INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL THEORY

Prof. Víctor M. Muñiz-Fraticelli
POLI 231, Winter 2019
M/W/F* 10:35–11:25
MASS 112
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1. Aims and objectives:

This course is an introduction to political theory, which includes the normative analysis of political action and the conceptual foundations of political science. The course is meant as a general exposition to some problems in political action, from authority, obedience, and resistance; to legitimacy, democracy, and consent; and the ethics of political action (including the problem of dirty hands). The course does not follow a chronological sequence, but rather groups together several theorists in dialogue over central themes.

The more general objectives of the course include developing the ability to critically evaluate political and philosophical arguments and adjudicate among different interpretations of texts, and improve the skills of communicating normative and interpretative arguments in oral discussion and written work.

While this course is only a general introduction to the sub-discipline of political theory, it fulfills the prerequisites for 300-level courses in political theory. Students may wish to expand their knowledge of the subfield through the history of political thought sequence (POLI 333/334 and 433/434) or the thematic courses (Political Theory of IR, Contemporary Political Theory, Radical, Democratic, or Liberal Political Theory, or the various Topics courses).

2. Required books:

Required books are available at Librarie Paragraphe Bookstore (on McGill College and Sherbrooke). All other readings will be made available electronically through myCourses at least a week before the reading is due.

Sophocles, Antigone (Hackett) ISBN: 978-0-87220-571-0
Plato, The Trial and Death of Socrates (Hackett) ISBN: 978-0-87220-554-3
Sieyès, Political Writings (Hackett) ISBN: 978-0-87220-430-0
Sartre, No Exit and three Other Plays (Vintage) ISBN: 978-0-67972-516-9

For convenience, you may seek out affordable and easily available copies of Thoreau, Civil Disobedience and Other Essays (Dover) ISBN: 978-0-48627-563-5, but the essays “Resistance to Civil Government” and “A Plea for John Brown” will also be made available online.
3. Evaluation:

Conference attendance: 10%
Conference participation: 15%
Three papers: 25% each

The class will follow a lecture format. Because of the size of the class, it is unlikely that there will be space for questions in-lecture. There will be a mandatory conference, which will determine the participation component of the grade, and which will be the major forum for discussion. Please come to each conference prepared to initiate topics of conversation and to draw others’ attention to important themes or passages in the text, as well as answer direct questions posed by the instructor or your classmates. Attendance to both lecture and conference is mandatory, and lack of attendance will affect your participation grade.

The three papers will be due on Thursday (not a lecture day) January 31, February 28, and April 11. Each should be between 1100 and 1300 words (including footnotes and references). More instructions will be given when the topics are assigned.

Late papers will be penalized by 2/3 of a letter grade per day (an A paper becomes B+, then B-, then C, and so on) with the first day beginning immediately after the papers are due. Papers that are over three days late will not be accepted, resulting in failing the paper which means (see below) failing the entire course. Documented illnesses or documented family emergencies will be the only grounds for exceptions, extensions, or acceptance of emailed papers.

Papers are due at 5:00pm on the day they are due, in both hard copy and via email as a PDF (not MS Word) attachment to munizfraticelli.students@gmail.com. No other email address will be monitored for papers. The timestamp on the email will determine whether the paper is on time.

Hard copies of papers should be left in the lobby of 3674 Peel Street either with my assistant (Ms. Libby Parker), or in a box that will be labeled with the course name and number. Hard copies of papers in order to pass the course as a whole, you must receive a passing grade for each of the course components. Excessive absences, a consistent failure to take part in discussion, or failing to turn in any one of the papers will result in a failing grade for the course as a whole. I apply this policy strictly, and have failed students for consistently failing to attend conferences.

4. University and class policies:

Academic integrity

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (for more information, see http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity).

L’université McGill attache une haute importance à l’honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l’on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l’étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (veuillez consulter le site http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity pour de plus amples renseignements).
Language policy

In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l’étudiant de l’Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l’un des objets est la maîtrise d’une langue).

Laptops, tablets, cell phones, and other electronic equipment

This is a manual note-taking course. The use of electronic devices, including laptop computers, is not allowed. Please switch your cell phones off before class begins. The only exceptions to this policy require a referral from OSD, or specific administrative arrangements with PSSA.

Barriers to learning

As the instructor of this course I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, or anticipate experiencing barriers, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and the Office for Students with Disabilities, at (514) 398-6009.

Copyright of instructor-generated materials

Instructor-generated course materials (e.g., handouts, notes, summaries, exam questions, etc.) are protected by law and may not be copied or distributed in any form or in any medium without explicit permission of the instructor. Note that infringements of copyright can be subject to follow up by the University under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures.

Emergency policy

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University’s control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

5. Schedule and Office Hours:

The course will generally follow a Monday/Wednesday schedule, with the exception of Friday, January 11 and 18. There will be no lecture on Wednesday, February 6, because I will be out of town at an academic conference, but I may arrange guest lecture on that days. Be prepared to attend class unless I notify you of the contrary.

I will hold office hours on a regular schedule in my office in the Faculty of Law. The office is located in 3690 Peel, Room 107, but you must enter the building through 3674 Peel, as the door to 3690 is locked. TAs may hold their own office hours if their schedule allows it.
**Introduction**

**PART I**  
Authority, obedience, and resistance

- **W** 9  Sophocles, *Antigone*
- **F** 11  Plato, *Crito* and *Apology*
- **M** 14  Wolff, *In defense of Anarchism*, Pts. I and II (skip appendix of Pt. II)
- **W** 16  Wolff, *In defense of Anarchism*, Pt. II continued, Pt. III
- **F** 18  *Thoreau, Resistance to Civil Government*

- **M** 21  *King, Letter from Birmingham Jail*; *Malcolm X, The Ballot or the Bullet*
- **W** 23  *Thoreau, A Plea for Captain John Brown*
- **M** 28  *Rawls, from A Theory of Justice, ch. 6; Raz, The Authority of Law, ch. 14*

**Part II**  
Legitimacy, democracy, and consent

- **W** 30  *Hobbes, from Leviathan*, chs. 13-14, 17-18
- **M** 4  *Hobbes, continued*

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**6**  
**NO LECTURE**

- **M** 11  Locke, from *Second Treatise of Government*, Chs. 1-3, 7-9
- **W** 13  Locke, from *Second Treatise of Government*, Chs. 17-19
- **M** 18  Rousseau, from *On the Social Contract*, Book I, all; Book II, Chs. 1-6
- **W** 20  Sièyes, from “What is the Third Estate?”*, Chs. 1, 2, 3§§I and III, and 5
- **M** 25  *Tocqueville, from Democracy in America*
- **W** 27  *Gentile, “The Philosphic Basis of Fascism”*

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**READING WEEK (MAR 4 –8)**

**PART III**  
The ethics of political action

- **M**  MAR 11  *Plato, from Republic*
- **W** 13  *Thucydides, “Melian Dialogue”*
- **M** 18  Machiavelli, *The Prince*
- **W** 20  Machiavelli, continued
- **M** 25  Sartre, “Dirty Hands”
- **W** 27  “Weber, “Politics as Vocation”

**PART IV**  
Justice, conflict, and rights

- **M**  APR 1  *Plato from The Republic*
- **W** 3  *Rawls from A Theory of Justice*
- **M** 8  *Marx, On the Jewish Question*
- **W** 10  *Hampshire from Justice is Conflict*

(Readings preceded by an *asterisk will be made available on myCourses.)