This course is a comprehensive introduction to political theory through the analysis of seminal historical and contemporary texts. Because the subject matter is vast, we will, of necessity, restrict our attention to a handful of critical issues: the distinct nature of public morality, the structure and defense of liberty, equality, and justice, and the different models of democratic politics. Although these issues are, arguably, foundational, our analysis will not directly address many other important issues, including those of power, feminism, moral pluralism, etc., which students are encouraged to pursue in their further coursework in political theory.

Our exploration of political theory in this course is structured both conceptually and, almost always, chronologically. Maintaining this structure both in class lectures and discussions and in thinking through the reading and writing assignments will allow our analysis to remain analytically focused and, at the same time, cognizant of the historic complexity and of the stylized conversation among the historically positioned works. Despite the advanced age of some of the texts we will consider, the issues of interest to us they address are “contemporary,” even if the positions they take are sometimes not. Even where our disagreements with these positions may have a distinctly historic dimension, however, our interest in them will not be antiquarian. To understand both the appeal and the limits of contemporary
arguments, we often need to appreciate their historical lineage and the reasons for rejecting the alternatives to them.

**Course Requirements**

All components of the grade will draw on lecture material, whether or not it is included in the assigned texts, and on material from the assigned texts, whether or not it is covered in the lectures. Successful performance in the course will, therefore, require both the regular attendance of lectures and the timely completion of reading assignments. You will need to bring your texts to class to follow along the references in the lectures.

The purposes of recitations will be (1) further elucidation of lectures and assigned readings through small-group guided discussions of specific questions central to the covered material; (2) introduction of special topics that are best covered in small groups. Discussion questions for the recitations – typically 2-3 for each recitation – will be distributed by e-mail in advance (on Thursday evening of each week before the corresponding recitation meetings) to allow students the opportunity to think them through by the time of those meetings. In order to make possible the careful tracking of students’ performance through the semester, and to maintain the small group discussion dynamic, students are required to attend *all and only* the recitations for which they are registered. To encourage this, students will not be given attendance credit for coming to meetings of other recitation sections.

Grades for the course will be based on the following components: (1) two short 4-5-page papers addressing a question of your choice from the list of recitation discussion questions; (2) recitation participation; (3) a number of in-recitation quizzes; (4) two exams.

**Papers.** The papers will be due to your respective TAs by e-mail by 3pm on the first Monday after you receive the discussion/paper questions. In the interests of fairness to other students, papers that are submitted late will not be accepted. When submitting your paper, be sure first to convert it to a pdf document and title it POLT_<1or2>_<YOUR LAST NAME>. Each paper will account for 15% of the final grade.

**Recitations.** Attendance and participation in the recitation discussions will account for 15% of the grade.

**In-recitation quizzes.** Most of the weeks, recitations will begin with a 5-7 minute quiz in which, typically, you will be given a quote from your reading assignments and asked to interpret it. The quiz grades will account for 15% of the final grade. You will need to bring your text to recitations to answer the quiz questions and will not be permitted to take the quiz if you come without your text. Students will not be allowed to share texts during the quizzes.

**Exams.** The two exams will account for 20% of the grade each. Both exams will be closed-notes and closed-book. No late exams will be given without a documented reason for the inability to attend and the prior consent of the professor.

**Classroom Policies.** It is a classroom policy in this course that students are not permitted to use electronic devices (laptops, tablets, phones) during lectures,
recitations, and exams. Please keep them off your desks to avoid a misunderstanding.

**Academic Integrity**
All the graded assignments for this course must be products of your own work. Words and ideas of other authors used in your work must be properly referenced in accordance with the standard reference manuals (APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.). All instances of plagiarism (whereby the work of other authors is presented as your own) and cheating will be handled in accordance with university policy and forwarded to the University Committee on Academic Misconduct.

**Texts**
The following texts and editions are required for this course:

**Schedule of Classes and Readings**

**I. Political Theory: the Why and the How**
Lecture 1
   Introduction: The Problems of Politics
   John Rawls, “Four Roles of Political Philosophy,” in JFR

**II. Public Morality and the State**
Lecture 2
Lecture 3
   Aristotle, *Politics*, pp. 60-91 in CHPT I
Lecture 4
Lecture 5
Lecture 6
Lecture 7

**III. Liberty and the Social Contract**
Lecture 8
THIS WEEK IS LAST OPPORTUNITY TO TURN IN THE FIRST ESSAY

Lecture 9

Lecture 10

Lecture 11

Lecture 12

Lecture 13
Rahul Sagar, “Against Moral Absolutism: Surveillance and Disclosure After Snowden,” *Ethics and International Affairs* 29(2), 2015,
[https://nyuad.nyu.edu/content/dam/nyuad/departments/faculty/rahul-sagar/documents/eia-snowden-sagar.pdf](https://nyuad.nyu.edu/content/dam/nyuad/departments/faculty/rahul-sagar/documents/eia-snowden-sagar.pdf)

http://us.cnn.com/2013/06/14/opinion/sagar-snowden-secrets/index.html?hpt=hp_t4

MIDTERM EXAM

Lecture 14
James Madison, *Federalist Papers* pp. 242-262 in CHPT II

Lecture 15
James Madison, *Federalist Papers* pp. 226-236 in CHPT II

Lecture 16

Lecture 17

IV. Equality and Justice

Lecture 18
Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, pp. 24-60 in CHPT II

Lecture 19
Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, pp. 60-91 in CHPT II
Karl Marx, “The Estranged Labor,” to be distributed

Lecture 20
Karl Marx, “Critique of the Gotha Program,” pp. 266-282 in CHPT II

Lecture 21

Lecture 22

Lecture 23

[https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Economics/Faculty/Glenn_Loury/louryhomepage/papers/reparations%20.pdf](https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Economics/Faculty/Glenn_Loury/louryhomepage/papers/reparations%20.pdf)

THIS WEEK IS LAST OPPORTUNITY TO TURN IN THE SECOND ESSAY

FINAL EXAM