



Lakehead University
POLI 4911 FDE (2020):
Tyranny and Democracy
Monday Zoom Meetings 1-2:30 (required)
Wednesday Zoom Meetings 1:00 (optional)

Instructor: Dr. Patrick Cain (Political Science)

Contact Information and Office Hours: Most course related questions are best asked before or after or during class meeting time. If academic advising is required, please stay on after our class Zoom meetings to arrange a time to speak (or we can just do it then in a Zoom breakout room). If these options are not possible, you may contact me via email at pncain@lakeheadu.ca. I often respond quickly, but if you do not receive a reply in 2-3 business days, please do not hesitate to follow up with an additional email.

COURSE DESCRIPTION and OBJECTIVES

This course is a seminar run over Zoom. Its primary aim is not to cover specific information or to provide students with pre-arranged sets of learned material. Rather, this course is meant to 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, and reflecting on how they might illuminate and guide our own lives.

To achieve these aims, this course focuses on important theories and debates in political philosophy, exploring the defining characteristics of democracy, and its relationship to other forms of government, especially tyranny and oligarchy. Of special concern is the claims made about virtue, equality, and political rule by these different regimes. Tyrannies and oligarchies claim that their superiority in virtue or talents gives them a natural and just right to rule over others, and tend to provide no limit to the degree to which they can exercise power over their subjects. Democracies, on the other hand, argue that human equality is the relevant fact that should determine membership in political communities, but have a harder time explaining how equality allows for the distinctions that make political rule either possible or just. To explore these issues, this course focuses on Aristotle's *Politics*, Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, and *The Godfather* film trilogy.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Required Texts:

1. Films required for purchase or streaming: *The Godfather Parts I, II, and III*. Also available for free through Lakehead library's Criterion Collection (databases).
2. All other required readings and videos will be posted on the course website

Grading:

Writing Portfolio Assignments: 40%

Discussion Facilitation: 10%

Seminar Participation: 20%

Final Take-Home Exam: 30%

Assignment and Grading Details:

Writing Portfolio Assignments (WPAs) (40%)

There will be two types of Writing Portfolio Assignments (WPAs): In-class WPAs and Post-class WPAs. Each assignment will have its own specific and idiosyncratic requirements, but will generally will ask you to reflect on questions raised by the assigned reading and/or by class discussion in about 2-3 pages in length.

In-class WPAs will be assigned and completed during class time and must be uploaded to students' Online Portfolios by midnight on the day they are given.

Post-class WPAs will assigned during meeting times but are to be completed after class times. WPAs given on Monday will be due Tuesday by midnight. WPAs assigned Wednesday are due Thursday at midnight. They will be also be posted that same day in that Week's Module on the course website. All tasks given must be submitted by students to their Online Portfolios by the deadline. Any late WPAs will receive a penalty of 10% for each day late.

There will be at least 5 In-class WPAs assigned and at least 15 Post-class WPAs assigned. Students are expected to hand in **17 assignments in total** (using whatever mix of In-Class and Post-class WPAs they like).

Each file submitted to the Online Portfolios (under assignments on the course webpage) should be consistently named as follows: LastNameWPA# (CainWPA1, CainWPA3, etc.).

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 17 WPAs. The instructor will provide a progress report on submitted work before the semester's course drop date; this report will not take into account (e).

Discussion Facilitation (10%)

Students will sign up for one week for which they will email the instructor two discussion questions in a Word Document by midnight on the Sunday night before that week's Monday meeting. These questions should be designed in line with the Course Description and Objectives (found on page 1, above). Students should also come to Monday's class prepared to introduce their questions, and to help in whatever way is useful to the instructor. They should also put extra time into that week's readings, doing their best to arrive in class as an "expert" on those readings, and therefore be prepared to answer detailed questions about the text that may be posed by classmates and/or the instructor.

Participation (20%)

For class meetings 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. Stay focused on the class discussion (ignoring other apps, texts, etc.)
6. Avoid: (a) excessive absences and tardies; (b) private conversations; (c) being inattentive and/or appearing inattentive.

In addition to demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the assigned readings, to achieve a high participation mark, students should participate with regularity, integrating the readings into the discussion in a way that responds to the contribution of others and moves forward our consideration of the topic and the issues at hand.

Wednesday classes are optional (no marks for participation from these), but students should attend them as much as possible, viewing them as extra study sessions that are available. They will hopefully enrich your experience in this course.

Zoom Participation Guidelines

Students must follow the class guidelines of the instructor as we proceed, including turning on your video function during meetings and following guidelines regarding the use of the chat, annotation, breakout rooms, and other Zoom functions. Zoom is a new teaching and learning platform for many of us, so the instructor will be experimenting and making adjustments along the way.

Class Readings: The readings and videos 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/watch 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 seminar facilitation, portfolio assignments, class participation, and the exam, all of which will ask you to focus on class texts.

Other Policies:*Recording of Classes is Prohibited*

In order to protect the security and freedom of all members of the class, and the intellectual property of the instructor, no audio or video recording of the class is allowed without the written permission of the instructor, which likely will not be given. If recording is permitted, it will be 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).

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 with accessibility issues or requiring accommodations of should contact Student Accessibility Services as soon as possible.

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

READING SCHEDULE

Wednesday classes are optional (no marks for participation), but students are encouraged to attend them as much as possible, and should view them as open course office hours that provide chances for extra study and support. They will hopefully enrich your experience in this course. Please complete the scheduled readings in advance of any Wednesday meetings you attend.

Also, please note that readings and videos listed as due for Monday and Wednesday classes are ALL required. I have split them up between Monday and Wednesday in order to allow you a sense of how to properly pace your work, and of the material that will likely be needed to complete the regularly assigned Writing Portfolio Assignments.

Finally, please note that the Reading Schedule will be adjusted throughout the year in response to the fruitfulness of class discussion, and how quickly we are proceeding through the material. Some readings may be added in response to class discussion.

9/14 Aristotle, *Politics Book I*, Ch. 1

9/16 Aristotle, *Politics Book I*, Ch. 2

9/21 Aristotle, *Politics Book I*, Ch. 1-7, 12-13
Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave (1845)*, Ch. 1-6
https://www.ibiblio.org/ebooks/Douglass/Narrative/Douglass_Narrative.pdf
Discussion Facilitation 1

9/23 Aristotle, *Politics Book I*, Ch. 1-7, 12-13
Schaub, *On the Life and Political Thought of Frederick Douglass*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xb13WCc4AHI>
Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, Ch. 7-10

9/28 Aristotle, *Politics Book III* (pp. 207-210)¹
Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, Ch. 11 and Appendix
Discussion Facilitation 2

9/30 Aristotle, *Politics Book III* (208-210)
Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*
Douglass, *Lincoln's Funeral Oration (1872)*
<https://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/oration-in-memory-of-abraham-lincoln/>

¹ Page #s from reserve material.

- 10/5 Douglass, *Lincoln's Funeral Oration* (1872)
Aristotle, *Politics Book III* (208-215)
Discussion Facilitation 3
- 10/7 Douglass, *Lincoln's Funeral Oration* (1872)
Aristotle, *Politics Book III* (210-215)
- 10/12 STUDY WEEK
- 10/14 STUDY WEEK
- 10/19 Aristotle, *Politics Book III* (216-220)
Discussion Facilitation 4
- 10/21 Aristotle *Politics Book III* (218-220)
- 10/26 Aristotle *Politics Book III* (220-226)
Discussion Facilitation 5
- 10/28 Aristotle *Politics Book III* (225-226)
- 11/2 Aristotle *Politics Book III* (227-231)
Discussion Facilitation 6
- 11/4 Aristotle *Politics Book III* (229-231)
- 11/9 Aristotle *Politics Book III* (229-233)
Discussion Facilitation 7
- 11/11 Aristotle *Politics Book III* (231-233)
- 11/16 Aristotle *Politics Book III* (233-234)
Discussion Facilitation 8
- 11/18 *Godfather* Part I
- 11/23 *Godfather* Part I
Discussion Facilitation 9
- 11/25 *Godfather* Part I
Godfather Part II
- 11/30 *Godfather* Part II
Discussion Facilitation 10
- 12/2 *Godfather* Part II
- 12/7 *Godfather* Part III