This course is an advanced introduction to the field of political theory. As such, its aim is really twofold. First, the course serves as an introduction to major figures and questions in the tradition of Western political thought. Specifically, we will engage the writings of Plato, Machiavelli and Nietzsche and, through them, some of basic questions that have occupied political theorists (e.g. what is the best regime? how is power acquired or maintained? what is the relation between truth and power?). Secondly, the course serves also as an introduction to the academic study of political theory as it developed in the United States in the latter half of the 20th century. Alongside the so-called “primary” texts by Plato, Machiavelli and Nietzsche, therefore, we will also be engaging the work of their scholarly interpreters, and discussing some of the interpretive and political debates between them. Ultimately, we may find that this division between “primary” and “secondary” literatures does not hold, just as we may call into doubt some of the other divisions we will encounter (e.g., politics v. philosophy, political science v. political theory, philosophy v. literature). For now, though, we’ll let it stand.

Most readings will be made available electronically to the extent possible.

Tentative Reading Schedule

**Week 1. January 22. Introduction**

**Week 2. January 29. What is politics?**

Jacques Rancière, *Ten Theses on Politics*
Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement*, Chapters 1, 2, 6

**Week 3. February 5. Political Theory as a Vocation**

Andrew Rehfeld, “Offensive Political Theory”, *Perspectives*
Anne Norton, “Political Science as a Vocation”
Anne Norton, *95 Theses on Politics, Culture and Method* (selections)
Week 4. February 12. Questions of interpretation

Leo Strauss, “Persecution and the Art of Writing.” Social Research 8:4 ( ), 488-504
Quentin Skinner, “Meaning and understanding in the history of ideas”
Shadia Drury, “The Esoteric Philosophy of Leo Strauss” in Political Theory 3:13
Derrida, Of Grammatology (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), pp. 3-65, 141-64.

Week 5. February 19. Plato (1)

Plato, The Republic, Books I-IV
Sheldon Wolin, “Plato” in Politics and Vision

Recommended:

Week 6. February 26. Plato (2)

Plato, The Republic, Books V-VI

Week 7. March 5. Plato (3)

Plato, The Republic, Books VII-X
Jacques Rancière, “Order of the City,” “Order of Discourse,” in The Philosopher and his Poor

Week 8. March 12. Machiavelli (1)

Niccolò Machiavelli, The Prince
Quentin Skinner, Chapters 4-6 of The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, 69-186
Leo Strauss, Thoughts on Machiavelli, Selections

Week 9. March 26. Machiavelli (2)


Week 10. April 2. Machiavelli (3)

Hanna Piktin, *Fortune is a Woman*, Chicago: University of Chicago, Chapters 1, 11, 12.

**Week 11. April 9. Nietzsche (1)**
Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*

**Week 12. April 16 – NO CLASS – WPSA Meeting**

**Week 13. April 23. Nietzsche**
Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, la généalogie, l’histoire”, in *Dits et écrits I*, 1004-1024.
Leo Strauss, “Notes on Beyond Good and Evil”
Thomas Lemke, “Foucault, Governmentality, Critique”

**Week 14. April 30. Class presentations / Readings to be determined**

**Week 15. May 7. Class presentations / Readings to be determined**

**Critical Commentaries on Readings**
Four to five times during the semester (depending on enrollment), you will be asked to provide 4-5 pages of written commentary on the week’s readings, to be shared with the class on the Tuesday prior to class. These critical reflections are not summaries or descriptive overviews of the readings. They should be analytical, critically engaging the central arguments and difficulties of the texts under discussion. These reflections will also serve to stimulate discussion during our seminar meeting on Wednesday.

**Class Presentations**
Students will be responsible for class presentation of weekly readings designed to provoke and facilitate discussion (again, depending on enrollment). Class size will determine whether this is done individually or collectively in small groups. Rather than provide an overview of the week’s readings, presentations should be concise and conceptually oriented. They should clarify key arguments, critically engage readings, and pose questions that open up the material for discussion.

**Seminar Papers**
Enrolled students will be expected to write a seminar paper, on a topic to be chosen in consultation with the instructor. A draft of the paper will be due close to the end of term. The final version will be due about two weeks later.

**UWM Policies and Procedures**
In this course, we will abide by the UWM policies and procedures as described in the following document. http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/SyllabusLinks.pdf

**Students with disabilities**
Students with disabilities should notify the instructor immediately so that we can make
appropriate accommodations. We will follow university procedures as described in the following document. http://www4.uwm.edu/sac/SACltr.pdf

**Religious observances**
Students who plan to observe religious holidays should notify the instructor immediately so that we can make appropriate accommodations. We will follow university procedures as described in the following document. http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S1.5.htm

**Students called to active military duty**
Students who are called to active military duty should notify the instructor immediately so that we can make appropriate accommodations. We will follow university procedures as described in the following document. Students: http://www4.uwm.edu/current_students/military_call_up.cfm