

Political Theory in Star Trek

Political Science 335
Saunders 541

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MWF 9:30-10:20

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Overview of the Course

This course examines the grand narratives of western political thought through the vehicle of *Star Trek*. We will look at the “important dead white guys” who have come to be included as central thinkers in this intellectual tradition: Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Mill, Hegel, Marx and Nietzsche. We will call on two 20th century political thinkers, Hannah Arendt and Michel Foucault, to help us frame our inquiries into this intellectual tradition.

This is a huge range of people and ideas, so we will only get a glimpse of each; further, each of these thinkers is complex and can be interpreted in many different ways. Our goal is to put together a coherent frame for an initial encounter with the history of western political thought. We will briefly situate each philosopher in his place and time, look at the public issues that he or she confronted, and articulate (one version of) the political analysis for which s/he has become famous. We will try to grasp the center of their vision, the concerns that most energized their thinking, the assumptions from which they worked, the values they advanced. We will ask about the implications of their thought for our world today.

We are also concerned with *how* these political arguments get made, with the rhetorical strategies that shape and limit arguments. Political theorists use language not only to describe, but also to *make* their world. Their metaphors and images call up certain meanings and displace others. We will be looking not just for what is said, but for what is not said, for silence as well as speech.

We will also use these thinkers to examine the whole idea of “the tradition” or “the canon” of western political thought. How come these guys get to be the important ones? Where are the women? The non-Europeans? The people from marginal classes and colors? How does this political narrative come to be, and how is it contested? How does it contribute to the problems we face in society today, and how might it help us to address those problems?

Star Trek will serve as a textual site for examining, evaluating and critiquing the ideas of these political theorists. We will look at some episodes that exemplify the ideas of a political thinker, and at other episodes that can be critiqued from the point of view of a particular thinker. *Star Trek* will serve as a narrative site where political stories are told, stories that often reflect and utilize the ideas of political philosophers. Political theory, ultimately, is everywhere; it is the way we put things together. It is embedded in the stories we tell, and in the stories that tell us.

Classroom etiquette:

- All cell phones must be OFF during class sessions. Do not check email, Facebook, etc. during class. Do not text during class. It is rude. The only function of your computer during our class is to allow you to take notes.
- Please come to class on time and stay for the entire class, unless you have an emergency.

Mandatory sessions on reading and writing political theory. We will spend two class sessions on the practices of reading and writing needed for this class and for political science classes (and most humanities and social science classes) more generally. The goals of this exercise are:

- To learn to be an active, engaged reader – we will articulate and practice reading skills that focus on identifying main points, marking them effectively, making useful marginal notes, and using what you read.
- To learn to be a clear and effective writer –we will articulate and practice key skills such as organizing your ideas, making an outline, producing a rough draft, revising, and editing.
- To clarify beyond any reasonable doubt what plagiarism is and how to avoid it.

While this is only a beginning, it is crucial that everyone attend these sessions. Please plan ahead to make sure that you arrive on time and stay for the whole class. Only serious illness (with doctor's account) or a major act of God count as excused absences. Any student not attending these classes must see me immediately to make up the material through a written assignment. If you miss these classes and do not complete the make-up assignment, you will lose 5 points from your final score.

Plagiarism. Plagiarism is taking another person's words or ideas without crediting them. *Anything* cut and pasted from a website without quotation marks and proper citation is plagiarism. Copying anything from a written source or another person without putting it in quotation marks and citing your source is plagiarism. Paraphrasing so closely that anyone can see the two texts are nearly the same is plagiarism. Plagiarism is cheating. There is no excuse for cheating. You will fail the course at the first instance of plagiarism or cheating of any kind on any assignment. No discussion, no negotiating.

This is a class about a powerful set of intellectual conversations over the last 2500 years. You are invited to join that conversation, to sort through the ideas, pick up those that appeal to you, and make them yours. Recognizing other voices in that conversation is basic intellectual honesty.

Plagiarism usually occurs when students feel overwhelmed--by school, finances, illness, relationship problems, an assignment they don't understand, etc. If anything like this happens to you, *let us know*. We will work something out that will be more beneficial to you than cheating.

Services to students with disabilities. If you are a student with any kind of disability (physical, mental, learning, etc.) and you have any concerns about access to the course or completing the work, I encourage you to contact the KOKUA program in the Student Services Center at 956-7511.

Grading policy. A = excellent work. B = good but not yet excellent work. C = adequate work. D = pretty bad but I can see you are trying. F = completely inadequate.

Access to computers: You will need to turn in written assignments (unless otherwise specified) electronically as Word documents on our Laulima page. If you have a computer or printer problem, computer labs are available on campus in Sinclair and Hamilton Libraries. Go to <http://www.hawaii.edu/itslab/index.htm> for locations and hours. Additionally, there are Social Science labs in Saunders Hall: check posted hours on lab doors on the third floor. Having your computer or printer malfunction is not an excuse for late work.

Required reading:

- Jene M. Porter, *Classics in Political Philosophy*, 3rd edition (2000).
- Other essays as posted in the Resources section of Laulima. Please print the essays and bring them to class on the days we discuss them.
- Occasional newspaper articles or blog posts that engage themes in political theory.

Assignments:

1. Everyone must attend and participate in class. (15 points) This includes:

- **Do the reading before coming to class, and be prepared to re-read the material.** The language is sometimes abstract and unfamiliar, and it requires careful and repeated readings.
- **Bring the assigned reading to class.** Be prepared to show evidence of “*active reading*” - underline passages that seem important; make notes to yourself in the margins as you read; pose questions about difficult passages.
- Attend class every day; arrive on time; stay until the end.
- Make comments and ask questions during class.
- Participate in small group discussions.
- Speak with us during office hours about the class.
- Raise questions and send comments to us on email.

3. Everyone is required to watch one *Star Trek* episode each week for the first 6 weeks (for serious intellectual reasons). To my great sadness, there is no series currently in production, but there are reruns. There have been 5 *Star Trek* series: The original *Star Trek* (Captain Kirk); *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (Captain Picard); *Star Trek: Voyager* (Captain Janeway); *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* (Captain Cisco); and *Enterprise* (Captain Archer.) The movies are not as useful for our class as the TV series. Wong AV in Sinclair Library has some of the TV episodes. All the series are on Netflix. It will be much easier to write your own *Star Trek* story after you see a few episodes. I suggest that you pick a series and watch a half-dozen episodes from that series so that you can get to know the characters.

4. Everyone is required to write at least 5 in-class responses. (2 points each for 10 total points) Time will be provided in class on some days for you to give your responses to the day’s reading assignment or other questions we pose. I will provide cards for this purpose. Please put your name and date on each response. You will have more than 5 opportunities to write these in-class responses, so don’t try to make up one that you missed. **Extra credit opportunity:** You can earn extra credit for writing more than the required 5 in-class responses. Each extra response is worth 2 points.

5. Everyone is required to write a two-part paper.

- Your papers must be typed, double-spaced, 12 point font, with proper grammar, spelling, sentence structure, and margins.
- Be sure your papers are Word documents. Title your document with your name and the assignment. Be sure to back up everything. Email your notes and papers to yourself so you have a record that is independent of your computer. Computer problems at the end of the semester will be less disastrous if you back up your work effectively.
- Number your pages. Please.
- Revise, edit, and proofread. Take pride in your work.
- Name each of your papers with your name and the proper number. So, for example, your first sketch will be Anna Smith-1. We will write comments and send it back as Anna Smith-1-Kathy or Anna Smith-1-Kahala. Your second sketch will be Anna Smith-2, and will come back as Anna Smith-2-Kathy or Anna Smith-2- Kahala. Your rough draft will be Anna Smith-draft; your final paper will be Anna Smith-final.
- Turn in your papers in your Drop Box on our Laulima site. No hard copy is required.

Part I: The first part is what they call in show biz a “treatment,” that is, the basic shape and structure for a *Star Trek* episode. (20 points) You must write your own original story; do not copy an episode you have seen. Reproducing an existing *Star Trek* episode and calling it your own is a form of plagiarism. It is ok to build on an existing episode, but you must add to the story, not just repeat what the *Star Trek* writers have already said.

You are not required to write the actual dialogue (although you are welcome to do so if you wish) but rather to tell a *Star Trek* story, with a coherent plot, a locus of action or conflict, a cast of characters, and a setting. Your story needs to feature an important political concept, such as power, authority, justice, equality, truth, democracy, freedom, etc. You need a story that allows for characters to engage in struggle or try to achieve a goal, so that you can have different characters approach the situation in different ways. Your episode can be anchored in any of the five series or combine characters from different series. Your story should be about 8-10 pages long. (It will be longer if you write dialogue because dialogue takes up more room on the page.) Quality is more important than quantity.

REPEAT: DO NOT SUMMARIZE AN EXISTING EPISODE AND CLAIM IT AS YOUR OWN. I’ve seen them all. Many times. Presenting an existing episode as though it were your own is a form of plagiarism. However, you may build on an existing episode, using the characters and setting to continue the story. It must be *your* story.

Part II: The second part of the paper will discuss your episode in light of the ideas of at least three of the political philosophers we are reading. (30 points) (You are welcome to include more if you wish; you must go into depth on 3 of the theorists we cover in class.) In this part of the paper you will show how the ideas of these thinkers are at work in your episode, how their concepts are active in your own story. Your analysis should be 8-10 pages long. Your paper should make use of quotations from our text (not from the internet or other versions of these texts) to support your interpretation, with proper footnoting, and discuss those quotations in your own words.

You can make use of your philosophers in creative ways. For example, you might have a character who takes a Marxist perspective on poverty, and you can use Marx to explain that character’s point of view. Or, you could have a character who takes an anti-Marxist perspective on poverty, and you can use Marx to show what is wrong with that character’s viewpoint from a Marxist perspective. You could use Foucault’s ideas about space to craft your setting, then draw from his essay to analyze the setting you created. You could take Plato’s and Aristotle’s ideas about justice as balance and apply them to an environmental disaster.

All the writing in this class relies on your reading of the original sources. **Do not** cite from any other source except for our class readings. Do not use Wikipedia, or any other websites, or any other sources at all, in your papers. I cannot stop you, obviously, from consulting these sources, but they should not appear in your papers. Your papers should only cite our class readings, discussions, or videos.

You may either write two separate papers, or you may integrate your political analysis into your story to create one long paper. If you write 2 separate papers (story and analysis), your analysis should be an integrated discussion of 3 (or more) philosophers with an introduction and a conclusion. If you combine the story and the analysis in one paper, be sure that you include direct discussion of relevant passages from the reading, where you explain the arguments in your own words. **The important point to remember is that this is a class about political theory; *Star Trek* is only our vehicle for studying political theory.**

Important dates for your papers:

- **Wed, March 16 by midnight: First sketch due (5 points).** Please write a **one page sketch** of your ideas to this point for your episode and analysis. You should identify the setting, the main characters, and the central theme of your story. You should also identify 3 political theorists who we have covered up to this point, and say briefly how their ideas are relevant to your story. About one half page should be devoted to your story, and about one half page to your analysis. This assignment is to get you started – you can change your mind as you encounter other writers.
- **Wed, April 6 by midnight: Second sketch due (5 points).** Please write a **five page expansion and revision** of your first sketch in light of the material we have covered since you wrote your first sketch. Again, identify your setting, main characters, and central theme. In addition, outline the plot of your story, including the main action, the climax, and the resolution. Identify the three political theorists you are using, selecting from those we have covered up to this point, and show how their ideas are relevant to your story. Again, about half of your paper should be devoted to your story and half to your analysis. Avoid vagueness – say something specific and meaningful about how you will use the philosophers' ideas. Select relevant quotations and discuss them in your own words. Be sure to respond to and remove the comments we wrote on your first sketch when you turn in your second sketch.
- **Wed, April 27 by midnight: Your rough draft of both papers (the treatment and the analysis) is due (10 points).** The main sections of the paper – the basic story and the main ideas of at least 3 philosophers – should be included in the rough draft. We will make suggestions and return the papers as soon as possible. We will suggest revisions you need to make to improve your work and your grade. Be sure to respond to and remove our earlier comments before turning in your paper.
- **Wed, May 11, by midnight: Final papers are due.**
 - Story is worth 20 points
 - Analysis is worth 30 points
 - 50 points total

8. Drawing of master/slave relation (5 points): Create a visual representation of Hegel's master/slave relationship. You can draw stick figures, or create something more elaborate. You can make a collage, a comic book, a diorama, an oil painting, whatever; you can use any kind of paper, pens, pencils, markers; you can sculpt or paint or make a movie. The point is to show that you understand the dynamic process of this relationship.

Along with your visual representation, please provide a one-half page explanation of your art. Since these are pieces of paper or material rather than electronic documents, you need to physically hand them to us in class or else bring them to the Political Science office (Saunders 640) and put them in my mailbox before the office closes at 4:30. **Due Wed, April 20.**

9. Optional extra credit assignment (5 points): You can write a 2 page paper about a *Star Trek* episode (other than those shown in class) that illustrates the ideas of any of the political philosophers we are reading. Provide a brief summary of the episode and identify one or more important political themes (about one page); explain how the episode relates to at least one of the thinkers we read (about one page). This assignment can earn a maximum of 5 points if it makes accurate use of a philosopher's ideas, draws relevant quotations from the text, and discusses them in your own words. Put the paper in the Laulima drop box and label it clearly as an extra credit assignment. **Due Wed, May 11 by midnight.**

Summary of assignments, due dates, and grading:

Attendance & Participation	First sketch	Second sketch	Rough draft	Final paper	In-class writing	Master/Slave drawing	Optional extra credit
15%	5%	5%	10%	50%	10%	5%	5%
Every class	Mar 16 mid-night	April 6 mid-night	April 27 mid-night	May 11 midnight	As assigned	April 20– due in class or by 4:30 pm in Saunders 640	May 11 mid-night

NOTES ON PAPERS:

- **Late papers** for the first two sketches, the rough draft, and the master/slave drawing will be accepted for one week after the due date for **half credit**. It is better to turn in a late paper than to blow off the assignment entirely.
- **No late final papers** or extra credit assignments will be accepted without prior arrangement.
- ****Be sure to deposit your papers in your Laulima drop box as Word documents.****
- If you have trouble with writing, it is a very good idea to sign up for assistance at the English Department writing center located in Sinclair Library. The center’s available appointments may fill up quickly, so plan ahead.

Mon, 1/11: I. Introduction – thinking about political theory

- Going over the syllabus – class requirements and expectations
- What is the western canon of political theory? Who is in and who is out? What stories does it tell?
- Why *Star Trek*? How does science fiction enable us to ask questions about these topics: human/machine boundaries; gender/identity boundaries; science fiction as a boundary-crossing genre; finding the familiar within the strange, and vice-versa.

Wed 1/13: II. Hannah Arendt: Narrative and the politics of storytelling

- Reading: Lisa Disch, ch 1 of *Hannah Arendt and the Limits of Philosophy* (on Laulima)

Fri 1/15: Arendt (con)

- Reading: Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (on Laulima)
- Reading: Hannah Arendt, *Eichman in Jerusalem* (on Laulima)

Mon 1/18: no class (Martin Luther King Day)

Wed 1/20 and Fri 1/22:

- Film (in class): “Hannah Arendt” written and directed by Margarethe von Trotta (113 min)

Mon 1/25 – finish Arendt

III. Machiavelli: Longing for the past, anticipating the future

Wed 1/27: *The Prince*

- Reading: pp. 225-246

Fri 1/29 and Mon 2/1: *The Prince*

- Reading: pp. 247-263

Wed 2/3: Video in class: *Star Trek: The Next Generation*: “The High Ground”

Fri 2/5: finish Machiavelli

IV. Michel Foucault: Imagining places

Mon 2/8: heterotopia

- Reading: Foucault, “In Other Spaces,” (on Laulima)

Videos in class:

- Victoria Jones, “Foucault’s Heterotopia and the Festival Tent – Greenman Festival 2010”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0EmKK9KdB-w&list=PLoBqcrfpmPly2mATeG2ABMUE6g1wdkpz5&index=5> (5’17”)

- Mike Grasso, “Heterotopia: Teaser”

<http://snowboarding.transworld.net/videos/heterotopia-teaser/>

Wed 2/10: Foucault (con)

- Reading: Foucault, “In Other Spaces” (again)
- Lionel Claris, “Foucault – the Lost Interview”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qzoOhhh4aJg>

Fri 2/12: finish Foucault

Mon 2/15: no class (Presidents Day)

V. Mandatory meetings on reading and writing political theory

Wed 2/17: How to read a political text

- Reading: handout

Fri 2/19: How to write a political text

- Reading: handout

VI. Classical beginnings: Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle

Mon 2/22: Socrates

- Reading: *The Apology* (on Laulima)

Wed 2/24: Plato, *The Republic*, Books 1-5

- Reading: pp. 2-62

Fri 2/26 and Mon 2/29: Plato, *The Republic*, Books 6-10

- Reading: pp. 63-100

Wed 3/2: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*

- Reading: 102-119

Fri 3/4: Aristotle, *The Politics*, Books 1-3

- Reading: pp. 120-143

Mon 3/7: Aristotle, *The Politics*, Books 4, 5, & 7

- Reading: pp. 144-173

Wed 3/9: Socrates, Plato and Aristotle

- Video in class: *Star Trek Voyager*: “Deathwish”

Fri 3/11: finish the Greeks

VII. Modernity, Secularism and the Rise of Liberalism

Mon 3/14: Hobbes, *The Leviathan*, first part

- Reading, pp. 265-299

Wed 3/16: Hobbes, *The Leviathan*, second part

- Reading: pp. 299-328

Fri 3/18: finish Hobbes

Mon 3/21 – Fri 3/25: spring break

Mon 3/28: Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*

- Reading: 299-328

Wed 3/30: Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*

- Reading: pp. 329-352

Fri 4/1: finish Locke

Mon 4/4 and Wed 4/6: Mill, *On Liberty*

- Reading: 503-529

Fri 4/8: Humanity, individuality and property

- Video in class: *Star Trek: The Next Generation*: “The Measure of a Man”

Mon 4/11: finish liberals

VIII. The Dialectic of History and Class Struggle

Wed 4/13 and Fri 4/15: Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*

- Reading: Master/slave guide (on Laulima)

Mon 4/18: Marx

- Reading: *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*, pp. 568-586

Wed 4/20: Marx

- Reading: *Engel's Speech at the Graveside of Karl Marx*, p. 546.
- Reading: *Critique of Political Economy*, p. 587
- Reading: *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, pp. 547-557

Fri 4/22: Marx

- Reading: *The German Ideology*, pp. 558-567
- Reading: *Capital*, pp. 589-596

Mon 4/25: Video in class: *Star Trek (original series): "The Cloud Minders"*

Wed 4/27: finish Marx

IX. The Death of God and the Challenge to Foundations

Fri 4/29: Nietzsche,

- Reading: *Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense*, pp. 599-610
- Reading: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, pp. 620-631.
- Reading: *The Genealogy of Morals*, pp. 632-647

Mon 5/2: Nietzsche

- Video in class: *Star Trek: The Next Generation: "Darmok"*

Wed 5/4: finish Nietzsche and wrap up course

Live Long and Prosper