

**College of San Mateo**  
**Official Course Outline**

1. **COURSE ID:** PLSC 150    **TITLE:** Introduction to Political Thought    **C-ID:** POLS 120  
**Units:** 3.0 units    **Hours/Semester:** 48.0-54.0 Lecture hours; and 96.0-108.0 Homework hours  
**Method of Grading:** Letter Grade Only  
**Recommended Preparation:**  
Eligibility for ENGL 100 or ENGL 105, and completion of, or concurrent enrollment in, any READ 400-level course.
  
2. **COURSE DESIGNATION:**  
**Degree Credit**  
**Transfer credit:** CSU; UC  
**AA/AS Degree Requirements:**  
CSM - GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS: E5b. Social Science  
**CSU GE:**  
CSU GE Area D: SOCIAL SCIENCES: DSI - Social Institutions  
**IGETC:**  
IGETC Area 4: SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES: Social and Behavioral Sciences
  
3. **COURSE DESCRIPTIONS:**  
**Catalog Description:**  
Study of classical and modern political thought designed to develop understanding of various theoretical approaches to politics, basic political problems and proposed solutions to these problems.
  
4. **STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOME(S) (SLO'S):**  
Upon successful completion of this course, a student will meet the following outcomes:
  1. Effectively communicate how different political theories explain the impact of state and non-state actors on the development and implementation of policy.
  2. Critically analyze the defining elements of different political theories and ideologies.
  3. Discuss how different political theories conceptualize the impact of ethnic, cultural and economic diversity on political issues and policy.
  4. Evaluate how different political theories conceptualize the ethical issues and conflicts inherent to political issues.
  
5. **SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES:**  
Upon successful completion of this course, a student will be able to:
  1. Evaluate the study of political theory, based on original texts and other sources, as a means for understanding important political phenomena.
  2. Critically analyze political theory and theoretical texts and explain how they are relevant to contemporary issues.
  3. Discuss the historical and social context--including the impact of ethnic, cultural and economic diversity--on the generation of political theories, political issues and policy.
  4. Compare and contrast the defining elements of each political theory.
  5. Evaluate ethical issues and conflicts inherent to political issues by analyzing the different assumptions and values about "human nature" and "reality" embedded in each political theory; examine the way these starting premises shape the questions asked and conclusions reached.
  6. Effectively communicate the contribution of each political theory towards a comprehensive understanding of political life, political institutions and the impact of state and non-state actors on the implementation of policy.
  
6. **COURSE CONTENT:**  
**Lecture Content:**
  1. The nature and tradition of political inquiry.
  2. Classical theorists.
  3. Modern theorists.
  4. Contemporary theorists.
  5. Basic theoretical debates such as, but not limited to, justice, equality, best government.
  6. Application of theoretical debates to the contemporary world.

7. This class explores the nature of normative political theory as a distinct intellectual discipline.
8. The student will develop an understanding of the characteristic problems that the great political theorists of the Western political tradition have addressed.
9. The class will address the central theme of the relationship between the citizen and political authority, in other words, the nature of political obligation.
10. Several questions are posed for consideration based upon an examination of the texts of the major political philosophers:
  - A. What is a good and bad citizen, and according to what standards?
  - B. What is political authority, how does it originate, and why is it central to human life?
  - C. What is justice, and is the life of justice really superior to the unjust life?
  - D. Is the just person always identical to the good citizen?
  - E. Should citizens obey the legal commands of the state if it requires immoral actions?
  - F. Under what conditions, if any, is disobedience, resistance or revolution justified?
  - G. What is a good community, and what institutions, values, and ways of life characterize it?
  - H. Is it possible to actualize an ideal society?
 The answers to these questions lead to a discussion of a range of concepts, including freedom, civic virtue, political conflict, and the relation between political practice and philosophical wisdom.

#### 7. REPRESENTATIVE METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

Typical methods of instruction may include:

- A. Lecture
- B. Discussion
- C. Other (Specify): A. Formal lectures B. Class discussion C. Socratic method D. Small group discussions

#### 8. REPRESENTATIVE ASSIGNMENTS

Representative assignments in this course may include, but are not limited to the following:

##### **Writing Assignments:**

Research papers, analytical essays, short-answer questions on assigned readings

##### **Reading Assignments:**

Textbooks

#### 9. REPRESENTATIVE METHODS OF EVALUATION

Representative methods of evaluation may include:

- A. Class Participation
- B. Exams/Tests
- C. Group Projects
- D. Homework
- E. Oral Presentation
- F. Papers
- G. Quizzes
- H. Research Projects
- I. Written examination

#### 10. REPRESENTATIVE TEXT(S):

Possible textbooks include:

- A. Arendt, H. . *The Human Condition*, 2 ed. University of Chicago Press, 1998
- B. Hobbes, T.. *Leviathan*, ed. Penguin Classics, 1982
- C. Machiavelli, N.. *The Niccolo Machiavelli Collection: The Prince, The Art of War, Discourses on Livy, and Florentine Histories* , ed. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014
- D. Marx, K.. *Selected Writings*, ed. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2010
- E. Marx, K.. *Selected Writings*, ed. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2010
- F. Rawls, J. . *A Theory of Justice*, Revised ed. Belknap, 1999
- G. de Tocqueville, A.. *Democracy in America*, ed. Penguin Classics, 2003
- H. Aristotle, C. Lord.. *Aristotle's Politics*, 2 ed. University of Chicago Press, 2013
- I. Rousseau, J.. *The Major Political Writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau: The Two "Discourses" and the "Social Contract"*, ed. University Of Chicago Press, 2014
- J. Locke, J.. *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Everyman Paperback, 1993
- K. Plato. *The Republic*, ed. Dover, 2010

**Curriculum Committee Approval Date:** December 2016  
**Effective Term:** Fall 2017  
**Course Originator:** Lee Miller