POL 1201: Political Ideas and Ideologies  
4 Credits  
05:45pm-08:40pm T, Th (07/10/00-08/04/00)  
Blegan Hall 225  

Instructor: Amit Ron  
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1. **Course Description and Objectives:**

The course offers a survey of the main schools of thought in political theory and the way that they are expressed in contemporary political ideologies. The ideologies surveyed in this course are liberalism, conservatism, socialism, fascism and feminism. There are two main objectives for the course. First, to familiarize the students with the terms of contemporary debates about politics. For this purpose, a strong emphasis will be given to the way political ideologies are expressed in actual political discourse. Second, to introduce the students to the field of political theory and to emphasize the importance of thinking theoretically about politics. The course will provide students with basic tools for reading and understanding primary texts in political philosophy.

2. **Textbooks**


Both textbooks are required.

One of the authors of the textbooks, Terence Ball, made a series of video recordings based on the textbook. These video recordings are available at the Norris Learning Center on the East Bank. Students can watch these recordings as a way to support their reading or to study for the final exam (Terence Ball, Contemporary Political Ideologies <videorecording>, VT L841.1 - VT L841.10).
3. Requirements

a) Attendance and participation in class discussion is required. The course is primarily in lecture form, supplemented by whole-class and group discussion.
b) Students are expected to follow the reading both in the textbook and in the reader. The material from the reader serves as the basis for in-class group discussion. Therefore, it is particularly important to read closely the text from the reader. Each week I will give guiding questions for the reading (these questions will appear also in the class’ web site). It is not required to answer the questions in writing, but it is strongly recommended. A student that answers the questions each week will have much easier time during class discussions, doing the assignment and preparing for the final exam.
c) Internet based assignment.
d) Final exam.
e) I strongly encourage students to speak with me about any questions or problems that they may have. The course material is not simple and requires a lot of reading and abstract thinking. It is also recommended to speak with me before writing the assignment. I would be willing to read and comment on a draft of the assignment, although I will not give last minute comments. If you'd like me to comment on a draft, please submit it at least one week before the deadline.

4. Grading and Policies

a. Weights: class attendance and participation 20%, internet-based assignment 30%, final exam 50%.
b. The criteria for evaluating the internet-based assignment and the final exam are detailed in the relevant sections in the syllabus. Participation in class is required. Students will have multiple opportunities to participate. Those students who feel uncomfortable speaking in front of the whole class can participate in the small group discussions.
c. Students who need academic accommodations due to a disability should speak with me directly.
d. The grade Incomplete will be given only in exceptional circumstances. No incomplete will be given unless you have a prior written agreement with me.

5. The Class Website

The syllabus, class information, weekly guiding questions and all handouts distributed in class sessions can be found in the class Website --

http://webct.umn.edu/SCRIPT/POL1201_v00/scripts/serve_home

You can login into the site using your university username (email) and password.
6. Class Schedule and Reading:

7/11 (Tuesday)
Topics: Course Description. What is political theory? What is political ideology?
Readings: Textbook, chapter 1.

7/13 (Thursday)
Topics: Liberalism – social contract, rights, utility.

7/18 (Tuesday)
Topics: Classical Conservatism.
Reading: Textbook, chapter 4 (pp. 93-121). Reader, pp. 143-9, 155, 174-82.

7/20 (Thursday)
Topics: Liberalism, conservatism and the market.

7/25 (Tuesday)
Topics: Marxism and socialism.

7/27 (Thursday)
Assignment is due.
Topic: Fascism.

8/1 (Tuesday)
Topic: Feminism.
Reading: Textbooks, chapter 8 (pp. 219-49). Reader, pp. 373-84, 389-97.

8/3 (Thursday)
Final Exam.
Topic: Summary.
No reading for this week.
7. Internet Based Assignment

The assignment must be submitted in class on 7/27. Late work will be penalized one grade notch (e.g., B- to C+) for each day it is late. The weekend counts as one day. If, for some reason, you cannot submit the assignment on time you must get prior written approval. The written approval should be attached to the assignment when submitted.

For the assignment, you have to search the World Wide Web for a statement or a speech of an incumbent politician or a candidate for office in the upcoming elections, either from state or from national politics. In the class web-site you can find a list of links. It is strongly recommended that you choose the source as early as possible (you can also discuss the source with me in advance). A printed copy of the source should be attached to the work. Choose a source that will allow you to address all parts of the assignment.

Write a 3-4 page long (double-space) essay discussing the ideological positions expressed in the source. The discussion should include two parts. In the first part, you should explain, with relevant citations, how the ideological standpoint of the author is expressed in the text. Notice that it is possible that source combines themes from different ideological positions, either to support the claim presented, or merely because these positions are popular. In the second part, you have to criticize the position of the source. To do so, it is useful to think what would be the position of someone who holds a different ideology on the same issue. More details regarding the assignment will be given in class. The assignments will be returned by the next class so you can use the comments to study for the final exam.

8. Final Exam

The exam will be given during the second half of the last session (8/3). The first part of the exam consists of ten short questions (3-4 lines' answer for each). In the second part students will be asked to read a short article from the newspaper and to explain what ideological perspectives appear in it. The best way to prepare for this part (besides doing the assignment) is to read during the semester the editorial or opinion section of a daily or weekly newspaper and to look for the ideological perspectives that appear in it (similar exercises will be done in class).

Students are expected to take the final exam on time (last session of class). Possible exceptions include illness, family emergency, or a legitimate conflict with recognized university activities. If these apply, you must contact me to request a make up. Make these arrangements as soon as you know of the conflict – prior to the exam date if possible.
9. Resources --University services:

The Students Writing Center, Composition Program

330 Lind Hall, East Bank, 625-1893
Provides tutoring in writing for students who need help with a paper or thesis. Does not edit or proof-read student work but provides substantial analysis and suggestions for improvement. There are staff members experienced in helping students for whom English is a second language.

University of Minnesota Counseling Program:

The UCCS Counseling program helps students with their concerns and offers an opportunity to talk with an experienced counselor who can help students select and achieve goals for personal and career development. The Learning and Academic Skills Center offers class, workshop, and individual assistance aimed at helping students achieve academic goals.
109 Eddy Hall, 612-624-3323
http://www.ucs.umn.edu/counsel/

10. Scholastic Dishonesty

Scholastic dishonesty is any act that violates the rights of another student with respect to academic work or that involves misrepresentation of a student's own work. Scholastic dishonesty includes (but is not limited to) cheating on assignments or examinations, plagiarizing (misrepresenting as one's own anything done by another), submitting the same or substantially similar papers (or creative work) for more than one course without consent of all instructors concerned, depriving another of necessary course materials, and sabotaging another's work.