

Political Philosophy



Fall 2026

Fridays 11:30 pm–2:20 pm, D 124

Dr. Joseph Carew

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The University of the Fraser Valley is located on the unceded territory of the Stó:lō peoples. We gratefully acknowledge our ability to live and work on the traditional territory.

PHIL 210: Political Philosophy

Course Description

This course will introduce students to prominent figures and problems in the history of political philosophy from the early modern period to the present day. Taking as our point of departure Aristotle's definition of the human being as a political animal, we will interrogate what makes us political and what fundamentally drives political life and change. We will focus on three frameworks—social contract theory (Hobbes, Rousseau), dialectics (Hegel, Marx), and ideology critique (Marx, Žižek)—and how each offers a distinct way of understanding the nature of the political. In so doing, we will explore how different thinkers understand the structures that hold societies together and the antagonisms that pull them apart. We will cover a wide range of topics, including but not limited to the following: the emergence and legitimacy of the state, the relationship between the individual and society, the nature and conditions of freedom, the role of conflict, domination, and exploitation in shaping social relations, and the illusions that sustain political reality.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Articulate central concepts in political philosophy.
- Interpret highly influential positions in political philosophy.
- Analyze different approaches in political philosophy.
- Provide close readings of foundational and important texts in political philosophy.
- Apply theories in political philosophy in conversation and writing.

Texts

The textbook listed below is required and is the basis for coursework. It is available through the bookstore. Other readings will be made available on Brightspace.

- Andrew Bailey et al., eds. *The Broadview Anthology of Social and Political Thought: From Machiavelli to Nietzsche*. Broadview, 2018.

Background Reading

If you are seeking supplementary texts to help you navigate the world of philosophy, there are many excellent resources available. Both the [Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#) and the [Stanford Encyclopedia](#)

[of Philosophy](#) are free and reputable. Another valuable resource is the [Very Short Introductions](#) book series published by Oxford University Press. All three are written by experts for a general audience, making them ideal for students. They are a great place to get your bearings in the discipline.

Assessment	Attendance	10%	
	Exam 1	30%	October 9
	Exam 2	40%	November 20
	Essay	20%	December 18

Attendance

Regular class attendance and participation in class discussions and activities are crucial for your success in the course.

Exams

The first exam will consist of two mini-essays. The second exam will consist of one long essay. Both exams will be in class and closed-book.

Essay

The final essay will be a work of collaborative writing.

Course Schedule

Unit	Date	Topic
1	Sep. 11	The Political Animal Aristotle, <i>Politics</i>, Book I, Chapters 1-2
2	Sep. 18	The State of Nature - Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> - The Introduction - Part I, Chapters 13-14 - Part II, Chapters 17-18 - Recommended: Part II, Chapter 19
3	Sep. 25	The General Will - Rousseau, <i>On the Social Contract or the Principles of Political Right</i> - Book 1, Chapters 1-8 - Book 2, Chapters 1-6 - Recommended: Book 3, Chapters 1 and 3
4	Oct. 2	The Struggle for Recognition - Hegel, "The Truth of Self-Certainty," <i>Phenomenology of Spirit</i>, ¶¶167-168, ¶¶174-175, and ¶177 - Hegel, "Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: Lordship and Bondage," <i>Phenomenology of Spirit</i>, ¶¶178-184 - Recommended: Stern, "The Dialectic of the Subject," <i>The Routledge Guidebook to Hegel's "Phenomenology of Spirit"</i>, 85-89f <i>First and third readings on Brightspace</i>
	Oct. 9	Exam 1
5	Oct. 16	The Master–Slave Dialectic - Hegel, "Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: Lordship and Bondage," <i>Phenomenology of Spirit</i>, ¶¶185-196 - Recommended: Stern, "The Dialectic of the Subject," <i>The Routledge Guidebook to Hegel's "Phenomenology of Spirit"</i>, 89-100

		<i>Second reading on Brightspace</i>
6	Oct. 23	Historical Materialism - Marx and Engels, "Ideology in General, German Ideology in Particular," <i>The German Ideology</i> - Marx, <i>Theses on Feuerbach</i>
7	Oct. 30	Alienation - Marx, "Estranged Labor," <i>Economic and Political Manuscripts</i> - Recommended: Marx, "Private Property and Communism," <i>Economic and Political Manuscripts</i>, 676-678
8	Nov. 6	Class Struggle Marx and Engels, <i>The Communist Manifesto</i>, Preamble and Sections I-II
	Nov. 13	Reading Break
	Nov. 20	Exam 2
9	Nov. 27	False Consciousness and Cynicism - Žižek, <i>The Sublime Object of Ideology</i>, 16-30 - Recommended: Carew, "Real, Imaginary, Symbolic," <i>The Bloomsbury Handbook to Slavoj Žižek</i> <i>Both readings on Brightspace</i>
10	Dec. 4	Ideological Fantasy - Žižek, <i>The Sublime Object of Ideology</i>, 31-35, 37-38, 47-50, and 139-144 - Recommended: Carew, "Jouissance," <i>The Bloomsbury Handbook to Slavoj Žižek</i> <i>All readings on Brightspace</i>

Course Policies and Procedures

Professionalism

I require that students maintain a professional attitude. This entails completing all readings before each session, paying attention during lectures, participating meaningfully in class discussions, completing in-class activities, arriving on time, not leaving early, and being respectful to the instructor and one's peers.

Email Communication

The subject line should include the course number and the nature of the inquiry. I do my best to respond within 2 workdays. If that timeframe has passed without a reply, feel free to reach out with a friendly reminder. Should it be an urgent matter, indicate so in the subject line. That way, I can prioritize getting back to you as soon as possible. Kindly note that UFV's Instructional Responsibilities Policy 46 states that "Instructors are not expected to respond to student emails on weekends or statutory holidays."

AI Use

Students are strictly prohibited from using generative AI for any requirements. In alignment with UFV's Student Academic Misconduct Policy 70, it "shall be an offense knowingly to [...] submit academic work for assessment that was purchased or acquired from another source." This includes work created by generative AI tools.

Missed Exams

Should you miss an exam, please contact me within 24 hours, if possible. If you are excused (for medical reasons, bereavement, etc., as determined on a case-by-case basis), you must reschedule through [Assessment Services](#).

Redoes

While I admire the dedication to academic success that students show when they request to redo coursework, I do not permit redoes. It is inequitable to offer some students and not others the opportunity to improve their grades. The best way to succeed is to be engaged throughout the term. I encourage you to make use of my office hours throughout the term for any specific questions or concerns you may have regarding course material, learning outcomes, and requirements. For your information, the [Academic Success Centre](#) and the [Library](#) also offer support in the form of [tutoring](#) and [consultation](#),

[writing support tools](#), and [Citation Style Guides](#) to aid you in your studies. By taking advantage of all the resources available to you, you will be prepared for each requirement by its scheduled time.

Drafts

I appreciate the eagerness to learn that students display when asking for feedback on drafts. However, I cannot provide this service. Reviewing academic work for some students but not others creates an uneven playing field that is contrary to the principle of fairness. I encourage you to make use of my office hours for any specific questions or concerns you may have regarding your essay. For general help on academic work, the [Academic Success Centre](#) offers [individual tutoring](#) and [writing support tools](#).

Grade Grubbing

Grade grubbing is when a student requests, threatens, or pleads for a grade increase for no legitimate academic reason. Instances include asking or begging for a grade bump, seeking preferential treatment, and disputing grades on subjective rather than objective criteria. The course syllabus clearly articulates students' responsibilities in demonstrating learning outcomes through the listed requirements and policies regarding missed requirements. Furthermore, the grading scheme and rubrics will be made available on Brightspace. There will be no grade changes that are not rightfully earned.



"Man is by nature a political animal."

— Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 1.2, 1253a2-3