

POL 1102: Political Theory

Associate Professor Vincent Vecera
Randolph College
Summer Session

Office Hours: By appointment (talk to me in class, I'm often available to meet!)

Email: vvecera@randolphcollege.edu

Stream link: TBA

Plan for the course

This is an introductory course in western political thought. Most of what we will discuss is called “normative political theory,” which is concerned with one question which we might state as follows: *How should society be organized?* Or put another way, *Who should rule whom, when, where, how, and why?* There are lots of ways of asking these questions, some of the most important human beings have asked. Every aspect of our lives has been shaped by how humans have answered these questions. The answers decide who lives and dies and how.

I have a few goals for you in this course. I want you to leave the course familiar with the “big ideas” in the history of political thought. You should be familiar with the most important political controversies in human history, and be able to explain how and why these important ideas emerged in the particular times and places they did.

Often when we read things in class, we are reading them because they represent the best knowledge about something. Textbooks usually do this. Our readings do not. We are reading primary texts and we will never presume the author is correct or even sincere. Instead, we'll ask why each text appeared where and when it did and by whom. Our goal with every reading, however, is to contextualize, understand, and critique. That is the three-step process with which we will confront every author. A great deal of our time each class will deal with trying to understand why this author said this from his or her social position in his or her time and place. Because this is an introductory course, this will be a new experience for many of you. That is okay. It is, in fact, the point! Our texts will usually not be very long, generally in the 5-15 pages range, but they are often dense and reading them well takes time. You should find yourself googling references in the texts routinely.

Notes on course delivery

This course is offered online asynchronously.

Honor

Since 1891, the students of the college have adopted an honor code. You must maintain its sanctity for future generations. It reads: “I pledge absolute honesty in my academic work and in all personal relationships at Randolph College. I will maintain the integrity of my word, and I will respect the rights of others. Realizing that these standards are an integral part of life at Randolph College, I assume my obligation to uphold this honor pledge. If at any time I fail to live

up to my obligation of this pledge, I will report myself to the Chair of the Judiciary Committee. I will also ask others to report themselves for any infraction of this pledge."

Title IX

As an instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment on our campus. I also have a mandatory reporting responsibility related to my role as a faculty member. It is my goal that you feel able to share information related to your life experiences in classroom discussions, in your written work, and in our one-on-one meetings. I will seek to keep information you share private to the greatest extent possible. However, I am required to share information regarding sexual misconduct or information about a crime that may have occurred on Randolph's campus with the College's Title IX Coordinator, Sharon Saunders. I do this to make sure that you are able to get all the information and support you may need.

The Health Center and Counseling Center staffs are not mandated reporters. As such they are not required to share information about sexual misconduct with the College and will keep your information private and confidential. Some staff and faculty serve as Campus Advocates. They can offer confidential guidance but they do need to report basic occurrence information. If a faculty member is also serving as a Campus Advocate, they remain a mandated reporter while in the classroom. A student must ask to speak to them in their role as Campus Advocate before revealing any information.

Academic accommodations

Randolph College is committed to providing online learning experiences that are accessible for all students, and will make reasonable accommodations for individuals with documented disabilities. If you have a learning difference or a disability — mental health, medical, or physical impairment — please contact Diane Roy, Coordinator of Access Services, in the Academic Services Center, 4th floor, Lipscomb Library; 434-947-8132; droy@randolphcollege.edu.

Academic services

Academic assistance via online peer tutoring and one-on-one consultations with the Director of the ASC and Writing Program is available for free to all students enrolled at Randolph College. Students can easily register for these services at randolph.mywconline.com. From there, online instructions and appointments are available for writing, academic strategies, and subject tutoring. All students are also automatically enrolled in a supplemental Moodle page that houses a myriad of academic strategies for online and in-person instruction. Please contact Grant Kittrell at gkittrell@randolphcollege.edu or 434-947-8827 for more information.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism, an act that violates the College's Honor Code, is using the words or ideas of another person without properly acknowledging the source. Ignorance of the conventions of

documentation is not a defense for plagiarism. The Student Handbook (<https://www.randolphcollege.edu/studenthandbook>) provides examples of ways to avoid it. You can educate yourself even more by speaking about the topic with faculty and Writing Lab tutors.

Books you will need

There is one book for the course, the second edition of the *Princeton Readings in Political Thought*, available here: <https://www.amazon.com/Princeton-Readings-Political-Thought-Essential-dp-0691159971/dp/0691159971>. The older edition lacks many of the readings for class.

Evaluation

Your grade has six components: three papers, two exams, and participation. The exams are each worth 10% of your total grade, participation and each of the papers is worth 20%.

Instructor feedback (20% of course grade): You are required to meet regularly with your instructor and discuss the papers and exams. Attending all (at least four) scheduled meetings and emailing regularly is worth an automatic 20% of the total grade.

Seminar papers (20% of the course grade each): You'll write three papers, due at various points in the semester. I will distribute paper topics in advance and we will discuss the papers further in our seminar. Each paper should run between 1,000 and 1,500 words. Do not write more than 1,500 words under any circumstance.

Exams (10% of course grade each): There are two exams, one at midterm and the other at the end. They are designed to assess your familiarity with the main thinkers, texts, and ideas from the course. If you're read all the assigned texts and paid attention in seminar, it should be nearly impossible to do badly on these exams. Not having read the assigned texts, on the other hand, will make passing the exams quite difficult.

All assignments must be submitted to my @randolphcollege.edu email address as .pdf attachments. **Do not send me links to shared files. I will not even click on them. Send me .pdfs as attachments.** No other manner of submitting work will be accepted without a prior conversation in which you make a compelling argument.

Schedule

Day 1

Introduction, no reading.

Day 2

Thucydides, "The Peloponnesian War."

Day 3

Plato, "The Republic." A recreation of ancient Greek music presented by Callum Armstrong. (<https://youtu.be/4hOK7bU0S1Y?t=537>)

Day 4

Thomas Aquinas, "Politics and Law."

Day 5

Machiavelli, "The Prince."

Day 6

Hobbes, "Leviathan."

"The Fairy Queen," by Purcell (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QAvS3AypQfI>) (1691, 40 years later)

Day 7

Locke, "Second Treatise."

"Music for the Royal Fireworks," By Handel (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fNqJ8mED1VE>)

Day 8

Rousseau, "On the Social Contract."

"Brandenburg Concerti," by J.S. Bach (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hbQORqkStpk>)

Day 9

Smith, "The Wealth of Nations."

"Symphony n. 40," by Mozart (<https://youtu.be/wqkXqpQMk2k?t=27>)

Day 10

Jefferson et al., "The Declaration of Independence"

Brutus, "Against the Constitution."

"Chester," by William Billings (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t7S_07E-9CA)

Day 11

National Assembly of France, "The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen"

Burke, "Reflections on the Revolution in France."

"Pathetique," by Beethoven. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vGq3-Fi_zQY)

"The Marriage of Figaro," by Mozart. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BzLpbV5hrAA>)

First paper due at 5pm.

Day 12

Wollstonecraft, "A Vindication of the Rights of Women."

"Piano Concerto in C Major," by Salieri. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U-gsSbuyV0>)

Day 13

Midterm exam.

Day 14

Kant, "What is Enlightenment?"

Hegel, "Lordship and Bondage."

"Symphony 9," by Beethoven. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QkQapdgAa7o>) Esp. 15:58-~20mins and (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDOAT1ZbTRI>) in full.

"Libiamo, ne' lieti calici," from La Traviata, by Verdi.

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=afhAqMeeQJk>)

Day 15

Mill, "On Liberty."

Barcarolle in "Tales of Hoffmann," by Offenbach.

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0u0M4CMq7ul>)

Day 16

Douglass, "What to a Slave is the Fourth of July?"

Lincoln, First Inaugural

Lincoln, "The Gettysburg Address."

Lincoln, Second Inaugural

"Battle Cry of Freedom," by George Frederick Root.

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MGKnc_YiR-E)

Day 17

Marx, "Communist Manifesto."

"Hungarian Dances," by Brahms. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tUe-clNbnBE>)

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1cGUoJzILB5Jq1IIDMdr9bld6t6ANN-S_/view?usp=sharing

"L'amour est un oiseau rebelle," by Bizet. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K2snTkaD64U>)

Day 18

Continuing discussion of Marx.

Nietzsche, "On the Genealogy of Morals."

Selection from "Die Walküren," by Wagner. (https://youtu.be/1PBhlPeTJ_g?t=713)

Day 19

Freud, "Civilization and Its Discontents."

"The Rite of Spring," by Stravinsky (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EkwqPJZe8ms>) and

"Pictures at an Exhibition," by Modest Mussorgsky.

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UBuSJXObgpw>)

Day 20

Mussolini, "Fascism"

Arendt, "The Origins of Totalitarianism."

“Caravan,” by the Duke Ellington Orchestra. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YkLBSLxo5LE>)
Symphony no. 7, the “Invasion March,” by Shostakovich.
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qGnv23IRDvM>)

Second paper due at 8:00 AM. Email a pdf.

Day 21

Rawls, “A Theory of Justice.”

“Lucille,” by Little Richard. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u0Ujb6IJ_mM)

Day 22

Continuing discussion of Rawls.

“Roll over, Beethoven,” by Chuck Berry. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kT3kCVFFLNq>)

“Machine Gun,” by Jimi Hendrix. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lw2L_vGUMtE)

Day 23

Nozick, “Anarchy, State, and Utopia.”

“Sister Ray,” by the Velvet Underground. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7d69mDT11yI>)

Day 24

King, “Letter from Birmingham Jail.”

“We Shall Overcome,” traditional, performed by the Morehouse College Choir.

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aor6-DkzBJ0>)

Day 25

Malcolm X, “The Ballot or the Bullet.”

“The Revolution Will Not Be Televised,” by Gil Scott-Heron.

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vwSRqaZGsPw>)

Day 26

Young, “Justice and the Politics of Difference.”

“Low-End Theory,” by A Tribe Called Quest.

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDKrJhNOygA&list=PLrbFUdbfepXVYeTBjkpsOORi0anvqabxV>)

Day 27

Anton, “The Flight 93 Election.” (<https://claremontreviewofbooks.com/digital/the-flight-93-election>)

“Street Trash,” by Tobacco. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=td-Xzq5DDFI>)

Day 28

To be determined.

Third paper due.

Final exam during exam times.