

PSCI 2301A
History of Political Thought I
Fridays, 9:35 am – 11:25 am
Please check location on Carleton Central

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Course Description

This course examines foundational texts that have shaped Western political thought. Through a careful reading of the works of Greek poets, historians and philosophers such as Homer, Sophocles, Thucydides, Plato and Aristotle, we will examine central themes and topics in classical political thought.

In the course of our investigation, we will address several fundamental questions such as:

- ◆ Should we always obey the law?
- ◆ Does might make right in times of war?
- ◆ What makes a good citizen?
- ◆ Is democracy the best political regime?

Through a close reading of the texts, we will also attempt to answer questions about the authors' intentions in writing what they wrote. What does Sophocles tell us about the nature of justice in *Antigone*? What can we learn about the nature of war from Thucydides' account of the conflict between the Spartans and the Athenians? What is Plato trying to convey in his dialogue that describes Socrates' trial by the Athenian democratic regime? What does Aristotle really think of democracy as a regime? To answer these questions, we will examine the fundamental doctrines and principles of Greek political thought, with the aim of discovering and understanding what these texts can still teach us today. This course will also provide an overview of the historical context and political organization of Greek cities in 4th century BC.

Learning Objectives:

This course is designed to help students:

1. Gain knowledge of the primary texts and intellectual context of the historical period covered;
2. Provide an elaborate account of the key political concepts developed in classical Western thought, such as democracy, justice, liberty, and equality;
3. Draw parallels with the use of these concepts in contemporary politics;
4. Explain theories and arguments presented in the texts and assess their strengths and weaknesses;
5. Develop skills in analytical thinking, critical reading and constructing arguments through tutorial discussions and assignments.

Contact Policy:

The best way to contact me outside of scheduled office hours is via email. You can expect a reply within 48 hours (weekends excluded). If your question cannot be answered by a short email, please drop by during office hours. If your question is of general interest to the whole class, please post on the "Ask your instructor" forum on Brightspace so that all students can benefit from seeing the answer.

When emailing:

- Include the **course code** in the subject line of the email (PSCI2301);
- Use your **Carleton email account**;
- **Address** the email properly (please avoid starting your email with "hey you" or "lol");
- Sign off with your **first and last name**.

Course Format

This course is delivered in person and combines two hours of lecture and one hour of tutorials led by teaching assistants on a weekly basis.

Required Texts

- All readings are available **directly on Brightspace** at no cost to you

Course Assignments

Assignment	Due Date	Percentage of Final Grade
In-Class Attendance	Marked weekly	10 %
Tutorial Participation	Marked weekly	20 %
Short Analysis	September 28 th	10 %
Midterm Exam	October 23 rd	25 %
Final Exam	TBD, exam period	35 %

Course Assignments Overview

1. In-Class Attendance (10%)

Attendance and participation in class are essential components of this course. To earn the full points, you are required to attend class on a regular basis. An attendance sheet will circulate in class each week (a very easy 10% to just show up and be physically present in the classroom)

Note about attendance: Excused absences include medical reasons, family emergencies and observance of religious holiday. Please make sure to notify me in advance and if necessary, to provide documentation. Two or more unexcused absences will result in a change of one third of a letter grade (e.g. from B+ to B). Three or more unexcused absence will result in losing one full letter grade (from B to C). These deductions apply to the class attendance grade.

2. Tutorial Participation (20%)

Participation in the tutorials is central to succeed in this course, which is based on debates and the exchange of ideas. Through weekly group discussions, students will be given the opportunity to ask questions about the readings, exchange and learn from their peers and the TA, and further deepen their understanding of the texts. Sessions will be held in person, **starting on September 18th**.

Participation will be evaluated based on preparation ahead of tutorials (in short, doing the readings!), regular attendance to tutorial discussions, and active and respectful contribution to the discussion with the TA and your classmates.

To help you prepare for the tutorials and to guide you in your weekly readings, **discussion questions** will be posted each week on Brightspace.

3. Short Analysis (10%) – Due September 28th

During the first weeks of the term, we will cover Homer's *Odyssey* and Sophocles' *Antigone*. Your first assignment will be a short reaction paper that can be done in two ways: 1) you can either submit an analysis from a close reading of a passage of the *Odyssey* or *Antigone* (excerpts posted in the guidelines on Brightspace); 2) or you can watch Christopher Nolan's *The Odyssey* (still in theaters) or the contemporary adaption of *Antigone* (2019) by film director Sophie Deraspe (link on Brightspace) and provide an analysis of the directors' interpretations of these works and the choices they made in their movie adaptations.

Your short paper should be 1-2 pages in length (single-spaced). Your assignment should be submitted on Brightspace on **Monday September 28th before 9pm**. Detailed guidelines will be made available on Brightspace in the "Assignments and Guidelines" module during the first week of class.

4. Midterm Exam (25%) – October 23rd

A midterm exam will be held in class and will cover the materials from the first half of the course. Further instructions will be posted on Brightspace.

5. Final Exam (35%) – TBD, Exam Period (December 12th -23rd)

A formally scheduled final examination will be held during the exam period. The exam will be cumulative and will consist of a set of short answers and two long essay questions. More information, including the date of the exam and other instructions, will be posted on Brightspace later in the term.

Summary

Students are required to:

- 1) Complete the readings and read the discussion questions before tutorials;
- 2) Attend the weekly tutorials sessions regularly (20%);
- 3) Attend weekly lectures (10%);
- 4) Write and submit a short paper (10%)
- 5) Prepare for the midterm and final exams (25% and 35% respectively).

Course Schedule and Required Readings

Week 1: Introduction: What is Classical Political Thought? (Sept 11)

- ♦ Required reading: Syllabus

Week 2: The Politics of Epic Narratives: Homer's *Odyssey* (Sept 18)

- ♦ Required reading: Homer, *The Odyssey*, Book 9: A Pirate in a Shepherd's Cave (18 pages)
- ♦ Tutorials begin on Sept. 18

Week 3: Tragedy, Injustice, Law: Sophocles' *Antigone* (Sept 25)

- ♦ Required reading: Sophocles, *Antigone* (Selections posted on Brightspace)

Week 4: War and Peace: Thucydides' *War of the Peloponnesians and the Athenians* (I) (Oct 2)

- ♦ Required reading: Thucydides, Book 1, 1- 23; Book II (Pericles' Funeral Oration, pp. 108-117) (32 pages)

Week 5: Power and Domination: Thucydides (II) (Oct 9)

- ♦ Required reading: Thucydides, *The War of the Peloponnesians and the Athenians*, Book V (The Melian Dialogue, p. 378-385); Book VI (The Sicilian Expedition, p.391-402) (19 pages)

Week 6: Socrates on Trial: Plato's *Apology* and the Fate of Political Philosophy (Oct 16)

- ♦ Required reading: Plato, *The Apology of Socrates* (Selections posted on Brightspace)
- ♦ Optional: Xenophon, *Socrates' Defence to the Jury*

Week 7: In-Class Midterm Exam (Oct 23)

- ♦ See instructions on Brightspace

Week 8 – October 24-28: Fall Break (no class)

Week 9: Rhetoric and Truth: Plato's *Gorgias* (I) (Nov 6)

- ♦ Required reading: Plato, *Gorgias* (Selections posted on Brightspace)

Week 10: Opinion and Expertise in Democracy: Plato's *Republic*

(Nov 13)

- ◆ Required reading: Plato, *The Republic*, Book VI (Selections) and Book VII (Selections)

Week 11: Ethics, Politics and the Good Life: Aristotle's *Politics* (I) (Nov 20)

- ◆ Required reading: Aristotle, *The Politics*, Book 1 (Chap. 1-2); Book 3 (Chap.1-4, 6-9); Book 4 (Chap. 1-2, 8) (25 pages)

Week 12: Oligarchy and Democracy: Aristotle's *Politics* (II) (Nov 27)

- ◆ Required reading: Aristotle, *The Politics*, Book 5 (Chap. 8-9); Book 6 (Chap. 1-5), Book 7 (Chap. 1-3, 13-15) (33 pages)

Week 13: Final Review (Dec 4)

- ◆ No readings

Key Dates: Summary

Date	Topic	Assignment
Friday, September 11	What is Classical Political Thought?	
Friday, September 18	Homer	Tutorials begin
Friday, September 25	Sophocles	
Monday, September 28		Short analysis due
Friday, October 2	Thucydides (I)	
Friday, October 9	Thucydides (II)	
Friday, October 16	Plato's Apology	
Friday, October 23		Midterm exam
October 24-28	Fall Break	
Friday, November 6	Plato's Gorgias	
Friday, November 13	Plato's Republic	
Friday, November 20	Aristotle (I)	
Friday, November 27	Aristotle (II)	
Friday, December 4	Final Review	
December – Exam Period		Take-home exam

Policy on the use of AI

The broad term of “AI” encompasses a great variety of technologies, tools and systems. This policy refers more specifically to the use of generative AI in research and writing. Large language models (LLMs) — such as ChatGPT, Claude, Llama, DeepSeek, Gemini, and so on — have become more accessible in recent years. Universities are still grappling with the wide-ranging effects of their omnipresence and various uses in higher education.

LLMs are not going away anytime soon. We cannot just stick our heads in the sand and pretend they do not exist. However, this does not mean that we should adopt them and integrate them into our daily tasks without a critical examination of their limitations and risks. Beyond the environmental cost of generative AI and the ethical issues their use raises (such as copyright infringements, data exploitation, ghost labour), we also have to assess whether they are beneficial as tools, and if so, to what extent.

One of the aims of this course is to foster critical thinking. LLMs are known for their occasional “hallucinations,” which can include factually incorrect statements, nonsensical responses and fabricated sources among other things. They can also introduce biases they replicate from the data sets on which they have been trained. Because of this lack of reliability, predictability and accuracy, their use must therefore require a great deal of caution.

My policy in this course is one of transparency. While I do not encourage the use of generative AI, I do not strictly prohibit it in my course. I require all students who decide to employ it as a tool to disclose the degree to which they have relied on it (in percentage), the way it has been used (for brainstorming, books and articles summaries, writing, editing, etc.) and to indicate with footnotes any section, paragraph or sentence that has been produced with the support of an AI tool (the footnote should include the prompt used). In a separate appendix, I require screenshots of all AI prompts used in the process, as well as a detailed written justification as to how AI was used in the assignment. Assignments will be evaluated in light of those disclosed elements.

Ultimately, I am interested in hearing what you have to say about the topics discussed in class. If I want to know the answers ChatGPT or Claude can generate based on a prompt, I'll ask those large language models directly. In any case, most assignments in this class do not lend themselves well to the integration of generative AI. The course is based on in-class and tutorials discussions, as well as in-class evaluations.

Course Policies

Citations and Bibliography

All written assignments should include a full list of sources used and avoid plagiarism or other violations of academic integrity. For examples of what constitutes plagiarism and what could be the possible sanctions, consult this page on academic integrity: <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>

You must indicate all references to the texts in footnotes or with in-text references. You are free to choose the style of citation with which you are most comfortable, as long as it is consistent throughout your assignment. For more details on how to cite properly, please consult the MacOdrum Library website: <https://library.carleton.ca/help/citing-your-sources>.

All assignments submitted should be **double-spaced**, formatted in **12-point font** and should include **page numbers**.

Copyright

Lectures and course materials (including all PowerPoint presentations, handouts, videos, and similar materials) are protected by copyright. You may take notes and make copies of course materials for your own educational use. You may not allow others to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly for commercial purposes without my express written consent.

Late Essays & Extensions

If you are ill or have any other legitimate reason for not being able to complete coursework or submit your assignments on time, **please advise me as soon as possible (preferably before the deadline)**. If an extenuating circumstance prevents a student from submitting an assignment on time, they should be prepared to provide proper documentation concerning the situation. Accommodations can be discussed on a case-by-case basis.

Please note that assignments in other courses **are not sufficient grounds** for an extension. As you dispose of several weeks to complete the assignments, it is your responsibility to start early in the term.

Late assignments will be penalized at the **rate of 4% of the student's assignment grade** per day. An

assignment is considered one day late if it is submitted to Brightspace any time up to 23:59 hours after the deadline. Assignments that have **not been submitted seven (7) days** after the deadline will not be accepted.

Grade Appeal

Any suspicion of error on the part of the TAs or the instructor should be brought up immediately to be corrected. You are more than welcome to drop by during office hours to discuss your assignment. If you are concerned that your assignment was not assessed fairly, you can request a review by submitting a **one-page justification** to your TA explaining the reasons why the assignment should be reviewed. You should send the justification along with the original essay by email to your TA **no later than one (1) week** after receiving your grade. A request for review can involve the raising or lowering of a grade upon further examination.

Political Science Course Outline Appendix **REQUESTS FOR ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION**

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

Student Mental Health

As a university student, you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you. Here is a list that may be helpful:

Emergency Resources (on and off campus):

<https://carleton.ca/safety/resources/>

Carleton Resources:

Mental Health and Wellbeing: <https://carleton.ca/wellness/>

Health & Counselling Services: <https://carleton.ca/health/>

Paul Menton Centre: <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>

Academic Advising Centre (AAC):

<https://carleton.ca/academicadvising/>

Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS):

<https://carleton.ca/csas/>

Equity & Inclusivity Communities: <https://carleton.ca/equity/>

Off Campus Resources:

Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region: (613) 238-3311 or TEXT: 343-306-5550, <https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/>

Mental Health Crisis Service: (613) 722-6914, 1-866-996-0991, <http://www.crisisline.ca/>

Good2Talk: 1-866-925-5454, <https://good2talk.ca/>

The Walk-In Counselling Clinic: <https://walkincounselling.com>

Academic consideration for medical or other

extenuating circumstances: Students must contact the instructor(s) of their absence or inability to complete the academic deliverable within the predetermined timeframe due to medical or other extenuating circumstances. For a range of medical or other extenuating circumstances, students may use the online self-declaration form and where appropriate, the use of medical documentation. This policy regards the accommodation of extenuating circumstances for both short-term and long-term periods and extends to all students enrolled at Carleton University.

Students should also consult the [Course Outline Information on Academic Accommodations](#) for more information. Detailed information about the procedure for requesting academic consideration can be found [here](#).

Pregnancy: Contact your Instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For accommodation regarding a formally-scheduled final exam, please contact Equity and Inclusive Communities (EIC) at equity@carleton.ca or by calling (613)

520-5622 to speak to an Equity Advisor.

Religious obligation: Contact your Instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details [click here](#).

Academic Accommodations for Students with

Disabilities: The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, please request your accommodations for this course through the [Ventus Student Portal](#) at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (*if applicable*). Requests made within two weeks will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. For final exams, the deadlines to request accommodations are published in the [University Academic Calendars](#). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally scheduled exam (if applicable).

Survivors of Sexual Violence: As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and its survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: <https://carleton.ca/equity/sexual-assault-support-services>.

Accommodation for Student Activities: Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation will be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.

PETITIONS TO DEFER

Students unable to write a final examination because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control may apply within **three working days** to the Registrar's Office for permission to write a deferred examination. The request must be fully supported by the appropriate documentation. Only deferral petitions submitted to the Registrar's Office will be considered. [See Undergraduate Calendar, Article 4.3](#)

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Student or professor materials created for this course (including presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the author(s). They are intended for personal use and may not be reproduced or redistributed without prior written consent of the author(s). Permissibility of submitting substantially the same piece of work more than once for academic credit. If group or collaborative work is expected or allowed, provide a clear and specific description of how and to what extent you consider collaboration to be acceptable or appropriate, especially in the completion of written assignments.

WITHDRAWAL WITHOUT ACADEMIC PENALTY

Please reference the [Academic Calendar](#) for each term's official withdrawal dates

OFFICIAL FINAL EXAMINATION PERIOD

Please reference the [Academic Calendar](#) for each term's Official Exam Period (may include evenings & Saturdays or Sundays)

For more information on the important dates and deadlines of the academic year, consult the [Carleton Calendar](#).

GRADING SYSTEM

The grading system is described in the Undergraduate Calendar section [5.4](#).

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is an essential element of a productive and successful career as a student. Students are required to familiarize themselves with the university's [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

PLAGIARISM

The University Senate defines plagiarism as "*presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own.*" This can include:

- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else, including the unauthorized use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT);
- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another's data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper

citations when using another's works and/or failing to use quotation marks;

- handing in "*substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.*"

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course's instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of "F" for the course.

RESOURCES (613-520-2600, phone ext.)

Department of Political Science (2777)

B640 Loeb

Registrar's Office (3500)

300 Tory

Centre for Student Academic Success (3822) 4th floor
Library

Academic Advising Centre (7850)

302 Tory

Paul Menton Centre (6608)

501

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Career Services (6611)

401 Tory