

GOV 080: Elements of Political Theory

Department of Government

Georgetown University

Summer 2021

Professor R. Boyd

MTWR 10:45-12:45

Office Hours: Wednesdays 9:30-10:45AM and by appointment

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Course Goals:

This course will explore fundamental theoretical issues surrounding life in a political community. Philosophical questions as basic as “What is politics?” or “Where does freedom come from, and what are its necessary limits?” must be addressed by self-reflective citizens of a liberal democracy in order to formulate any tolerable justification for our own democratic way of life. Classic philosophical and literary texts shed light on these and other timeless questions, such as the ambiguous relationship between law and liberty, the relationship between ethics and politics, the limits of political obligation, the origin and nature of totalitarianism, and the meaning of justice.

Required Texts (inexpensive paperbacks for purchase at GU Bookstore):

Sophocles, *Antigone*. (Chicago)

Machiavelli, *The Prince*. (Chicago)

John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*. (Hackett).

Karl Marx, *The Marx-Engels Reader*. (Norton).

Art Spiegelman, *Maus I: My Father Bleeds History*. (Pantheon).

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*. (Hackett).

Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*. (Bantam).

§Additional readings available online via the GU Blackboard system

Class Sessions and Required Readings:

June 7: Course Introduction; Sophocles, *Antigone*.

June 8: Sophocles, *Antigone*.

June 9: § Aristotle, *Politics*, Book I.

June 10: § Aristotle, *Politics*, Book III

June 14: § Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, “On Law,” pp. 44-80.

June 15: Machiavelli, *The Prince*, “Dedication Letter,” Chapters 1-13.

June 16: Machiavelli, *Prince*, Chs. 14-26.

June 17: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, “Letter Dedication,” “Introduction,” Chs. 13-15.

June 21: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chs. 16-19, 21, 24, 26-28, 30.

June 22: In-class Blue Book Midterm.

June 23: Mill, *On Liberty*, Ch. 1-3.

June 24: Mill, *On Liberty*, Ch. 4-5.

June 28: Marx, “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844,” pp. 67-109.

June 29: Marx, “Manifesto of the Communist Party,” pp. 473-500. (Short Paper due In-class)

June 30: § Mazzini, “On Duties to the Nation,” Ch. V, 57-63 (<http://history.hanover.edu/texts/mazzini/mazzini5.htm>).

July 1: Spiegelman, *Maus I: My Father Bleeds History*.

July 5: Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, Acts 1-2.

July 6: Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, Acts 3-5.

July 7: Final, In-class blue book examination.

Course Requirements:

There are four formal requirements for GOV 080.

- 1) In-class, midterm exam on required readings and lectures=25%
- 2) Short, analytical paper of 4-6 pages=25%.
- 3) Final, blue book examination covering all material since mid-term=25%.
- 4) Attendance and active participation in class discussions=25%.

Statement on Attendance Policy for Summer Session classes:

In lieu of weekly recitation sections, which are required of all students in Elements of Political Theory during the regular academic year, attendance and class participation is a graded component of Gov 080 in the Summer Session. What this means, in practice, is that at the end of the term when calculating grades I will take into account not only a student's physical presence in class but the contribution they've made to our discussions.

You're wondering: "Does this mean that if I'm quiet and don't speak up in class I'll get a bad grade?" Not necessarily. I fully recognize that some people are naturally less comfortable participating in class discussions than others. However, most students at the end of the term will inevitably find themselves midway between two grades. Students who've made consistent and meaningful contributions may expect to receive the higher of the two grades.

In addition, the Dean of the Summer School has requested that all instructors clarify their policies for conspicuous non-attendance.

Attendance is obviously important during the regular academic year, but it takes on heightened importance in an intensive, accelerated Summer Session. We are going to move very quickly this summer. Missing even a single class in the Summer Session means that one may have missed an entire thinker. Missing two or three classes is the equivalent of weeks in a regular academic term. In recognition of this reality, and regardless of a student's performance on the other components of the course, I reserve the right to give an unsatisfactory grade to any student who for any reason misses more than three of the class sessions. If you anticipate missing—for any reason whatsoever—conspicuous amounts of class time this summer, then you should not enroll in the course.

GRADING SCALE FOR GOV 080

A=100-93
A-=92.99-90
B+=89.99-87
B=86.99-83
B-=82.99-80
C+=79.99-77
C=76.99-73
C-=72.99-70

Cut-offs are absolute and I do not round grades up.