

## **POLI 1001: Fundamentals of Politics**

**T Th 10:30 – 11:50**

**Audubon Hall: 114**

**Fall 2022**

**Instructor:** Thomas Cloud

Stubbs 310: email: tcloud4@lsu.edu

**Office Hours:** Monday and Friday 11:30 – 12:30, and by appointment.

### **Introduction:**

Welcome to Fundamentals of Politics. I am very excited to teach you. I was once told by a professor that he envied my reading Aristotle for the first time. I understand now why he said that. I hope you too will understand what that means by the end of the semester.

This course is also an introduction to critical reading. Critical reading is a skill like any other. It requires dedication and good practice. I say “good” practice because you need to practice the right way in order to master it. I will coach you in this. Practicing right is important. Like any other skill, it will be awkward or difficult in the beginning. Do not let that discourage you. Whenever you hear someone say something is “second nature” to them, remember that it is “second” nature and that they were not born with that skill. At the end of the semester, you will have a new skill you can continue to hone and to use for the rest of your life.

Specific to our course, it is important to know that authors at the highest level choose every word with utmost care. Very important information can be “hidden” in plain sight or buried in a footnote. Some of the authors we will read lived before free speech was a normal legal protection and had to fear being punished for what they wrote. Even those who wrote when free speech became common still wrote with care (and still write with care today).

### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this course is to uncover the fundamentals of politics. A closer examination of the words “fundamental” and “politics” might help. “Fundamental” comes from the Latin word “fundamentum” which means “a foundation, groundwork, support, beginning.” The word “politics” comes from the Greek “polis” which means “city.” This means that in this course we will be examining foundations and beginnings of the city. What does “city” mean? City means “The community of citizens.” This semester then will be an exploration of beginning and support for a community of citizens.

### **Course requirements:**

- Class participation in class discussion [10%]
- Reading Reflections and Questions [10%]
- Quizzes [30%]
- Midterm. (October 6) [30%]
- Final [20%]

### **Class Participation:**

Learning is best when done in community. I hope to open the world of political theory for your exploration. On the way you will find that part of the joy of exploring is sharing your discoveries and frustrations with your classmates. Perhaps you may discover a shared interest. Perhaps you will disagree and challenge each other's interpretation. Both will help you learn. Politics deals with the greatest moral matters. Every single one of us finds it interesting on some level and has something to say on it.

### **Reading Reflections and Questions:**

Starting with the second day of class (August 25) students are expected to submit questions and reflections on the day's reading prior to every class. I grade questions on a point scale of 0 to 3. Reading reflections are a way for me to keep track of how students are reading a text. They also create a more interesting course and allow every student to have his or her say. I do not need more than a paragraph. Please give the page numbers for any citations or quotes.

These reading reflections are crucial to your success. They are designed to help build your learning scaffold upon which you can hang your knowledge. A musician must practice playing music. A critical reader must practice critical reading.

I will provide some sample reading reflections on Moodle to help clarify my expectations. At the outset though, I want to see effort. Effort is more important than being "right" in your reflections. If I think a student did not make enough effort or clearly did not read the assignment, the student will not earn full credit.

The reading reflections and questions are found on Moodle.

### **Quizzes with Cumulative Questions:**

Quizzes start the 2<sup>nd</sup> session of the first week of class. Quizzes are daily unless otherwise noted. Starting with the second quiz students may expect to see (but may not necessarily get) some questions from previous quizzes. For example, quiz 4 will have new questions and

could have questions from quizzes 1 through 3.

This is based on cognitive research out of Washington University St. Louis<sup>1</sup> but is well supported by other historical accounts, like learning to drive. Students (and anyone else for that matter) often confuse recognition with recall. When we re-read something multiple times, we usually are only recognizing a page instead of recalling it. Recall takes effort and feels uncomfortable but is necessary to truly learn something. Students may paradoxically feel they are retaining less while their tests show they are retaining more.

All that is to say, cumulative quizzes are one tool (among others) designed to prevent the dreaded “but I studied for TWELVE hours” phrase professors sometimes hear after the test. Usually, most of those twelve hours are spent re-recognizing something instead of recalling it. Practicing recall throughout the semester will provide a continuous firming up of foundations so that come test time students can study with greater efficiency and take well-earned and needed breaks to relax and recover.

### **Policy on laptops, iPad, smartphone, etc.:**

I will allow electronic devices. These devices must be used for classroom purposes, however. You will use your phones or laptops to take the daily quizzes.

If you find you have trouble paying attention, I encourage you to place any electronic devices in your bag until needed for a quiz or for flashcards. The trouble with electronic devices is that they are well designed to keep our attention. Dividing our attention between a phone and class is a very hard thing.

### **Required Paper Notebook:**

**A notebook for notetaking is required.** Notes are not required but strongly urged. We will use the notebooks for other in class activities aside from notetaking. I frequently ask the class to take a minute to organize their thoughts by writing them down. This helps reduce learning anxiety.

### **Required Flashcards:**

I will set aside one to two minutes each class for writing a flashcard. We will not use these flashcards in class. These are for your personal use. You must write a flashcard each class. This is one area where I prefer using a smartphone app. My preferred app is Anki.

Flashcards are one of the greatest learning tools out there. Apps like Anki improve

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<sup>1</sup> One of the researchers, Pooja Agarwal, maintains a website named after the book she co-wrote with Patrice Bain. [Powerful Teaching: Unleash the Science of Learning](#)

upon them. There are a few things to remember about flashcards.

1. It is better to have many short flashcards than a handful of long ones.
2. If you do not remember what is on the back of a flashcard, always struggle a bit to remember before flipping it over. This is akin to doing a pushup. It is a bit like resistance training for your brain. It feels uncomfortable but will improve your memory. This where you move from recognizing information to recalling it.
3. Practice your flashcards every day. This is the advantage of a flashcard app. While you are waiting in line for coffee, you can run through a few flashcards.

I too will make a flashcard. I am also reading new books I wish to master.

### **Midterm:**

I will give one in class midterm (October 11<sup>th</sup>). You will be allowed one page of handwritten notes (front and back). The page must be handwritten.

### **Final:**

For now, plan on having an in-class final on Wednesday December 7<sup>th</sup> from 5:30 to 7:30 PM (that's what the registrar assigned us...).

### **Grading scale:**

A+ (98%-100%), A (93%-97%), A- (90%-92%)

B+ (88%-90%), B (83%-87%), B- (80%-82%)

C+ (78%-80%), C (73%-77%), C- (70%-72%)

D+ (68%-70%), D (63%-67%), D- (60%-62%)

F (below 60%)

**University Policies:**

[Attendance](#), [Integrity](#), and [Access](#)

University education is a great privilege, offered to all with the ability and the willingness to learn, without obstacles based on race, sex, or other aspects of personal identity. Students would be foolish to squander their opportunity by unexcused absence from class or by academic dishonesty. Please consult linked LSU policies.

I will emphasize that plagiarism is a serious violation of academic integrity and will not be tolerated. Students should familiarize themselves LSU's plagiarism policies.

**University Statement on Integrated Learning:**

Integrated learning allows students to make simple connections among ideas and experiences and across disciplines and perspectives. The LSU Integrative Learning Core (ILC) curriculum is designed to develop student abilities to transfer their learning to new situations, and demonstrate a sense of self as a learner. A fundamental goal of the ILC is to foster students' practical and intellectual capacities associated with integrative learning in preparation for high competence and functionality in their post-baccalaureate careers. This course fulfills the BOR Area of *Social/Behavioral Sciences* and provides students experience with the ILC proficiency of *Inquiry and Analysis*.

**Resources for Students:**

Your health and safety are LSU's top priority. If you are feeling ill or overwhelmed with anxiety, please contact the [LSU Student Health Center](#) for medical advice and mental health support.

I also recommend checking out LSU's Center for Academic success. They can provide more one on one coaching for you. This is a great resource. I particularly recommend using the CAS for improving your writing. [LSU Center for Academic Success](#)

**Makeup Policy and Instructor Emails:**

Students are expected to read emails sent to them by their instructor. Assigned readings will be adjusted slightly over the semester.

Makeup quizzes require a doctor's note if sick. Makeups are meant for extraordinary circumstances. If you are late, you are not entitled to a makeup. (We will discuss when you can take makeup quizzes on the first day of class.)

### **Required Books**

*The Prince* by Niccolo Machiavelli translated by Harvey C. Mansfield, second edition ISBN: 978-0226500447

*Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics* Oxford World Classics translated by Sir David Ross & Lesley Brown ISBN: 978-0199213610

Shakespeare's *Henry VI part 2* Folger Shakespeare Library ISBN: 978-0671722678

Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* Folger Shakespeare Library ISBN: 978-1982157371

*Shop Class as Soulcraft: An Inquiry into the Value of Work* by Matthew B. Crawford ISBN: 978-0143117469

(Other Readings will be provided on Moodle)

### **Reading Schedule**

August 23 – Welcome. In class activities. Study Strategies. Intro to Machiavelli.

August 25 – Machiavelli *The Prince* 1-7

August 30 – Machiavelli *The Prince* 8 – 15

September 1 – Machiavelli *The Prince* 16 – 20

September 6 – Machiavelli *The Prince* 21 – 26 and Letter to Vettori.

September 8 – Machiavelli selections from *Discourses* (Moodle). Begin Shakespeare's *Henry VI part 2*

September 13 – Shakespeare's *Henry VI part 2*

September 15 – Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 1 – 2

September 20 – Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 3 – 4

September 22 – Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 5 – 6

September 27 – Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 7 – 8

September 29 – Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 9 – 10

October 4 – Selections from Aristotle *Politics/Rhetoric/Eudemian Ethics* (Moodle)  
Begin Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*

October 6 – Shakespeare *Coriolanus*

October 11 – **Midterm (In Class)**

October 13 – No Class

October 18 – Declaration / Slavery / Chesterton (Moodle)

October 20 – Federalists (Moodle)

October 25 – Progressives (Moodle)

October 27 – Hayek “The Origin and Effects of Our Morals: A Problem for Science”  
and “The Use of Knowledge in Society” (Moodle)

November 1 – TBA (Moodle)

November 3 – TBA (Moodle)

November 8 – *Abolition of Man* 1

November 10 – *Abolition of Man* 2 and 3

November 15 – TBA

November 17 – *Shop Class as Soulcraft*

November 22 – *Shop Class as Soulcraft*

November 24 – No Class

November 29 – TBA

December 1 – Roger Scruton beauty documentary

**December 7<sup>th</sup> – Final, 5:30 to 7:30 PM**