POIR 600: Graduate Seminar in Political Theory  
Spring 2019

Professor Ange-Marie Hancock Alfaro  
Tuesday 2:00 – 4:50 pm, VKC 256
Office Hours (sign-up sheet posted weekly in THH 422): Tuesday 11:00 am – 1:30 pm (last appointment is at 1; ends by 1:30)

Email (do not call): ahancock@usc.edu; Please note I read and answer all emails between the hours of 6 am and 5 pm M-F, with limited reading/replying on Saturday and none on Sundays.

Course Description:
This course is intended as an introduction to political philosophy as seen through an examination of some of the major texts and thinkers of the Western political tradition. As important as learning the content of such work is to graduate education, this course also serves as an intensive training in interpretation – focusing on close textual readings, developing arguments and engaging with dueling interpretations and approaches.

Many if not most political science graduate programs break political theory into a minimum of a three-course sequence: Ancient (roughly up to Machiavelli); Modern (Machiavelli through Marx); and Contemporary (everything after Marx). This chronological break down is increasingly untenable due to the length of time since Marx in particular. That said, because this is likely the only political theory class you will take during your graduate career, unfortunately much has to be left OFF the syllabus. You will have plenty of opportunity to supplement your theory education through the snowball paper assignment that is at the heart of this course.

Texts:
Texts can be ordered from any online source. They must be the specific edition listed in the syllabus (e.g. the most recent Cambridge edition of Plato’s Republic, not the Oxford, Penguin or another edition). Time is of the essence – you will want to place your entire book order at once, rather than order throughout the semester. Part of the first week’s readings are on Blackboard as PDFs; the remaining weekly assignments are entire books, except where noted in the syllabus. While we preserve the environment by ordering books online, we do not retain as much of the information and impoverish the class discussion by being unable to quickly follow the text. I encourage you to buy the actual paper books so you can use them well in class (and if necessary, sell them back at the end of the semester or loan them to the next cohort as your environmental contribution).

Required Books (in alphabetical order):
Barvosa, Edwina. Wealth of Selves: Multiple Identities, Mestiza Consciousness and the Subject of Politics. TAMU Press ISBN# 1603440690
Fanon, Franz. The Wretched of the Earth Grove Press ISBN# 0802141323
Hobbes The Leviathan Cambridge UP ISBN# 0521567971
Class Learning Objectives and Grade Rubric:

There are three learning objectives for this class:

1. Thorough familiarity with “classic” readings in political philosophy;
2. Broad understanding of the philosophical foundations of political science;
3. Strong faculty for analysis and writing about fundamental questions in political science.

Grade Rubric:

Class Participation: 20% (includes Blackboard question submission; mini-conference & class discussion)
Snowball Paper: 60% (10%-15%-15%-20%)
Class Leadership: 20%

Assignments:

Class Participation (20% of final grade): This course will be run by discussion, so you need to do the reading carefully before class, and prepare 2 written questions or points of discussion every week to be uploaded to Blackboard by 11:59 PM on the Friday prior to class. I expect all students to participate intelligently and respectfully in every class; failure to attend class more than twice will negatively affect your participation grade. This grade also includes the mini-conference presentation held during the final exam period.

Class Leadership (20% of final grade): Each student will take responsibility for leading one class discussion, which will consist of organizing the contributions from the listserv in a manner consistent with the way class will be led, adding additional insight from interlocutors/scholars who are experts on the work (including but well beyond springboard chapters explained below), and moderating class discussion. Teams are welcome and expected for this assignment.

- Springboard chapters from Wolin and/or Taylor are suggested for class leaders so that they can properly place the assigned author in proper context for the class; presentations should go beyond these chapters.
- Every presentation must include a list of 3-4 scholars considered contemporary experts on the work or in the field; handouts and/or PowerPoint slides are welcome in this assignment.

Snowball Paper (50% of final grade): Your paper will aim at digesting the reading, putting the readings into conversation with each other and continually rethinking and rewriting your ideas as you encounter new materials. This is a DIFFERENT ASSIGNMENT from other graduate seminars – you do not START with a literature review, you will start with your topic of interest and your understanding of the primary source
materials we read in the class. Outside literature is added in the last two versions of the paper only, and will consist of political theory resources ONLY. Both resources that agree with your arguments and those that present alternate or conflicting interpretations of the same texts will ultimately end up in the paper.

Topics: Early in the semester you need to pick a general theme for your paper, a broad topic or question that will frame your writing for the semester. You will no doubt revise or refine your topic as you proceed through the reading and writing assignments, and you may even completely change your topic (unlikely and undesirable), but you need an initial direction for your thoughts. Some examples might be: the relationship between justice and equality; the role of the state in guaranteeing equality or order; international law and cosmopolitanism; normative standards of citizenship; the evolution of the social contract; the role of political leadership; the significance of critique in ensuring implementation of normative ideals; feminism and democracy, etc. Your topic should be sufficiently broad that you can make some link with or find some point of entry into many of the assigned readings. You will narrow and refine your topic as your develop your paper and plumb your sources.

Process: You will begin with a 2-4-page paper on your topic as it relates to one class reading within the first few weeks (as defined below) – not a book report, but an analysis and discussion of your topic as it is treated in that book. Then you will re-write your first paper into a 6-8 page paper incorporating a book from the second month of readings; the third paper will produce a 12-15 page page paper incorporating a third book in the class; the final re-write will produce a 20-25 page page paper incorporating outside secondary sources (interpretations of the original three works, not usually additional primary sources). The final re-write is also your most polished final submission. By the end, you should have not 4 separate papers pasted together, but an integrated 20-25-page interrogation of your topic with a convincing argument drawing upon a variety of the course readings and secondary sources.

Length: Paper lengths grow over time (see below). You must use standard font, standard margins, double-spacing. Take pride in your work: edit and proofread before submitting. Quality is more important than quantity; papers will be penalized only for being substantially shorter or longer than the page requirement (~1 page in either direction).

Submission: Please hand in paper (hard copy) versions and submit electronically via Blackboard so you can track your grades on the site. On each submission date you will hand in both your new paper AS WELL AS PREVIOUS GRADED PAPERS (e.g. for Paper 2 you will submit BOTH paper 2 AND the previously graded Paper 1; for Paper 3 you will submit BOTH paper #3 AND the previously graded papers 1 & 2, etc. All graded papers will be returned to you each time for your ease of understanding any necessary improvements to be made.

Feedback will include (in addition to substantive interpretive concerns) suggestions for organizing and developing your ideas, and will help you (if necessary) with grammar and form; it is your responsibility to make all corrections. If there are readings that either directly contradict or support your interpretations, those will also be suggested upon request. Note: submission of multiple drafts doesn’t automatically indicate increasing grades – better grades, as always, depend on the submission of significantly improved work.

Snowball Paper Learning Objective: Students who stumble on this assignment at first often do so because they have been trained to ignore their own interpretations initially in favor of what “experts” have already found. This assignment asks you to reverse that process and to trust your own interpretations and clarify them first before consulting the scholarly literature.
This way of writing also requires a great deal of revision and rethinking as you go. I’m encouraging you to see your work and learning about political theory as an ongoing encounter, not a one time, one-off type of affair. You may find that your first 2 papers are not yet connected; that they are separate analyses of distinct ideas with little interaction between them. You may also find that the topic you initially select is fully explored in some sources, rather neglected in others. But as you progress through this writing assignment you will probably find unexpected connections among the texts, and later readings may suggest points of entry into earlier texts that were not visible before.

**Mini-Conference Presentation:** All students will present the latest versions of their snowball papers during the final exam period. You will have ~7 minutes each to walk through your papers, and you are welcome to note places where you might be struggling or need some feedback so that your peers can assist you. **NO POWER POINTS ARE PERMITTED for this assignment.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Paper Length</th>
<th>Max/Min # of Class Texts/Materials</th>
<th>Grade Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper #1 February 12, 2019</td>
<td>2-4 pages</td>
<td>1 Primary Source*** MAX</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper #2 March 5, 2019</td>
<td>6-8 pages</td>
<td>2 Primary Sources*** MAX</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper #3 April 9, 2019</td>
<td>12-15 pages</td>
<td>2 Primary Sources MAX; 3 outside refs. MIN</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper #4 <em>FINAL PAPER DUE DATE TBA – DUE DURING POIR 600 FINAL EXAM PERIOD</em></td>
<td>20-25 pages</td>
<td>2 Primary Sources*** + 6 outside references MIN OR 3 Primary*** &amp; 3 outside full-length texts MAX</td>
<td>20%</td>
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*** Primary Sources are noted on the weekly readings in bold***

*Final, polished version of paper*

Hard Copy (plus copies of earlier graded papers)

**NO EXCEPTIONS; NO INCOMPLETES IN THIS COURSE**

**Weekly Schedule:**

January 8, 2019  **Introduction: The Difference Between Political Theory & Empirical Political Science**
Thiele, “Theory and Vision” (PDF available on Blackboard)
Gunnell, “Political Theory: The Evolution of a Sub-Field” (PDF on Blackboard)

January 15, 2019 Wolin, Chapter 1 “Political Philosophy and Philosophy” (PDF on Blackboard)
Taylor, Chapter 1-2

January 22, 2019 Plato, *The Republic*  
Class Leadership Springboard Chapters: Taylor Chapters 5-6; Wolin Chapter 2

January 29, 2019 Aristotle, *The Politics*  
Class Leadership Springboard Article: Shapiro, Ian (2002). “Problems, methods, and theories in the study of politics, or what’s wrong with political science and what to do about it” *Political Theory* 30:4, 588-611
February 5, 2019  Machiavelli, *The Prince*
*Class Leadership Springboard Chapters: Wolin Chapters 3, 7*

February 12, 2019  Taylor Chapters 3-4; 7-8; Wolin Chapters 4-6  *Snowball Paper #1 due – see table*

February 19, 2019  Hobbes, *Leviathan*
*Class Leadership Springboard Chapters: Wolin Chapter 8*

February 26, 2019  Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*
*Class Leadership Springboard Chapters: Taylor Chapters 10-11; Wolin Chapter 9*

March 5, 2019  Rousseau, *Basic Political Writings*  *Snowball Paper #2 Due – see table*
*Class Leadership Springboard Chapters: Wolin Chapter 10*

****SPRING BREAK****

March 19, 2019  Taylor Part V; Wolin Chapters 11-14

March 26, 2019  Wolin Chapters 15-17

April 2, 2019  *Conversations on Political Violence:*
Arendt, “On Violence”
Fanon, “On Violence”
*Class Leadership Springboard Chapters: Wolin Chapters 15-16*

April 9, 2019  *Conversations on Political Resistance: Snowball Paper #3 Due – see table*
Arendt, “Civil Disobedience”
Fanon, “On National Culture”
*Class Leadership Springboard Chapters: Taylor Chapters 24; Wolin Chapters 16-17*

April 16, 2019  Queer Theory Symposium (NO READING)

April 23, 2019  *Conversations on Political Identity:*
Barvosa, Chapters 1-3
Taylor, Chapter 25
*Class Leadership Springboard Chapters: Taylor Chapter 24; Wolin Chapters 17*

April 30, 2019  Barvosa, Chapters 4-7

**FINAL PAPER DUE DURING THE EXAM PERIOD**
Bring hard copies of all 4 papers (3 previously graded + final paper)
Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:
Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Support Systems:
Student Counseling Services (SCS) - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call
Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255
Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/

Sexual Assault Resource Center
For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: http://sarc.usc.edu/

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX compliance – (213) 740-5086
Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. https://equity.usc.edu/

Bias Assessment Response and Support
Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/

The Office of Disability Services and Programs
Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. http://dsp.usc.edu

Student Support and Advocacy – (213) 821-4710
Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/

Diversity at USC
Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. https://diversity.usc.edu/
USC Emergency Information
Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, [http://emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu)

USC Department of Public Safety – 213-740-4321 (UPC) and 323-442-1000 (HSC) for 24-hour emergency assistance or to report a crime
Provides overall safety to USC community, [http://dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu)

Updated June 2017