

University of Arkansas – Fort Smith 5210 Grand Avenue
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General Syllabus

POLS 3403 Political Philosophy

Credit Hours: 3

Lecture Hours: 3

Laboratory: 0

Prerequisite: ENGL 1213 Composition II, ENGL 1233 Honors Composition, or PHIL 2753 Introduction to Philosophy

Effective Catalog: 2019-2020

I. Course Information

A. Catalog Description

Study of the nature of political institutions and their philosophical and theoretical foundations from ancient times to the present.

B. Additional Information

This course will serve as one of the upper level choices for the Minor in Philosophy and for the Minor in Political Science.

II. Student Learning Outcomes

A. Subject Matter

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Explain the unique contribution which philosophy can make to the study of the political theory.
2. Identify the major philosophical issues related to the nature of political institutions.
3. Describe the major philosophical positions that have been put forward in response to these issues.
4. Analyze common arguments used to justify positions in political philosophy.
5. Evaluate common arguments that have been introduced to justify positions in political philosophy.
6. Place political theories within their historical context.

B. University Learning Outcomes

This course enhances student abilities in the following areas:

Analytical Skills

Critical Thinking

Students will analyze major issues/features related to political philosophy principles and to theoretical arguments.

Quantitative Reasoning Skills

Students will apply appropriate statistical models to understand various solutions to issues in political philosophy. Students will represent statistical information symbolically, visually, numerically and verbally and will interpret models and data in order to draw inferences on the impact of various philosophical applications of political solutions. Students will recognize the limitations of quantitative analysis.

Ethical Decision Making

Students will identify ethical dilemmas that political leaders often face in pondering the philosophical solutions to various societal problems. Students will apply ethical frameworks to resolve a variety of ethical dilemmas in political philosophy.

Communication Skills (written and oral)

Students will proficiently articulate and defend abstract ideas, by composing coherent documents appropriate to get their points across to the class and to the instructor. Students will effectively communicate orally in a public setting.

Global and Cultural Perspectives

Students will demonstrate understanding and application of U.S. political solutions in a global environment. Students will demonstrate how the U.S. political culture/philosophy impacts or is impacted by different political cultures.

III. Major Course Topics

- A. The nature of political philosophy
- B. The essential characteristics of political institutions
- C. The different positions on political institutions such as anarchism, liberalism (including classical liberalism, libertarianism, and welfare liberalism), communitarianism, and socialism
- D. The question of the ideal or best form of government
- E. The history of political theory in its ancient, medieval and modern periods
- F. Constitutional political theory