a mark for each student. And we’ll announce the spread of results as we go, to give you a sense of how you’re performing relative to the class.

Top four working papers—60%

Doing political theory involves understanding a range of possible positions on a question, articulating where you stand and why, and giving reasons for your position relative to others. We’ll be supporting you in learning to do this through class activities, and we’ll ask you to do it in written work.

There are five working papers due on fixed dates by the beginning of section (that’s 10am on a Friday) during the term, and your top four will be worth 60% of your final grade (i.e. 15% each). Working papers should be submitted as Word or RTF documents by email to your TA. People who do well in this component of the course will typically submit all five working papers, so that their lowest grade can drop away; even for good writers and scholars, there’s a learning curve for these things.

Comprehensive advice on working papers is included in a separate handout. Here, though, is the big picture:
1. Begin by succinctly framing a core question that comes out of the course to date, and that one of the readings from the previous week will help you to address. Here you're drawing on your sense of where we've come so far in the course, and what important gaps there are in our ability to address central questions.

2. Against that background, take up one specific, relevant issue from a reading from the previous week and discuss it critically. Here you're drawing carefully on the text to explore an issue that can take our inquiry forward—you're arguing for or against an important claim, or making a useful conceptual distinction, or posing a careful and generative question.

3. The advice in the handout on writing working papers will hopefully be of help in keeping your paper succinct, precisely focused, and argumentative.

4. Note that we're very serious about the word limit: if you exceed it by more than 10% on a given assignment, it'll affect your mark. Your working papers should indicate the word count.

Late working papers will lose one portion of a letter grade each calendar day that they're late (so a paper due on Friday that deserves a 3.3 will get 3.0 if it's handed in Saturday, 2.7 if it's handed in Sunday, etc.)

Course policies

Lateness and extensions:

We know that two things are true:

1. Students get behind with work, stressed, overcommitted, etc. during their degrees. Their computers die, they miss busses, they're asked to work overtime, they get a bad cold. This is part of life as a student. These are not good enough reasons for us to make allowances with assignments and grading (since if we do, it'll tend to advantage students who are brashest or most entitled in asking for breaks, not necessarily those who face the greatest challenges).

2. Sometimes exceptional circumstances do come up and deserve accommodation—you're struggling with serious mental or physical illness, your child is ill, a member of your family is dying or dies. These are serious problems.

It's your responsibility to plan your term so that stuff in category #1 doesn't kill your grade—i.e. do writing early in the term, don't leave reading and written work to the night before it's due, hit 'save' often and back up your data, see us for help/advice before things get serious, etc.

If stuff happens in category #2, speak to one of the professors, and please do this as soon as possible once you realize there's a problem.

Regarding absences that may be excusable and procedures for addressing course components missed as a result, consult sections 23.3(1) and 23.5.6 of the University Calendar.

Policy on academic integrity:

All students should consult the information provided by the Office of Judicial Affairs regarding avoiding cheating and plagiarism in particular and academic dishonesty in general (see the Academic Integrity Undergraduate Handbook and Information for Students). If in doubt about what is permitted in this class, ask the instructor.
An instructor or coordinator who is convinced that a student has handed in work that he or she could not possibly reproduce without outside assistance is obliged, out of consideration of fairness to other students, to report the case to the Associate Dean of the Faculty. See the Academic Discipline Process.

"The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour and avoid any behavior which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University."

See: [http://www.governance.ualberta.ca/CodesofConductandResidenceCommunityStandards/CodeofStudentBehvaviour/303OffencesUndertheCode/3032lnappropriateAcademicBehav.aspx](http://www.governance.ualberta.ca/CodesofConductandResidenceCommunityStandards/CodeofStudentBehvaviour/303OffencesUndertheCode/3032lnappropriateAcademicBehav.aspx)

Recording classes

Audio or video recording of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the instructor or as a part of an approved accommodation plan. Recorded material is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the instructor.

Finding non-academic help

The Student Distress Centre is there to listen, offer support, supply information and provide services:
- Call: 492-HELP (492-4357)
- Drop in: 2-707 in the Students’ Union Building
- Visit Peer Support Services: [http://www.su.ualberta.ca/services/psc/](http://www.su.ualberta.ca/services/psc/)
- Email psc@su.ualberta.ca

Specialized Support & Disability Services:

If you have special needs that could affect your performance in this class, please let us know during the first week of the term so that appropriate arrangements can be made. If you are not already registered with Specialized Support & Disability Services, contact their office immediately (2-800 SUB; Email ssdsrec@ualberta.ca; Email; phone 780-492-3381; WEB www.sds.ualberta.ca).
EXCERPTS FROM THE CODE OF STUDENT BEHAVIOUR
FOR REVIEW WITH EACH CLASS AT THE BEGINNING OF EVERY TERM

Procedures for Instructors Regarding

Plagiarism, Cheating,

Misrepresentation of Facts and Participation in an Offence

The following procedures are drawn from the Code of Student Behaviour as approved by GFC and the Board of Governors. The guidelines summarize what instructors must do when they have reason to believe that a student has plagiarized, cheated, misrepresented facts or participated in an offence. If you have questions about these guidelines, or about the policies, please talk with the senior administrator in your Faculty responsible for dealing with student discipline—usually an Associate Dean—a the Appeals and Compliance Officer (Appeals Coordinator), University Governance (2-2655).

30.5.4 Procedures for Instructors in Cases Respecting Inappropriate Academic Behaviour

30.5.4(1) When an Instructor believes that a Student may have committed an Inappropriate Academic Behaviour Offence [30.3.2] or that there has been Misrepresentation of Facts [30.3.6(4)] or Participation in an Offence [30.3.6(5)] in cases respecting Inappropriate Academic Behaviour in the course that he or she instructs, the Instructor will meet with the Student. Before such a meeting, the Instructor shall inform the Student of the purpose of the meeting. In the event that the Student refuses or fails to meet with the Instructor within a reasonable period of time specified by the Instructor, the Instructor shall, taking into account the available information, decide whether a report to the Dean is warranted.

30.5.4(2) If the Instructor believes there has been a violation of the Code, the Instructor shall, as soon as possible after the event occurred, report that violation to the Dean and provide a written statement of the details of the case. The instructor may also include a recommendation for sanction.

Possible Sanctions

One or more of the following sanctions given in 30.4.3 (2) and (3) of the Code are commonly used for plagiarism, cheating, participation in an offence, and misrepresentation of facts:

30.4.3(2) a.i a mark reduction or a mark of 0 on any term work or examination for reason of Inappropriate Academic Behaviour
30.4.3(2) a.ii Reduction of a grade in a course
30.4.3(2) a.iii a grade of F for a course
30.4.3(2) a.iv a remark on a transcript of 8 (or 9 for failing graduate student grades), indicating Inappropriate Academic Behaviour, in addition to 30.4.3(2)a.i, 30.4.3(2)a.ii or 30.4.3(2)a.iii
30.4.3(3) b Expulsion
30.4.3(3) c Suspension

The following sanctions may be used in rare cases:

30.4.3(3) e Suspension of a Degree already awarded
30.4.3(3) f Rescission of a Degree already awarded

30.6.1 Initiation of an Appeal

30.6.1(1) When a Student has been found to have committed an offence under the Code of Student Behaviour or an Applicant is found to have committed an offence under the Code of Applicant Behaviour, whether or not that Student or Applicant has been given a sanction, the Student or Applicant may appeal that decision, except in the case of a decision of the Discipline Officer under 30.5.6(2)a.ii, which remains final and is not subject to appeal. In cases where a severe sanction has been recommended to the Discipline Officer, once the student receives the final decision of the Discipline Officer, the student can appeal the decisions of both Dean and the Discipline Officer at the same time. The written appeal must be presented to the Appeals Coordinator in University Governance within 15 Working Days of the deemed receipt of the decision by the Student or Applicant. The finding that an offence has been committed, the sanction imposed or both may form the basis of appeal. The written appeal must also state the full grounds of appeal and be signed by the Appellant. The appeal shall be heard by the UAB.

PROFESSOR STEVEN PENNEY
CHAIR, CAMPUS LAW REVIEW COMMITTEE

DR MARTIN FERGUSON-PELL
ACTING PROVOST AND VICE-PRESIDENT (ACADEMIC)

* The Campus Law Review Committee is a standing committee of General Faculties Council (GFC) responsible for the review of the Code of Student Behaviour and of student disciplinary procedures.

Updated: 30/01/2013

R:GO05 General Faculties Council - Committees/CAM12-13/Don't CheatsheetUpdated.docx
NOTICE TO INSTRUCTORS REGARDING PLAGIARISM, CHEATING, MISREPRESENTATION OF FACTS
AND PARTICIPATION IN AN OFFENCE

The U of A considers plagiarism, cheating, misrepresentation of facts and participation in an offence to be serious academic offences. Plagiarism, cheating, misrepresentation of facts and participation in an offence can be avoided if students are told what these offences are and if possible sanctions are made clear at the outset. Instructors should understand that the principles embodied in the Code are essential to our academic purpose. For this reason, instructors will be fully supported by Departments, Faculties and the University in their endeavours to rightfully discover and pursue cases of academic dishonesty in accordance with the Code.

At the beginning of each term, we ask you to review with your students the definitions of plagiarism and cheating. We are now also asking you to review with your students the definition of Misrepresentation of Facts and Participation in an Offence. Your co-operation and assistance in this matter are much appreciated.

30.3.2(1) Plagiarism

No Student shall submit the words, ideas, images or data of another person as the Student’s own in any academic writing, essay, thesis, project, assignment, presentation or poster in a course or program of study.

30.3.2(2) Cheating

30.3.2(2)a No Student shall in the course of an examination or other similar activity, obtain or attempt to obtain information from another Student or other unauthorized source, give or attempt to give information to another Student, or use, attempt to use or possess for the purposes of use any unauthorized material.

30.3.2(2)b No Student shall represent or attempt to represent him or herself as another or have or attempt to have himself or herself represented by another in the taking of an examination, preparation of a paper or other similar activity. See also misrepresentation in 30.3.6(4).

30.3.2(2) Cheating (Continued)

30.3.2(2)c No Student shall represent another’s substantial editorial or compositional assistance on an assignment as the Student's own work.

30.3.2(2)d No Student shall submit in any course or program of study, without the written approval of the course Instructor, all or a substantial portion of any academic writing, essay, thesis, research report, project, assignment, presentation or poster for which credit has previously been obtained by the Student or which has been or is being submitted by the Student in another course or program of study in the University or elsewhere.

30.3.2(2)e No Student shall submit in any course or program of study any academic writing, essay, thesis, report, project, assignment, presentation or poster containing a statement of fact known by the Student to be false or a reference to a source the Student knows to contain fabricated claims (unless acknowledged by the Student), or a fabricated reference to a source.

30.3.6(4) Misrepresentation of Facts

No Student shall misrepresent pertinent facts to any member of the University community for the purpose of obtaining academic or other advantage. This includes such acts as the failure to provide pertinent information on an application for admission or the altering of an educational document/transcript.

30.3.6(5) Participation in an Offence

No Student shall counsel or encourage or knowingly aid or assist, directly or indirectly, another person in the commission of any offence under this Code.

The Truth In Education (TIE) project is a campus wide educational campaign on Academic Honesty. This program was created to let people know the limits and consequences of inappropriate academic behaviour. There are helpful tips for Instructors and Students. Please take the time to visit the website at: http://www.ualberta.ca/tie