

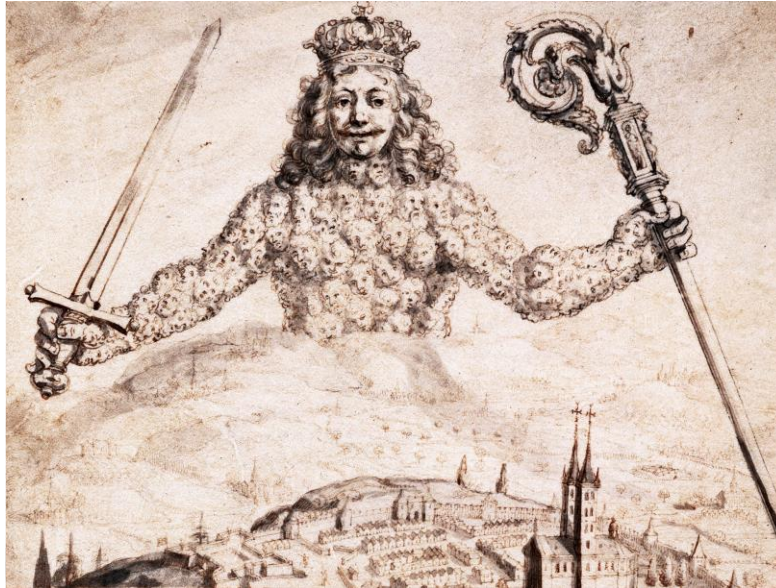
Renaissance and Modern Political Theories

POLS 3720/PHIL 4360/WGST 3720

Fall 2023

Dr. Wynne Moskop
McGannon 136
wynne.moskop@slu.edu
Class meets:
TR 12:45-2pm, BBH 221

Office hours:
T 2:15-3:15pm
W 3:30-4:30pm
R 2:15-3:15pm
& by appointment



Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Drawing_of_frontispiece_of_Leviathan.jpg. This image is in the public domain.

Course Description

The class will examine selected works in the history of Western political thought from the 16th to the 19th century—the period when modern notions of democratic political community, virtue, law, rights, freedom, and equality emerged. As we read and discuss primary source texts by thinkers ranging from Machiavelli to Marx, we will pay particular attention to the gendered division between public and private spheres that marks modern liberal thought and institutions. Differences between what counts as public or private in modern liberal democracy have shaped our political and social institutions and the ways in which those institutions have addressed, or failed to address, injustices related to gender, race and class.

Students will compare the ways that different thinkers address questions such as: What is the purpose of politics? What institutions and social practices are established to achieve that purpose? Why is there a separation between public and private spheres in liberal institutions? Which values, interests, and groups are served by that separation? Which are marginalized? As you come to understand the ramifications of different approaches to these questions, you can hone your ability to think through the role of institutions in shaping possibilities for justice in democratic society.

University Core Curriculum

Dignity, Ethics, and a Just Society

This course is part of the Saint Louis University Core, an integrated intellectual experience completed by all baccalaureate students, regardless of major, program, college, school or campus. The Core offers all SLU

students the same unified approach to Jesuit education guided by SLU's institutional mission and identity and our nine undergraduate [Core Student Learning Outcomes](#) (SLOs).

Dignity, Ethics, and a Just Society is one of 19 Core Components. The University Core SLO(s) that this component is designed to intentionally advance are listed below:
University Core Student Learning Outcomes The Core SLO(s) that this component is intentionally designed to advance are:
SLO 1: Examine their actions and vocations in dialogue with the Catholic, Jesuit tradition
SLO 3: Assess evidence and draw reasoned conclusions
SLO 7: Evaluate the extent to which social systems influence equity and reflect innate human dignity

Additionally, the Core Component-level Student Learning Outcomes are listed below:
Component-level Student Learning Outcomes Students who complete this course will be able to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze the cultural-institutional conditions and causes of just and unjust social systems using such concepts as social location, relationships, power, privilege, and vulnerability Apply such ethical concepts as human dignity, equity, well-being justice, and the common good to critically evaluate both existing social systems and proposals for social change Envision and articulate systemic social changes and other ways to promote flourishing, well-being, equity, justice, and the dignity of the human person

Syllabus requirements. All versions of this course will explicitly require students to demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes for the Dignity, Ethics, and a Just Society core attribute through reading, analyzing, and comparing primary source texts in political thought from the Renaissance and Modern historical period. All versions of the course require students to show what they have learned through both class discussion and multiple writing assignments, such as journal reflections, essays, and essay exams. Finally, to meet Essential Criterion 4 of the DEJS Core attribute, all versions of the course "will require students to produce an artifact that demonstrates recognition of how and when injustice is institutionalized in social, political, and cultural systems, and identification of conditions that promote the dignity and equity of all."

Learning Outcomes for the Political Science major.

1. Graduates will be able to identify the structure and operation of political systems in the U.S, across a variety of countries, and in multinational organizations.
2. Graduates will be able to distinguish among various approaches to studying political phenomena.
3. Graduates will be able to read carefully and evaluate and construct analytical arguments in clear and logical prose.
4. Graduates will be able to identify and gather information from credible primary and secondary sources.
5. Graduates will be able to design original research to test arguments and hypotheses with qualitative and/or quantitative approaches.
6. Graduates will be able to assess the effects of various social and political structures and public policies to determine which are more likely to promote equality, justice, freedom, or other values important to them.

In this course, the learning objectives above are translated through these specific goals:

By the end of the semester, you will be able to:

- 1) *Discuss and write about* meanings and evolution of notions of political community, virtue, law, rights, freedom, and equality, as these notions have developed in modern political thought.
- 2) *Explain* how the ideas and institutions of modern politics are intertwined with, and shaped by gendered public and private spheres.
- 3) *Read closely, analyze, and compare* theoretical arguments made by different historical thinkers.
- 4) *Use evidence* from these texts to construct persuasive theoretical arguments, in both written and oral work.

Class Format. The class format is a structured discussion that combines occasional problem-oriented mini lectures with class discussions and regular written reflections. To guide your reading, I supply study questions for each assignment. For most class sessions, some students will be assigned to serve as “expert” discussants who are tasked with suggesting approaches to study questions or developing questions of their own for the class to consider. This format is designed to serve the learning goals above. As you can see, these goals emphasize **a process** of reading, discussing, and writing that will help you **learn how** to analyze theoretical arguments and construct theoretical arguments of your own. Because this learning process can work only through your own repeated effort and practice, the lecture format of many classes is not helpful for achieving goals of this course.

As you read historical texts in political philosophy, the **immediate goal is to read the text closely enough to be able explain the main argument to others:** How does the author answer questions about the purpose of politics? What institutions and social practices serve that purpose? You’ll learn how to ferret out the ways in which different political theories promote justice, and also the ways in which institutions and social practices that correspond to these theories may foster injustice. Your ability to do this will be developed through practice speaking in class discussion and through writing journal reflections and short essays.

Always bring the assigned text (electronic or paper) to class so that we can work together to understand an thinker’s purpose, evidence, and underlying assumptions. Periodically class time will be allotted for you to write short journal reflections about what you have learned from our examination of particular texts. **There will be occasional pop quizzes to encourage everyone to keeping up with reading assignments.** Since the knowledge and ability to use it in critical analyze accumulate, if you fall behind at the beginning of the semester, that will hamper your progress for the remainder of the course.

Requirements

1) Participation

- **Complete reading assignments on time and participate regularly in class discussions.** Philosophical readings can be challenging. To prepare for class discussion, be sure to *give yourself time to read more than once; and think about how you want to respond to study questions.* Then you will be ready to participate. Otherwise, you cannot expect to follow the class discussion as we develop responses to study questions and your own questions.
- You are expected to *complete reading assignments before the beginning of the class* in which they are to be discussed and to participate regularly in class discussions of the readings. You might think of the assigned reading as a “lecture” that everyone in the class has already attended; in that context, the purpose of class discussion is, then, to process the author’s ideas so that we understand them better and have the opportunity to consider their ramifications for political

community. Naturally, you cannot expect to get much out of the discussion if you haven't "attended" the "lecture" to be discussed.

- **To prepare for class, outline the author's argument:** What is their purpose? What do they want us to learn? Why? Take note of passages in the text that help you respond to these general questions and to the specific study questions assigned for the text.
 - **Taking notes in class. What kind of notes is it helpful to take in a discussion class?** First, listen to the discussion and try to understand what each speaker is contributing to move the discussion forward. Second, when some part of the discussion clicks in your mind – by appearing to support or contradict your own tentative conclusions, write it down. Contribute your insight to the class discussion. All of this will help with your journal reflections (see below).
 - **Always bring a copy of the assigned text(s) to class for easy reference.** The copy may be paper or electronic.
 - Everyone in the class will have multiple opportunities to **serve as an "expert" discussant** who is responsible for commenting on study questions I will provide and for raising questions of your own.
 - There will be at least one reading and presentation project that small groups work on together.
 - There will be occasional **pop quizzes** over the readings to encourage you to pay close attention to them. Pop quizzes count as part of your class participation grade.
 - **Attendance at every class is required**, because discussing assigned readings and considering the perspectives of others is essential for learning to a) interpret and evaluate arguments and b) construct your own arguments.
 - **Absences. Absences are excused *only* if you a) provide a good reason**--e.g. illness, required university activity--preferably in advance, *and* **b) within one week, email me written responses to all study questions for the reading assignment for that day.** You are allowed one unexcused absence with no penalty. Each additional unexcused absence will lower your class discussion grade by 1/3 of a letter grade.
- 2) **Journal reflections.** *Create an individual google doc inside this folder, [SLU Google Drive folder, Renaissance & Modern Student Reflections](#). Label it with your last name and share it only with me, giving me "editor" capability so that I can comment occasionally. This will be your space for continuing journal reflections that can help develop your interests and understanding throughout the semester. Periodically I will allot class time for you to reflect on what you have learned from our readings. Each entry should be dated. Guidelines will be given for different kinds of reflections or responses to study questions, as the need arises.*

Journal reflections do not earn letter grades, but entries are considered as part of your class participation grade. I will comment on these reflections periodically, so that you will know how you are progressing in light of posted guidelines or specific assignments. I'm always glad to meet with you to discuss your reflections or to think about how to develop one of them into an essay. Two or three final journal reflections during the semester will be retained for University Core assessment purposes.

- 3) **Three short essays.** Essays will be evaluated according to criteria explained on the peer review/grading guideline posted on Canvas. The goal over the course of the semester is to improve your ability to read philosophical texts closely, reflect on them, and write clearly and persuasively about them.

We will discuss the first draft of Essay #1 in tutorial groups so that we have time to go over your draft carefully before you turn in a final version. The class will be divided into tutorial groups of 3. Drafts will be shared and each group will meet with me to review the drafts. Guided by the peer review

guidelines/rubric, we will suggest ways to improve each essay. Each of you will have a turn as an author and as a helpful peer reviewer, so that you gain experience listening to others and learning from their perspectives. Since this is the only essay assignment for which we will take class time for tutorial groups, it is important to pay close attention to the peer review rubric and the feedback you receive so that your future essays show improvement. To ensure that you understand how well your first draft meets criteria on the rubric, which also are the criteria I use to grade essays, you will receive a grade on this initial draft of Essay #1. However, this grade does not count toward the grade on the final version of Essay #1; it is only a benchmark that indicates what you need to work on for the final (graded) draft.

The remaining two essays will vary somewhat in length and topics, but criteria(peer review and grading guidelines) will be the same so that you gradually improve through writing and revising. Again, to improve, it is always important to reflect on the peer review guidelines and feedback on your previous essays. The third essay will serve as the final exam.

I strongly recommend visiting the writing tutors in the Student Success Center. They can help you organize your argument and eliminate any grammatical errors or confusing sentence structure that interfere with clarity and persuasiveness of your essay. writing@slu.edu, <https://www.slu.edu/life-at-slu/student-success-center/academic-support/universitywriting-services/index.php>

- 4) **Exams.** There will be a midterm exam (consisting of short answer essays and a small group oral) and occasional pop quizzes, as noted above. The third essay mentioned above will serve as a final essay exam.
- 5) **Electronics.** Computers and tablet are to be used in class only for accessing assigned readings, working on journal reflections, or taking notes or exams.
- 6) All students are expected to fill out both a **self evaluation and a course evaluation** at the end of the semester.

Grading. Grades will be determined as follows:

Class participation (including attendance, regular class participation, journal reflections, participation as an assigned discussant, pop quizzes, group project participation) — 30%

Midterm exam (short answer essay exam combined with small group oral exam— 10%

Two short Essays — 30% (including rough drafts that meet guidelines and are submitted on time; these essays will be about 750 words.)

Peer reviews of first two essays — 10%

Final exam essay — 20% (This essay will be about 1200 words.)

Midterm and final grades will be reported in terms of the College of Arts and Sciences grading scale: A=4.0, A-=3.7, B+=3.3, B=3.0, B-=2.7, C+=2.3, C=2.0, C-=1.7, D=1.0, F=0.0. However, grades given on assignments are up to individual professors; e.g. in this class, it is possible to receive a D+ or D- on a particular assignment. Or sometimes there may be an “in-between” grade (A-/B+), which is averaged 3.5 in the scale above.

Communication. The easiest way to reach me is by email, wynne.moskop@slu.edu. Please do not hesitate to email with questions and concerns. I will answer within 24 to 48 hours. Help is always available, so please do not hesitate to ask. I am *always* glad to meet with you. If my office hours are not convenient, please ask for an appointment, and feel free to drop in to McGannon 136 whenever my office door is open.

Civility. Talking about political issues and reading historical texts that employ language no longer in use today can be controversial. Strong opinions are expected and acceptable. Even so, it is crucial to maintain respectful, open conversation that allow us to question how well founded any of our assumptions may be. These guidelines may be helpful. (Modified from https://livingroomconversations.org/topics/talking_politics/)

- Be curious about what we read and **seek to understand the author's argument**; in the same vein, listen to other perspectives in class discussion and try to understand the speaker's perspective.
- **Show respect to the voices of authors and also to members of our class; suspend judgment.** Setting judgement aside opens you up to learning from others and makes them feel respected and appreciated. Try to truly listen, without interruption or crosstalk.
- **Note any common ground as well as any differences**, among authors and among members of our class. Look for areas of agreement or shared values that may arise and take an interest in the differing beliefs and opinions of others.
- Be authentic and welcome that from others. Share what's important to you based on our texts and your own experience. Be considerate of others who are doing the same.
- Be purposeful and to the point. Do your best to keep your comments concise and relevant to the question you are answering. Be conscious of sharing airtime with other participants.
- Own and guide the conversation. **Take responsibility for the quality of your participation and the conversation as a whole.** Be proactive in getting yourself and others back on track if needed.

The following university policy statements can be found at the end of this syllabus:

- Student Success Center
- University Writing Services
- Academic Integrity
- Disability Accommodations
- Title IX
- Wellness
- Basic Needs Services

All required texts are available at no cost online, on Pius Library electronic reserve (ERes), or from the instructor. Texts listed below are available in the campus bookstore, as well as online. We will read large portions of these texts, and it may be handy to have a paperback copy that you can annotate.

Thomas Hobbes, *The Leviathan* (available in bookstore)

John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (available in bookstore)

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*

Pius Library electronic reserve readings: The link to electronic reserve readings for this class is: https://libguides.slu.edu/er.php?course_id=98915 and the password is: **Modern**. *The password is case sensitive.*

Preliminary Schedule. *This schedule will be adjusted according to needs of the class. Specific detailed assignments for each week are provided on Canvas. You are responsible for checking the assignment on Canvas and for notifying me if you have any difficulty accessing it. Please do not wait until the last minute to*

check the assignment. It is not acceptable to come to class unprepared and explain belatedly that you could not find the reading.

Introduction: The role of virtue in politics. How does Machiavelli understand virtue? In the public sphere? in the private sphere? For men? For women?

- 8/24 Overview of course goals, format, and requirements. We will begin by viewing and discussing the first part of a video of Niccolo Machiavelli's comic play, [La Mandragola/The Mandrake Root](#) (1524)
- 8/29 View the rest of the *Mandragola* video. Read Machiavelli, [The Mandrake Root](#).
- 8/31 Mary O'Brien, "The Root of the Mandrake" [ERes](#). Journal reflections
- 9/5 Machiavelli, [The Prince](#) (1513), excerpts.
- 9/7 Machiavelli, [The Discourses](#) (1517, published 1531), excerpts. Journal reflections
- 9/11,12,14 **A draft of Essay #1 is due 9/11, by 6 pm on Canvas and to students in your tutorial group.** There will be no regular class this week. We will meet in tutorial groups of 2 or 3 to review draft essays. Your essay should follow guidelines on the peer review rubric posted on Canvas). These guidelines are also my criteria for grading the final version of your essay. Each of you will serve as a helpful peer reviewer/critic for draft essays authored by other students in your group. As a peer reviewer, you are responsible for using the peer review guidelines to suggest how other students in your group might improve their essay. **Peer reviews are due by email to me and to students in your tutorial group 1 hour before your scheduled tutorial group.** Your performance as a critic will be evaluated according to how well your comments and suggestions use the rubric. You will build on feedback you receive in the tutorial to revise your essay and submit a final version within 48 hours after your tutorial session.

The role of reason and science in the modern political sphere. Many consider Hobbes a foundational thinker in modern political thought.

- 9/19 Thomas Hobbes, *The Leviathan* (1651), excerpts. Available in campus bookstore.
- 9/21 Hobbes, *Leviathan* continued. Journal reflections

Natural rights, property, and power in modern political thought

- 9/26 John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* (1689). Available in campus bookstore.
- 9/28 Locke, *Second Treatise* continued; [U.S. Declaration of Independence](#) (1776)
- 10/3 Mary Astell, [Some Reflections Upon Marriage](#) (1700), excerpts
- 10/5 Penny Weiss, "Mary Astell: Including Women's Voices in Political Theory," *Hypatia*, Volume 19, Number 3, Summer 2004, pp. 63-84. Pius Library electronic journals. Journal reflections.

Liberty, virtue, and gender in political community. The next several readings (Rousseau, Wolstonecraft, Harriet Taylor Mill, and J.S. Mill) will be the basis for group projects and presentations, each with an emphasis selected by students.

- 10/10 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, [The Social Contract](#) (1762), excerpts. Available in campus bookstore.
- 10/12 Rousseau, *Social Contract*, continued
- 10/17 Rousseau, ["Letter to d'Alembert" on the Theatre](#) (1758), excerpts
- 10/18-20 Midterm exam (short answer essay and small group oral)

10/23,24,25 First Draft of Essay #2 due on Canvas on Monday, 10/23 by noon. This is a firm deadline to allow time for peer review. **Peer review of Essay #2 is due on Canvas on Tuesday 10/24 by noon Canvas.** Class will not meet. I hope you'll reserve the normal class time for responding to the peer review of your essay. **Final version of Essay #2 is due on Canvas by 10 pm Wednesday, 10/25**

10/26 FALL BREAK

Women, Gender, and Political Community

This group of readings will be the basis for collaboration in small groups. Specific topics will be determined by student interests. Wollstonecraft responds to Rousseau, extending natural rights arguments about liberty and equality to women, and, in the process, disrupting the boundaries between public and private. Harriet Taylor Mill and John Stuart Mill address the liberation of women from a utilitarian perspective (as opposed to a natural rights perspective.)

10/31 Mary Wollstonecraft, [A Vindication of the Rights of Woman](#) (1792), excerpts

11/2 Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, continued.

11/7 Harriet Taylor Mill, "[Enfranchisement of Women](#)" (1851),

11/9 John Stuart Mill, [On Liberty](#) (1859), excerpt. Group project time.

11/14 In class group project preparation

11/16 Group project presentations

Responses to modern liberal ideals: Class, Race, Gender

11/21 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, [Communist Manifesto](#) (1848), Chapters 1 and 2

11/23 Holiday

11/28 Marx, [Estranged \[Alienated\] Labor](#) (1844), excerpt. Journal reflections.

11/30 Flora Tristan, [The Emancipation of Woman](#) (1846), excerpts

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "[Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions](#)" (1848). What additional rights and freedoms do women need to enjoy rights and freedoms demanded in the Declaration of Independence?

12/5 Frederick Douglass, "[What to the Slave is the 4th of July?](#)" (1852); read assigned excerpt. Listen to [5-minute excerpt of Douglass's speech](#), read by James Earl Jones.

Charles Mills, 8-minute video talk, "The Racist Roots of Liberalism" (2010) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GEr-xXHVjKk>. Journal reflections.

12/7 Review

12/15 Take-home essay #3 (final exam) due on Canvas by 6 pm. This essay will be retained (anonymously) as an artifact for assessment of the University Core DEJS attribute.

University Policy Statements for all syllabi:

Disability Services, and Academic Coaching. [Disability Accommodations Syllabus Statement](#)

Student Success Center and University Writing Services

[Student Success Center Syllabus Statement](#)

[University Writing Services Syllabus Statement](#)

Academic Integrity policy [Academic Integrity Syllabus Statement](#)

Title IX policy [Title IX Syllabus Statement](#)

Wellness

All students experience stressors and challenges at some point, and seeking support is beneficial. Such challenges may be the result of academic concerns (such as those related to particular assignments or content in a course), or they may be more personal in nature (such as concerns related to relationships, mental health, loss, identities, alcohol or drugs, housing or food security, or finances, among other things). If you experience these or other difficulties, please consider seeking support from the resources available to you.

- For concerns related to this course, please contact me. I am invested in your success and will support your success in the ways I can.
- Additionally, you have access to the many resources SLU provides in support of your personal wellness. You will find a list of available resources on [the Well-being page of the SLU website](#).

Basic Needs Security

Students experiencing food insecurity, housing insecurity, and any other challenges that are impacting their personal and/or academic wellbeing are encouraged to contact the Dean of Students Office for support. Students can submit an [intake](#) form, email deanofstudents@slu.edu, or call 314-977-9378 to connect with their office. Students may also communicate directly with their instructors about any challenges they are experiencing to receive support and resource referrals.