Course Description

In this course we will explore and discuss ancient and modern responses to questions such as: What are the nature, the causes, and the effects of good government? How far are people able to influence the regimes that govern them? Can political philosophy help us identify the best form of government? What are the qualities of a good citizen? Who should rule? What are the qualities of a good ruler? How should political change occur: by reform or by revolution? Is democracy the best form of government? What is liberty? Why is liberty politically and morally relevant? What is the relationship between history and politics?

In answering these questions we will understand the differences between ancient and modern political philosophy. We will also understand how modern political philosophers differed from each other in the way they theorized about politics and its relationship with moral, socio-economic, and cultural aspects.

Course objectives

To understand what political philosophy is: what are its main concerns and its specific method;
To grasp the foundations of Western political philosophy, the way they have been set by Greek political philosophy, particularly, by Plato and Aristotle;
To learn about the specific concerns and ideas of ancient and, respectively, of modern political philosophy;
To understand the differences (and the similarities) between ancient and modern political philosophy;
To know some of the differences between modern approaches to politics;
To become better readers, thinkers, speakers, and writers

Achieving the Course Objectives:

We will learn about the specific nature of political philosophy, particularly, of ancient and modern political philosophy by carefully and closely reading the following books:

**Course Requirements:**

**Five short (two page) essays** on the following topics (**10% each**):

(i) **Compare** Plato’s and Aristotle’s conceptions of good government (what is good government, what does it require, and how can it be achieved), due on **April 18** (in class).
(ii) **Explain** how Aristotle would evaluate (what reasons he would have to criticize or endorse) Burke’s argument about the nature of political change, due on **April 25** (in class).
(iii) Drawing on ideas of Plato and Aristotle, **criticize** Hobbes’ argument about monarchy as the best form of government, due on **May 7** (in class).
(iv) **Explain the reasons for which you agree/disagree** with Kant’s argument about the way in which political theory (reason) can help people to achieve good government, due on **May 16** (in class).
(v) J. S Mill argues in favor of “skilled democracy.” **Explain** how his argument for liberty and the full development of individuality can help achieve such a form of democracy, due on **May 25** (in class).

**Final exam** (scheduled for June 2, 2012, between 9:00-11:00 AM) (**40%**)

**Active and informed class participation** (**10%**)

**What is Expected from the Students?**

Students will be expected to read, think, form arguments and counter-arguments, understand the fundamental concepts, and participate (in a critical and creative manner) in class discussion. That means that students must keep up in their reading assignments and attend class regularly. Students must be fully prepared **at all times** to discuss the arguments and concepts from the previous readings. The best students will be knowledgeable, critical but balanced in their critical
assessments, and will develop coherent and sound arguments that they can defend in their essays, in their exams, and in class discussion.

**Academic dishonesty:**

"All assignments, quizzes, and exams must be done on your own. Note that academic dishonesty includes not only cheating, fabrication, and plagiarism, but also includes helping other students commit acts of academic dishonesty by allowing them to obtain copies of your work. You are allowed to use the Web for reference purposes, but you may not copy material from any website or any other source without proper citations. In short, all submitted work must be your own.

Cases of academic dishonesty will be dealt with strictly. Each such case will be referred to the Academic Standing Committee via the Associate Dean of Students or the Associate Dean of the College. A formal finding of responsibility can result in disciplinary sanctions ranging from a censure and a warning to permanent dismissal in the case of repeated and serious offenses.

The academic penalty for a finding of responsibility can range from a grade of zero in the specific assignment to an F in this course."

**SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND READINGS:**

**March 26:** Introduction: What is Political Philosophy? Why Study Political Philosophy?

**March 28:** Socrates, Athenian Democracy, and the Sophists  
*Reading:* Plato, *Apology of Socrates*

**March 30:** The Battle for Power: Rhetoric or Philosophy?  
*Reading:* Plato, *Gorgias*, 447a-466a

**April 2:** Politics and Ethics  
*Reading:* Plato, *Gorgias*, 466b-481b

**April 4:** Who is a Good Citizen? Who is a True Statesman?  
*Reading:* Plato, *Gorgias*, 481c-527e

**April 6:** The place and role of political partnership in the human life  
*Reading:* Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 1

**April 9:** Citizenship, qualifications for citizenship; the difference between citizen and the good man  
*Reading:* Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 3, Chapters 1-13, 18
April 11: The nature of the political regime, types of political regimes, and the stability of political regimes
Reading: Aristotle, Politics, Book 4, Chapters 1-4, 6, 9, 10, 12, 14, Book 5, chapters 1-3, 5-8

April 13: No class (I will attend the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association)

April 16: The best (practicable) political regime
Reading: Aristotle, Politics, Book 4, Chapters 8, 9, 11, Book 7, chapters 1-3, 7, 13-15

April 18: Burke and the main tenets of European Conservatism
Reading: Edmund Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France, pages 85-122

April 20: Burke on politics and political change
Reading, Edmund Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France, pages 123-145 and 149-154

April 23: Burke on corporate groups and their role in politics
Reading: Edmund Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France, pages 183-200 and 242-306

April 25: Hobbes: Rethinking the Foundations of Politics
Reading: Hobbes, Leviathan, Introduction

April 27: Speech, Reason, and Power
Reading: Hobbes, Leviathan, Part One, Chapters I, ii, iii, iv, v, vi, viii, x, and xi

May 2: The natural condition of man: natural law and natural rights
Reading: Hobbes, Leviathan, Part One, Chapters xiii, xiv, xv, and xvi

May 4: The commonwealth
Reading: Hobbes, Leviathan, Part Two, Chapters xvii, xviii, xix, xxi

May 7: Introduction to Kant: Enlightenment and Politics
Reading: Kant, An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?

May 9: Human nature, History, and Reason
Reading: Kant, Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose

May 11: Morality and Politics
Reading: Kant, On the Common Saying: ‘This May Be True in Theory, But It Does Not Apply in Practice, pages 61-73

May 14: Kant’s view of Domestic and International Government
Reading: Kant, On the Common Saying: ‘This May Be True in Theory, But It Does Not Apply in Practice, pages 73-93
**May 16:** Why Does Liberty Matter? What Kind of Liberty?
*Reading:* Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapters One and Two

**May 18:** The Value of Individuality and its Development
*Reading:* Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapters Three and Four

**May 21:** The Nature of Representative Government
*Reading:* Mill, *Considerations on Representative Democracy*, Chapter One, Two, and Three

**May 23:** Skilled Democracy
*Reading:* Mill, *Considerations on Representative Democracy*, Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight

**May 25:** Marx on History, Class Struggle, and Politics

**May 28:** Capitalism: The Historical Role of the Bourgeoisie

**Marx 30:** Communism: The Historical Role of the Proletariat

**Final review:** May 31, 10 AM