



**POLS 263**  
**Introduction to Political Theory**

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**Required Texts (other texts may be added):**

Machiavelli, *The Prince*

Quentin Skinner, *A Very Short Introduction: Machiavelli*

Albert Hirschman and Jeremy Adelman, *The Passions and the Interests*

Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*

**Course Description**

This course is intended to introduce you to some of the fundamental questions, ideas, problems, and issues that must be confronted and, in varying degrees, resolved in order for members of a political community to live well. The course materials have been selected because, among other things, they treat fundamental matters in ways that are both interesting and provocative. They are intended to nurture one's ability to analyze and think broadly about such fundamental political, philosophical, cultural, social & economic issues as: the inherent tensions between equality and inequality, religion and the state, rich and poor, democracy and aristocracy, and natural and conventional leaders. Above all, we will focus on answers to the questions of who should rule in a regime and for what ends.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

This class fulfills the following Goal of the South Dakota System General Education Requirements:

GOAL 3: Students will understand the organization, potential, and diversity of the human community through study of the social sciences.

**Student Learning Outcomes:** As a result of taking courses meeting this goal, students will:

Learning Outcomes:	Assessment
1. Identify and explain basic concepts,	Discussion topics, homework assignments,

terminology and theories of the selected social science disciplines from different spatial, temporal, cultural and/or institutional contexts	examinations.
2. Apply selected social science concepts and theories to contemporary issues	Discussion topics, homework assignments, examinations
3. Identify and explain the social or aesthetic values of different cultures	Discussion topics, homework assignments, examinations
6. Understand the impact of diverse philosophical, ethical or religious views	Discussion topics, homework assignments, examinations

A major objective is to show that great thoughts are not only a product of our own time, and that some knowledge and appreciation of intellectual history are indispensable to a properly educated mind. More specifically, as a result of taking this course the student should be able to converse about some of the major political and philosophical principles that have undergirded the establishment of political regime—and the conduct of human interactions—for much of recorded history. The student should be able to write, at the end of this course, a short spontaneous essay on the meaning and importance of such fundamental ideas as: 1) justice, 2) equality, 3) self-interest, 4) virtue/vice, 5) the major foundations for ruling and being ruled, and 6) human nature.

A closely related objective is to improve the art of thinking and evaluating on one's own, as well as to improve one's attitude and appreciation of diversity in ideas. We wish to provide a basis for more sophisticated thinking on great questions, and this requires freedom to inquire, to muse, to go where one's mind leads. We must learn how to carry on a conversation with those who have gone before us.

#### **GRADING SCALE**

<b>A=</b>	90-100
<b>B=</b>	80-89
<b>C=</b>	70-79
<b>D=</b>	60-69
<b>F=</b>	0-59

#### **BASES OF GRADING**

Midterm	20% (20/100 points)
Final	20% (20/100 points)
Discussion board participation	25% (25/100 points)
Short essay	15% (10/100 points)
Final paper	20% (15/100 points)

## INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

**Discussion board participation:** Each week, students will answer a prompt and respond to peer postings. Initial postings are due by Friday at midnight each week. Responses to peers must be posted on either Saturday or Sunday. Posts are worth 2 points each (with the first week introduction post worth 1 point).

**Midterm & Final Exams:** These will be essay exams in which the student will be asked to discuss, analyze, contrast and/or compare key issues/problems presented during the course. The exams will be released through D2L and must be returned to the Dropbox by the specified due dates.

**Short Essay:** Students will be required to write a short essay (3-5 pages) linking the readings to a contemporary topic. Essays must include at least 2 sources and use APA style. Topics must be approved in advance.

**Final Paper:** At the end of the semester, students will write a 5-8 page double-spaced paper on one of the following topics, drawing on readings from the course: 1) justice, 2) equality, 3) self-interest, 4) virtue/vice, 5) the major foundations for ruling and being ruled, and 6) human nature. The paper is to be formal in tone and follow correct APA guidelines for references and formatting. Further details will be forthcoming.

**TURNITIN:** Under BOR policy, the plagiarism program “Turnitin” is now incorporated into D2L statewide. Whenever you submit a written assignment to the Dropbox, it will automatically generate a Turnitin report on its originality. The consequences for Academic Dishonesty are severe and are detailed in the following category. If you have questions about how to cite a source or quotation, contact me BEFORE you submit the assignment.

## EXPECTATIONS

### Students

Students will be expected to understand the course syllabus and follow the course schedule. Students are expected to keep up on the weekly readings and assignments must be completed on time. If there is an emergency or conflict with the schedule, students must contact the instructor *prior* to any scheduling issue. Participation is absolutely necessarily, especially in an on-line course and therefore students should be willing to voice their opinions in an appropriate manner.

In addition, students should familiarize themselves with the CE Online Orientation that can be accessed from this link: <http://www.usd.edu/-/media/files/usd-online/online-orientation-guide.ashx?la=en>. Please take advantage of the technical and student support services that the Division of Continuing Education provides.

## **Instructor**

The instructor will be accessible to students through email, office calls, and discussion boards. All phone calls and emails will be replied within 48 hours. The instructor will also provide timely feedback on all examinations and assignments via email within two weeks from the end of the week the assignment was due and strive to provide the best educational environment.

## **Technology Requirements:**

The University of South Dakota requires that students satisfy certain technology requirements, which can be found in the CE Online Orientation document: <http://www.usd.edu/-/media/files/usd-online/online-orientation-guide.ashx?la=en>. For this class, students will be expected to need: Microsoft Word, Adobe Acrobat Reader, and Power Point.

## **COURSE POLICIES**

### **Student Disability**

If you are a student with special needs or circumstances and need extra accommodation, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible and contact the Office of Disability Services. For additional information, please contact:  
Ernetta L. Fox, Director Disability Services Room 119 Service Center 605-677-6389  
<http://www.usd.edu/ds/dservices@usd.edu>

### **Academic Dishonesty**

The College of Arts and Sciences considers plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty inimical to the objectives of higher education. The College supports the imposition of penalties on students who engage in academic dishonesty, as defined in the "Conduct" section of the University of South Dakota Student Handbook, [www.sdbor.edu/policy/Documents/2-33.pdf](http://www.sdbor.edu/policy/Documents/2-33.pdf).

No credit can be given for a dishonest assignment. A student found to have engaged in any form of academic dishonesty may, at the discretion of the instructor, be:

1. Given a zero for that assignment.
2. Allowed to rewrite and resubmit the assignment for credit.
3. Assigned a reduced grade for the course.
4. Dropped from the course.
5. Failed in the course.

### **Freedom in Learning**

Under Board of Regents and University policy student academic performance may be evaluated solely on an academic basis, not on opinions or conduct in matters unrelated to academic standards. Students should be free to take reasoned exception to the data or views offered in any course of study and to reserve judgment about matters of opinion, but they are responsible for learning the content of any course of study for which they are enrolled. Students who believe that an academic evaluation reflects prejudiced or capricious consideration of student opinions or conduct unrelated to academic standards should contact the dean of the college that offers the class to initiate a review of the evaluation.

### Course Outline

Note that the outline below is subject to change; readings may be added or removed. Any changes will be announced in class.

<b>Week beginning</b>	<b>Readings covered</b>	<b>Assignments</b>
January 8	Review syllabus and other course expectations	Post introduction to discussion board
January 15	Plato	Discussion board #1
January 22	Aristotle	Discussion board #2
Jan 29	Machiavelli <i>The Prince</i> (dedicatory letter, books 15-26); Skinner, <i>A Very Short Introduction: Machiavelli</i> (pp 23-53)	Discussion board #3
Feb 5	Hobbes	Discussion board #4
Feb 12	Locke	Discussion board #5
Feb 19	The Federalist Papers	Discussion board #6 Essay topic due Feb 25
Feb 26	Tocqueville	Discussion board #7 Short essay due March 4
Mar 5	SPRING BREAK	
Mar 12	None	Midterm due March 18
Mar 19	Thoreau	Discussion board #8
Mar 26	Friedan	Discussion board #9
April 2	Hirschman	Discussion board #10
Apr 9	Berlin	Discussion board #11
Apr 16	Review for exam; <b>no class meeting</b>	Discussion board #12
April 23	None	Final paper due April 29
April 30	None	Final Exam due May 4