



Lakehead University  
*POLI 3515 Political Thought and Contemporary Issues (2011F)*  
WF 10-11:30 – Braun Building 1054

Instructor: Dr. Patrick Cain (Political Science)  
Office: Ryan Building 2033  
Phone: 343-8304  
Email: [pncaain@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:pncaain@lakeheadu.ca)  
Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday 10-1:00 pm (or by appointment)

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course examines the relationship between contemporary political ideas and current political concerns with the aim of stimulating dialogue and debate about the political problems of the modern world. This section of the course will focus on the idea of human progress, with a particular emphasis on how the attempt to achieve progress in history influences both our understanding of rights, community, education, and history, and our practice of poetry, theology, philosophy and politics. In examining these issues, particular attention will be paid to the work of Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Leo Strauss, Benedict XVI, and Mark Twain. Students are expected to engage these thinkers with care, in the attempt to bring their thoughts and arguments into dialogue with contemporary political issues.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

#### **Required Texts:**

*Note: Please purchase the editions listed*

1. Heidegger, Martin, *Basic Writings* (Harper)
2. Nietzsche, Friedrich, *On the Advantages and Disadvantages of History for Life* (Hackett)
3. Twain, Mark, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Norton Critical Edition, 1999)
4. Other readings will be made available to the class by the instructor.

#### **Grading:**

Discussion questions (with justification): 5%  
2 Papers: 50% (25% each)  
Final exam: 25%  
Participation: 20%

**Assignments:** Paper topics to be distributed. Unless otherwise stated, assignments are due in class on the date scheduled. Late assignments will see a grade deduction of 2% per day. Extensions may be requested in advance of the due date, but not afterwards.

**Discussion Questions (with justification):** Students will prepare three discussion questions related to one class day of readings (sign-up sheet to be distributed). In addition to the questions, students will provide a one-page justification of their questions. Both the questions and the justification of the questions are to be emailed to the instructor at least 24 hours before the day on which the readings are scheduled (see Class Schedule below). This assignment is meant to both cultivate careful readings of the assigned text, and to further student's understandings of what elements are essential to the cultivation of fruitful group discussion. The submitted questions may or may not be used by the instructor during class time.

**Electronic Devices:** Cell phones should be left at the front of the class, or should not be visible to the instructor (e.g. placed in a bag or purse). If a cell phone is visible, the instructor will assume that it is being used. Placing your cell-phone on your lap and glancing down to read texts, emails, etc., fools no one. Laptop use is discouraged but allowed.

**Class Participation:** All students are expected to:

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

*Note 1: Consistently meeting these expectations will earn students a mark in the "B" range (70-79%).*

*Note 2: To earn a mark in the "A" range (80-100%), consistently fulfill the 5 requirements AND regularly participate in class discussion in a thoughtful way.*

*Note 3: Failure to follow even one of the 5 expectations may result in an extremely low grade (for instance, multiple violations of the course's electronic device policy will result in a mark as low as 1/20 for participation). **Participation grades are not free marks!***

**Academic Honesty:** Academic honesty is expected of all Lakehead University students. It should go without saying that cheating, collusion, and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students are expected to make themselves fully familiar with Lakehead's policy. 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 (with the help of a thesaurus) 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.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

Note: Readings and schedule will be adjusted as necessary at the instructor's discretion.

Week 1	09/14	Course outline and introduction
	09/16	Locke, <i>2<sup>nd</sup> Treatise of Government</i> (excerpt) Jefferson, <i>Declaration of Independence</i> (excerpt) Nietzsche, <i>Thus Spake Zarathustra</i> (excerpt) Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> Book 1, Chapters 1, 2, 5
Week 2	09/21	Nietzsche, <i>The Advantages and Disadvantages of History for Life</i>
	09/23	Nietzsche, <i>The Advantages and Disadvantages of History for Life</i>
Week 3	09/28	Nietzsche, <i>The Advantages and Disadvantages of History for life</i>
	09/30	Nietzsche, <i>Genealogy of Morals</i> , Book I
Week 4	10/5	Heidegger, "Thinking About Technology," <i>Basic Writings</i>
	10/7	<b>TBA</b>
Week 5	10/12	Strauss, "Introduction," <i>Natural Right and History</i>
	10/14	Strauss, "Natural Rights and the Historical Approach," <i>Natural Right and History</i>
Week 6	10/19	<b>TBA</b>
	10/21	Strauss, <i>Progress or Return</i>
Week 7	10/26	<i>Genesis</i> , Ch. 1-3
	10/28	<b>TBA</b> <b>Paper 1 Due</b>

Week 8	11/2	Benedict XVI, <i>Introduction to Christianity</i> (excerpt)
	11/4	Benedict XVI, <i>Spe Salvi</i> , sec 1-32, 38-39, 42-44 <a href="http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20071130_spe-salvi_en.html">http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20071130_spe-salvi_en.html</a>
Week 9	11/09	Benedict XVI, <i>Truth and Freedom</i>
	11/11	Benedict XVI, <i>The Regensburg Address</i> <a href="http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060912_university-regensburg_en.html">http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060912_university-regensburg_en.html</a> Intervention of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, April, 2003. Linked to at: <a href="http://popebenedictxvi.blogspot.com/">http://popebenedictxvi.blogspot.com/</a>
Week 10	11/16	<b>TBA</b>
	11/18	Twain, <i>The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i> <b>Paper 2 Due</b>
Week 11	11/23	Twain, <i>The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i>
	11/25	Twain, <i>The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i>
Week 12	11/30	Twain, <i>The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i>
	12/02	Twain, <i>The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i>