**Intro to Political Thought POLI.2310**

# Instructor: Time: Course Page: Office:

**Office Hours:**

**Note:** Links to all required readings and assignments are included on the course web page.

By surveying landmark texts in the history of Western political thought, this course provides an overview of some of the central concepts that have shaped present-day approaches to politics and government. During the first two thirds of the course, we will read selections from Plato, Aristotle, Niccolò Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Adam Smith, the Federalists, Karl Marx, Henry David Thoreau, W.E.B. DuBois, Simone de Beauvoir, and Michel Foucault. Then, after we explore ways in which the principles and ideas set forth by these theorists relate to ongoing political debates, developments and trends, students will make presentations on topics chosen from a list of possibilities such as Aristotle's legacy to scientific inquiry, Adam Smith's role in the making of modern economics, Henry David Thoreau's contributions to environmental philosophy, or what W.E.B. DuBois can teach us about race relations in the twenty-first-century.

**Outcomes\*:** Readings and assignments are designed to enable students to enhance their critical thinking and writing skills as they explore central themes in western political thought.

\*This course meets the UML Essential Learning Outcome of Written and Oral Communication.

**Requirements:** You are not required to purchase any books. All course materials, including required readings and assignments, are available at [http://faculty.uml.edu/sgallagher.](http://faculty.uml.edu/sgallagher)

If you need to miss a session, please e-mail a valid excuse beforehand if you can or as soon as possible after that session. If you miss more than two [sessions without providing a](http://faculty.uml.edu/sgallagher) valid excuse, you will receive an “F” for the course.

**Assignments:** The lecture/discussion portion of the course is divided seven Units. We will generally spend a week covering each Unit, but a few might run into the next session. To complete each Unit, you must provide brief answers to questions on the required readings. All assignments must be submitted via email. In most cases, you will also be required to bring a copy of your answers to class to facilitate discussion. Please follow the instructions included with each set of reading questions and always arrive in class prepared to show that you have completed your work.

In all of your assignments, you must demonstrate your ability to write college-level prose. Consequently, all of your work must be thoughtfully composed and free of grammatical errors. I will do my best to help you solve writing problems, but if your assignments are carelessly written, or if you neglect to proofread, or if you submit work late without a valid explanation, you will not do well in this class.

During the final part of the term, each student will prepare and give a presentation on specific issues related to major aspects of Western political thought. On the date of their presentations, students will be required to submit a summary of their main points either in PowerPoint or in Microsoft Word. Please note that you must choose the same topic for your presentation and final paper.

**Exams:** For your midterm exam, you will be required to write two two-page essays on specific aspects of the required readings. Your work will be graded according to your ability to write college-level prose. Consequently, like your answers to the reading questions, your midterm must be carefully written and proofread. If your essays do not conform to the basic rules of college-level composition, you should not expect to receive a passing grade.

For your final exam, you must choose one of the following options:

1. You may write a five-page paper on a topic chosen from a list that I will supply well in advance.
2. You may write a five-page paper on a topic of your own choosing so long as you discuss it with me beforehand.
3. If you already possess the required technical skills, you may create a web page on a specific aspect of one of the major issues covered in class.

No matter which of these options you choose, you must submit a thesis statement on your topic approximately three weeks before the work is due. To help you complete this task, we will discuss possible thesis statements in class well in advance of the due date for the final exam. Then you must submit a complete and polished first draft approximately two weeks before the end of the term. Finally, after I review and correct your first drafts, you must submit a revised version of your paper.

**Grade Formula:** Weekly Assignments and Class Participation = 30% Midterm = 30%

Final Paper/Presentation = 40%