



Lakehead University
*Contemporary Political Thought (2019):
Democracy, Tyranny, and Reason
POLI-4513-FA
T/Th 11:30-1:00 – Regional Centre 1003*

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is a seminar. The primary aim of the course is not to cover specific information or to provide students with pre-arranged sets of learned material. Rather, this course is meant to facilitate, develop and enhance students' ability to: (a) freely partake in the art of thoughtful and reasoned discussion about the most important human questions; (b) produce reasoned and well organized writings about the most important human questions; (c) read and consider important and complex texts with care and insight, attempting to understand them as they were understood by the authors themselves. To achieve these aims, this course focuses on a number of theories and debates at the centre of contemporary political thought, including the relationships between freedom, tyranny, democracy, liberalism, history, and political philosophy. We explore these themes with the aim of reaching a fuller understanding of the strengths, limits, and problems of contemporary political life and of political philosophy.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Required Texts:

1. Xenophon, Strauss, and Kojeve, *On Tyranny*
2. Frances Ford Coppola, *Mario Puzo's The Godfather, Parts I, II, and III*
(available on several streaming services)
3. All other readings will be posted on the course website

Grading:

Reading Quizzes: 1.5% X 10 = 15%

Student Writing Portfolio (including in-class work): 20%

Seminar Facilitation: 5%

Seminar Participation: 20%

Paper: 20%

Final Exam: 20%

Assignment and Grading Details:*Reading Quizzes*

There will be 13 in-class quizzes, which will not be announced in advance. Each quiz will be based on the assigned readings for the day and are especially designed to develop and measure: (a) students' preparation for class time; (b) students' ability to comprehend reading material independent from the instructor's guidance.

Therefore, quizzes cannot be made up. However, to allow some leeway for unavoidable (including excused) absence or tardiness, the three lowest quiz scores will be dropped, with students' top 10 scores counting toward their final grade.

Student Writing Portfolio

Worksheets and assignments will make up each student's Writing Portfolio. These tasks will be assigned during class time (at least one per class), and will be completed individually and in groups, both during class time and outside of class time. All tasks given must be submitted by students to their Portfolios by the deadline given by the instructor. The deadlines will be no later than the beginning of the subsequent class, and sometimes earlier.

Each file submitted to the Portfolio (under assignments on the course webpage) should be named in accordance with the following template: WPLastName-DateAssignment was given by the instructor (e.g. WPCainSept17).

The Portfolio will be graded as a whole at the end of the semester on the basis of (in no particular order): (a) depth and accuracy of analysis; (b) thoughtfulness and cogency of analysis; (c) writing quality; (d) the degree to which the writing addresses and answers the tasks assigned; (e) the percentage of tasks completed. To not lose marks for (e), students should hand in at least 20 separate worksheets/assignments. The instructor will provide a progress report on work is submitted approximately half way through the semester (this report will not take into account (e)).

Seminar Facilitation

Students will sign up for 1 class time for which they will be Seminar Facilitators. In this role, they will take responsibility to help organize and facilitate the class time, in accordance with the instructor's guidance. Tasks will vary as per the needs of the particular class day, but will include taking attendance, facilitating of the discussion of Student Writing Portfolio assignments, and the organizing of discussion questions for the class. The Seminar Facilitator should come to class with 2-3 prepared discussion questions (based on the assigned readings).

Term Paper

Prompts and details to be provided. All papers should use notes in accordance with the latest edition of the *Chicago Manual of Style*. A useful guide can be found at: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

Participation

All students are expected to:

1. Read assigned material carefully
2. Be prepared to discuss the readings
3. Bring the hard copies of the readings to class
4. Discuss the readings with fellow students during class time
5. Follow the course's electronic device policy
6. Avoid: (a) excessive absences and tardies; (b) private conversations; (c) being inattentive and/or appearing inattentive.

Class Readings: The readings from this course involve complicated ideas and difficult arguments. Moreover, the presentation of these ideas and arguments sometimes take forms that may not be familiar to students. Students should therefore read the assigned readings carefully, slowly, and at least several times in order to grasp their content. The importance of this task is reflected in the weight of the grade given to quizzes/reading assignments, class participation, the term paper, and the exam, all of which will ask you to focus on class texts.

Other Policies:

Electronic Devices

Cell phones and laptops should not be used. If a cell phone is visible, the instructor will assume that it is being used. Anyone regularly violating this policy should expect to see their participation grade significantly diminished.

No audio or video recording of the class is allowed without the permission of the instructor. Any permitted recording is strictly for private use and cannot be shared with others without the written permission of the instructor.

Communication

The instructor will regularly communicate with students about a variety of matters, both through in-class announcements and via email (using students' Lakehead email account). Students are encouraged to contact the instructor with any questions that arise during the course of the semester

Academic Honesty

Academic honesty is expected of all Lakehead University students. Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students are expected to make themselves fully familiar with Lakehead's policies in this area. Although all these policies will be enforced in full, it is worth emphasizing the following:

Plagiarism involves presenting another's work, ideas, theories, or interpretation as one's own.

To avoid plagiarism, writers should always:

1. Put quotation marks around any words from sources
2. Paraphrase material completely; changing or rearranging a few words or the tense of a verb is not paraphrasing.
3. Give accurate and complete citations for all material *including paraphrased material*.
4. Avoid borrowing entire arguments or approaches to a subject from another writer. Make it 'original' while staying faithful to the assignment parameters.

Accessibility and Accommodation

Students requiring accommodations should contact Student Accessibility Services.

<https://www.lakeheadu.ca/faculty-and-staff/departments/services/sas>.

READING SCHEDULE

Readings schedule will be adjusted throughout the year in response to the fruitfulness of class discussion. We will take as much time as needed for Parts 1 and 2, sacrificing readings in Part 3 if doing so is beneficial to this purpose.

9/3 Course Outline

Part 1

9/5 Strauss, *Three Waves of Modernity*

9/10 Strauss, *Three Waves of Modernity*
Zuckert, *Three Paths of Modernity*
Grant, *YouTube Video*

9/12 Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*
Manent, Interview on Aron and Strauss

9/17 Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*
Schaub, *On the Anniversary of Tocqueville's Death*

9/19 Tocqueville, Tyranny of the Majority (*Democracy in America*)

9/24 Tocqueville, Individualism (*Democracy in America*)

9/26 Tocqueville, Despotism (*Democracy in America*)

Part 2

10/1 Xenophon, Strauss, and Kojeve, *On Tyranny*,

10/3 Xenophon, Strauss, and Kojeve, *On Tyranny*

10/8 Xenophon, Strauss, and Kojeve, *On Tyranny*

10/10 Xenophon, Strauss, and Kojeve, *On Tyranny*

10/15 STUDY WEEK

10/17 STUDY WEEK

10/22 Xenophon, Strauss, and Kojeve, *On Tyranny*

10/24 Xenophon, Strauss, and Kojeve, *On Tyranny*

10/29 Xenophon, Strauss, and Kojeve, *On Tyranny*

10/31 *Godfather Part 1*

11/5 *Godfather Part 2*

Part 3

11/7 Manent, *City, Empire, Church, Nation*

11/12 Ratzinger, *Truth and Freedom*

11/14 TBA

TERM PAPER DUE

11/19 Koestler, *Darkness at Noon* (excerpt)

11/22 *The Godfather Part 3*

1/26 TBA

11/28 Course Conclusion

FINAL EXAM