Spring 2025

Course Outline

POT 2930 Section 01 (21216)
Special Topics:
Introduction to Political Theory

School of Politics, Security, and International Affairs
College of Sciences, University of Central Florida
3 credit hours

Instructor: Dr. Daniel Marien, Daniel.Marien@ucf.edu
Graduate Teaching Assistant: Claudette Medina. Contact her via course email.

CLASS MODALITY: In Person, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:30 to 11:45 AM.
CLASS LOCATION: NSC room 0117
OFFICE HOURS. HPH 311 H

Course Description

Political theory is the branch of political science concerned with normative thinking about politics. This course introduces students to a range of sophisticated arguments about the historically enduring themes in the discipline as well as to a discussion of specific topics of particular importance in current politics.

Among the most enduring themes, we look at the following questions. Why do we have states imposing obligations on their citizens? Can society be organized without state authority? If binding political authority is unavoidable or even desirable, who should exercise it? How, and for what purposes? What place should be made for individual liberty in a well-ordered government?

Among the specialized topics, we engage with the following questions. How are property rights to be constructed and property to be distributed across the population? Who should belong to the political association and on what terms? Who cares for the environment and how? When are wars justified? Does racial justice demand more than color blind institutions?

Classical and modern thinkers surveyed include Plato, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Bentham, J.S. Mill, Marx, Hayek, Nozick, Rawls, Walzer, Carens, and Miller.

Course Materials

You will need to have ready access to the following:

Jonathan Wolff
An Introduction to Political Philosophy
Oxford University Press
Fourth edition, 2016
ISBN: 978-0-19-284790-4

Colin Bird
An Introduction to Political Philosophy
Cambridge University Press
Second edition, 2019
978-1-108-43755-4

Jonathan Wolff's slim volume affords us an accessible introduction to the subject matter. Colin Bird's more substantial book allows us to push the reflection deeper. Occasionally, other assigned readings will be found in Files under Assigned Readings.

IN ADDITION TO THE TEXTBOOK, we will also use an electronic platform called *Yellowdig* to facilitate discussion on issues of evaluation among participants (Part B Questions). This platform presents advantages over Webcourses for that purpose.

I. Basic Course Expectations

Students are expected to: (1) attend class regularly; (2) promptly procure the textbooks; (3) take quizzes and submit Part A (Webcourses) and Part B (Yellowdig) answers in due time in normal circumstances. (Extensions are possible under certain conditions. See course policy.); (4) respect the rules of academic honesty, never to present text not their own as their own wording. (5) In most cases to paraphrase contents from the textbooks rather than use direct quotes (ten or twenty percent of quotes are acceptable

but nothing beyond that.); (6) avoid using artificial intelligence to compose your submissions.

IV. Student Learning Outcomes

LO-1: Students will be able to describe with a high degree of accuracy various arguments for and against political authority.

LO-2: Students will be able to describe with a high degree of accuracy various arguments about who should rule and how.

LO-3: Student will be able to describe with a high degree of accuracy various arguments about the scope and role of individual liberty in a well-ordered government.

LO-4: Students will be able to describe with a high degree of accuracy various arguments about who should or can belong to the political association and on what terms.

LO-5: Students will be able to describe with a high degree of accuracy various arguments about who should remedy past historical injustices.

LO-7: Students will be able to demonstrate sophisticated critical thinking in answers to Part B evaluation questions raised in Yellowdig.

V. Assessment Overview

NOTE ON ASSIGNMENTS AND SCHEDULE:

The semester unfolds in 16 weeks (including spring break and the final exam period).

Before Course Perception of environmental issues **is due on the first week's Friday (1/10)** (activity verification to free up your financial aid).

For any given module, the Quiz and Part A Questions are due on Monday nights in Webcourses.

For the same module, Part B posts are due in Yellowdig on Wednesday nights following the related Part A and Quiz Monday deadline.

Why Using Two Electronic Platforms?

Webcourses for the weekly quiz and for answering Part A questions. The quiz is where you demonstrate your understanding of the assigned material.

Part A questions in Webcourses provide an opportunity for you to:

1. Signal to the instructor an aspect of the reading you may find confusing or unclear. The instructor will clarify the issue in a subsequent email.
2. Accurately summarize in your own words a meaningful idea drawn from the assigned readings to demonstrate your understanding.

Part B Tasks in Yellowdig is where you "make meaning" out of the materials by:

1. answering the instructor's evaluation/discussion question, and
2. formulating your own original critical thinking question concerning the week's readings, and
3. answering one other student's critical thinking question.

Part B in Yellowdig is basically where you reflect on the reading's meaning in dialogue with class participants.

Why a Different deadline for Part B?

For a given module, the Wednesday extension for Part B over the Monday deadline for quiz and Part A is meant to give you time to reflect critically in the issues. My experience as an instructor at UCF suggests that many students will take the quiz and answers Part A questions at the last minute on Monday evening. That leaves little time for critical thinking on the readings. The Wednesday deadline for Part B is meant to give time for critical thinking. **Note that extensions for Part B posts are not possible**. See course policies on **Make-up Exams and Assignments** for details.

Assessment Overview

WHAT? Description	WHEN? Deadlines	WORTH Course Points	WHY? Purpose
Before Course Perception of Normative Political Issues	Friday 1/10 11:30 pm Upload a file in Webcourses.	**1**	Free up your financial aid **and** prepare your After-Course Statement.
Weekly Quiz Average Each quiz is over 48 points. An average is used to compute the final course grade.	Monday Evenings 11:30 P.M.	**48**	Verify mastery of subject matter with multiple choice questions.
Weekly Discussion Post Average **Part A** Each set of weekly post is over 20 points. An average is used to compute the final course grade.	Monday Evenings 11:30 P.M.	**20**	Verify mastery of subject matter on specific issues with a discursive answer.
Weekly Discussion Post Average **Part B** **Evaluation** **In Yellowdig** Each set of weekly posts is over 20 points. An average is used to compute the final course grade.	Wednesday Evenings 11:30 P.M.	**20**	Develop critical evaluation of ideas through exchange with other class participants.

After Course Perception of Normative Political Issues	**Friday 4/25** 11:30 PM Upload a file in Webcourses.	**1**	Students reflect on and evaluate their learning throughout the semester.
Final Exam	TBA	**10**	Comprehensive final examination on all materials covered during the semester.
TOTAL		**100**	

Grading Scale (%)	
94-100	A
90-93	A-
87-89	B+
84-86	B
80-83	B-
77-79	C+
70-76	C
60-69	D
0-59	F

VI. Course Prerequisites

Course prerequisites include an open mind and a readiness to reflect on the subject matter. There are no prerequisites in the sense of having completed specific previous courses beyond English Composition.

VII. Course Credits

3 credits

VIII. Course Schedule

NOTE: the schedule below may be adjusted as need be. Adjustments wil be stated in the Part A description found in Webcourses for each module.

PART I: ENDURING THEMES

Module 1: Why Political Authority?

Weeks 1-2-3

Reading Assignments:

Wolff
- Introduction
- Chapter 1: The State of Nature
- Chapter 2: Justifying the State

Bird
- Introduction
- Chapter 1: Forms of Political Criticism

Hobbes and Locke selections TBA

Module 2: Who Should Rule and How?

Weeks 4-5

Reading Assignments:

Wolff
- Chapter 3: Who Should Rule

Bird
- Chapter 2: The Common Good
- Chapter 3: Classical Utilitarianism
- Chapter 4: Utilitarian Critical Morality
- Chapter 5: The Social Contract

Module 3: What Place for Liberty?

Weeks 6-7

Reading Assignments:

Wolff
Chapter 4: The Place of Liberty

Bird
Chapter 12: Liberty
Chapter 13: Democracy

PART II: SPECIALIZED TOPICS

Module 4: Property: Who Should Get What?

Weeks 8-9-10

Reading Assignments:

Wolff
Chapter 5: The Distribution of Property

Bird
Chapter 6: Contractualism 2.0
Chapter 7: Property and Wealth
Chapter 8: Economic Justice

Nozick and Rawls selections TBA

Week 11 Spring Break

Module 5: Who Belong in the Political Community?

Weeks 12-13-14

Reading Assignments:

Bird, Chapter 9: The Significance of Borders

Bill Talbot, Overview of the Debate over Immigration Restrictions.
Joseph Carens, Aliens and Citizens: The Case for Open Borders
Michael Walzer, chapter 2 Membership in *Spheres of Justice*.
David Miller, Immigration: the Case for Limits.

Module 6: Ideal Futures and Past Injustices

Week 15

Reading Assignments:

Bird
Chapter 14: Critical Enlightenment and Ideology

Ta-Nehesi Coates,
The Case for Racial Reparations

Kevin Williamson
The Case against Reparations: A Reply to Ta-Nehisi Coates

Week 16, Final Exam Period

After Course: Friday 4/25, 11:30 pm.

Final Exam: in class on Tuesday 4/29 at 10:00 am until 12:50 pm.

IX. Policy Statements

Notifications in Case of Changes to Course Modality
Depending on the course of the pandemic during the semester, the university may make changes to the way classes are offered. If that happens, please look for announcements or messages in Webcourses@UCF or Knights email about changes specific to this course.

COVID-19 and Illness Notification
Students who believe they may have a COVID-19 diagnosis should contact UCF Student Health Services (407-823-2509) so proper contact tracing procedures can take place.

Students should not come to campus if they are ill, are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19, have tested positive for COVID, or if anyone living in their residence has tested positive or is sick with COVID-19 symptoms. CDC guidance for COVID-19 symptoms is located here: (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html)

Students should contact their instructor(s) as soon as possible if they miss class for any illness reason to discuss reasonable adjustments that might need to be made. When possible, students should contact their instructor(s) before missing class.

In Case of Faculty Illness
If the instructor falls ill during the semester, there may be changes to this course, including having a backup instructor take over the course. Please look for announcements or email in Webcourses@UCF or Knights email for any alterations to this course.

Course Accessibility and Disability COVID-19 Supplemental Statement
Accommodation may need to be added or adjusted should this course shift from an on-campus to a remote format. Students with disabilities should speak with their instructor and should contact sas@ucf.edu to discuss specific accommodation for this or other courses.

Make-up Exams and Assignments

Per university policy, you are allowed to submit make-up work (or an equivalent, alternate assignment) for university-sponsored events, religious observances, or legal obligations (such as jury duty). If this participation conflicts with your course assignments, I will offer a reasonable opportunity for you to complete missed assignments and/or exams. The make-up assignment and grading scale will be equivalent to the missed assignment and its grading scale. Please contact me ahead of time to notify me of upcoming needs.

Cannot make the deadline for other reasons than those listed above? Contact the instructor with an explanation **and** a request for a specific deadline extension. I cannot accept open-ended extension requests. Note also that my flexibility on deadlines diminishes with the approach of the end of the semester.

NOTE: I cannot give extensions in Part B. Yellowdig is a platform for exchange between participants. There is no point in joining a conversation that happened last week, after other participants have already moved on to another topic. If you have a major impediment hindering you from completing your tasks in Yellowdig (such as surgery, illness, accident, bereavement, etc.), you need to email me with an explanation and documentation. The best I can do for you then is to not count that missing Yellowdig week in the computation of your final course grade. Such exemptions will be limited to one module.

Attendance is expected and compulsory unless a valid reason (illness, job interview, etc.) hinders it.

I do not write letters of recommendation to law school or for other purposes to students in the habit of missing class.

Academic Integrity

Students should familiarize themselves with UCF's Rules of Conduct. According to Section 1, "Academic Misconduct," students are prohibited from engaging in:

- *Unauthorized assistance*: Using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information or study aids in any academic exercise unless specifically authorized by the instructor of record. The unauthorized possession of examination or course-related material also constitutes cheating.
- *Communication to another through written, visual, electronic, or oral means*: The presentation of material which has not been studied or learned, but rather was obtained through someone else's efforts and used as part of an examination, course assignment, or project.
- *Commercial Use of Academic Material*: Selling of course material to another person, student, and/or uploading course material to a third-party vendor without authorization or without the express written permission of the university and the instructor. Course materials include but are not limited to class notes, Instructor's PowerPoints, course syllabi, tests, quizzes, labs, instruction sheets, homework, study guides, handouts, etc.
- *Falsifying or misrepresenting* the student's own academic work.
- *Plagiarism*: Using or appropriating another's work without any indication of the source, thereby attempting to convey the impression that such work is the student's own.
- *Multiple Submissions*: Submitting the same academic work for credit more than once without the express written permission of the instructor.
- *Helping another violate* academic behavior standards.

- ***Marien's addition to UCF academic integrity policy:***
    - the listing of works cited but not materially used in a post or essay also constitutes a breach of academic honesty. It misrepresents the depth of research done.
    - The use of AI to compose a post is strictly forbidden. I want you to develop your own abilities and voice as an author. Copying and pasting AI generated text will not accomplish that.
    - The use of outside sources without proper citations is a breach of academic integrity.

For more information about Academic Integrity, students may consult The Center for Academic Integrity.
For more information about plagiarism and misuse of sources, see "Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism: The WPA Statement on Best Practices".

Responses to Academic Dishonesty, Plagiarism, or Cheating

Students should also familiarize themselves with the procedures for academic misconduct in UCF's student handbook, The Golden Rule. UCF faculty members have a responsibility for students' education and the value of a UCF degree, and so seek to prevent unethical behavior and when necessary, respond to academic misconduct. Penalties can include a failing grade in an assignment or in the course, suspension, or expulsion from the university, and/or a "Z Designation" on a student's official transcript indicating academic dishonesty, where the final grade for this course will be preceded by the letter Z. For more information about the Z Designation, see http://goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/zgrade.

Turinitin.com:

In this course the instructor may utilize turnitin.com, an automated system which instructors can use to quickly and easily compare each student's assignment with billions of web sites, as well as an enormous database of student papers that grows with each submission. The instructor submits your texts to Turnitin at his discretion. Students found guilty of plagiarism will receive a failing grade for the entire course and may incur additional penalties.

Weekly postings must be original. To ensure originality, students are not able to view classmates' posts before they have themselves posted in the Discussion Board. Students are also not able to edit their postings after having posted it in the Discussion Board. **It is strongly recommended that you compose your post in a word processing file, review it there for content and style and only then paste the final product in the Discussion Board.**

Quizzes are individual exercises with open access to the materials but limited time to answer the questions.

Course Accessibility Statement

The University of Central Florida is committed to providing access and inclusion for all persons with disabilities. Students with disabilities who need disability-related access in

this course should contact the professor as soon as possible. Students should also connect with Student Accessibility Services (Ferrell Commons 185, sas@ucf.edu, phone (407) 823-2371). Through Student Accessibility Services, a Course Accessibility Letter may be created and sent to professors, which informs faculty of potential access and accommodations that might be reasonable. Determining reasonable access and accommodation requires consideration of the course design, course learning objectives and the individual academic and course barriers experienced by the student.

Campus Safety Statement

Emergencies on campus are rare, but if one should arise in our class, everyone needs to work together. Students should be aware of the surroundings and familiar with some basic safety and security concepts.

- In case of an emergency, dial 911 for assistance.
- Every UCF classroom contains an emergency procedure guide posted on a wall near the door. Please make a note of the guide's physical location and consider reviewing the online version at http://emergency.ucf.edu/emergency_guide.html.
- Students should know the evacuation routes from each of their classrooms and have a plan for finding safety in case of an emergency.
- If there is a medical emergency during class, we may need to access a first aid kit or AED (Automated External Defibrillator). To learn where those items are located in this building, see http://www.ehs.ucf.edu/workplacesafety.html (click on link from menu on left).
- To stay informed about emergency situations, sign up to receive UCF text alerts by going to my.ucf.edu and logging in. Click on "Student Self Service" located on the left side of the screen in the tool bar, scroll down to the blue "Personal Information" heading on your Student Center screen, click on "UCF Alert," fill out the information, including your e-mail address, cell phone number, and cell phone provider, click "Apply" to save the changes, and then click "OK."
- Students with special needs related to emergency situations should speak with their instructors outside of class.
- To learn about how to manage an active-shooter situation on campus or elsewhere, consider viewing this video. You CAN Survive an Active Shooter

Deployed Active-Duty Military Students

If you are a deployed active-duty military student and feel that you may need special accommodation due to that unique status, please contact your instructor to discuss your circumstances.

Copyright

This course may contain copyright protected materials such as audio or video clips, images, text materials, etc. These items are being used with regard to the Fair Use doctrine to enhance the learning environment. Please do not copy, duplicate, download or distribute these items. The use of these materials is strictly reserved for this online classroom environment and your use only. All copyright materials are credited to the copyright holder.

Third-Party Software and FERPA
During this course you might have the opportunity to use public online services and/or software applications sometimes called third-party software such as a blog or wiki. While some of these could be required assignments, you need not make any personally identifying information on a public site. Do not post or provide any private information about yourself or your classmates. Where appropriate you may use a pseudonym or nickname. Some written assignments posted publicly may require personal reflection/comments, but the assignments will not require you to disclose any personally identity-sensitive information. If you have any concerns about this, please contact your instructor.

Title IX

Title IX prohibits sex discrimination, including sexual misconduct, sexual violence, sexual harassment, and retaliation. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find resources available to support the victim, including confidential resources and information concerning reporting options at https://letsbeclear.ucf.edu and http://cares.sdes.ucf.edu/.

For more information on diversity and inclusion, Title IX, accessibility, or UCF's complaint processes contact:

- Title IX – OIE – http://oie.ucf.edu/ & askanadvocate@ucf.edu
- Disability Accommodation – Student Accessibility Services
- Diversity and Inclusion Training and Events
- UCF Compliance and Ethics Office & complianceandethics@ucf.edu
- Ombuds Office