

# POLITICAL THEORY (GOVT 2650)

Spring 2025, Millsaps College\*

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<b>Office Hours:</b>	MW 9:30-11:00am; F 3:00-4:00pm	<b>Office:</b>	Sullivan-Harrell 169 (GOVT)

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## Course Overview and Learning Objectives

This class offers an introduction to the *practice* of political theory. We will learn how to think like political theorists – how to identify our assumptions about human nature, compare and contrast different proposals for governance, and acknowledge the inherent uncertainty in any effort to form and sustain political communities.

Throughout the semester, we will grapple with the two most fundamental questions of political theory: **what is the “good society?”** **And what is the best form of government?** These questions are not the same thing – but to answer the second question, you need to start by answering the first. To know how people should be governed, you must first know what values you want government to promote. This means clarifying key assumptions about human nature. Who are human beings in the first place? What are we like and what do we value? Do our individual values mirror the values that the “good society” would prioritize? How would we act without government to restrain us? What (if anything) do we need from government and what makes us so sure that we need it?

It’s tempting to think that it’s just a matter of opinion. For instance, some people agree with Thomas Jefferson that “the government that governs best, governs least.” Other people think we need a large and powerful government, and that we should be willing to sacrifice civil liberties for the protections that government can provide. Still others believe there should be no government at all. Shouldn’t we let a thousand flowers bloom?

Not quite. True, political theorists have strong opinions. And we will hear strong opinions over the course of the semester – from the authors you read, your classmates, and (I hope) yourself. But these disagreements will mean nothing unless we acknowledge that **it is possible to be wrong**. If workers have no interest in owning the means of production – and if human flourishing *requires* workplace hierarchies not bound by democratic principles – Marx was wrong to predict that communism was the end-point of history. If humans are naturally fair-minded and benevolent, then Madison was wrong to insist on checks and balances in the exercise of power. If people in abject poverty prefer to pull themselves up by their bootstraps rather than surrender to a benevolent welfare state, Rawls was wrong (perhaps) to define justice as fairness. If the policies that democracies enact depend on the order in which policy-makers vote on alternatives, democracy is not necessarily the best way to represent public opinion. For that matter, if Aristotle was wrong that “Man is by Nature a political

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\*This syllabus and class are dedicated to Professor Robert “Booth” Fowler (1940-2024). Many of the weekly topics are chapter titles in Booth’s *An Introduction to Political Theory: Toward the Next Century*, co-authored with Jeffrey Orenstein. Booth was – and is – the greatest teacher and mentor I have known. Booth, thanks for teaching me that “there are many rooms.....”; I finally know what you mean. –ERS

animal,” then *most* Western political theorists have been barking up the wrong tree.

See where I’m going? To be clear, then, this is **not** a class on the history of political thought. We will not take a nonstop flight from Plato to Foucault. We’ll start with Plato and Aristotle, for reasons that will become clear in Week 2. But beyond that, we will sample the most significant theories of governance from different periods of human history, and scrutinize these theories using a common framework. Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

- **Identify the values that groups bring to non-political interactions.** To understand how humans might be governed, we need to first ask what human beings are like – what we care about and how we interact in group settings. Political theory is impossible without first clarifying our assumptions about human nature, based (in many cases) on first-hand observation.
- **Identify the values and assumptions that underpin different forms of government.** Most people agree that both freedom and equality are good things. Most people would say they want government to pursue justice and combat injustice. But what *is* justice in the first place – and is it realistic to expect political communities to root out every injustice, however trivial? Similarly, is it possible to maximize both freedom *and* equality? If not, which of these should we prioritize? The way political communities answer these questions (and others like them) help explain the types of government they end up with.
- **Formulate arguments based on logic and reason, rather than emotion or gut instincts.** Political theory is not ideology or activism. Being too earnest isn’t just poor form; it produces political systems that are unsustainable at best and tyrannical at worst. In GOVT 2650, you’ll learn how to make principled, rigorous, and cautious arguments – considering not just that you might be wrong, but that the *consequences* of being wrong are often incalculable.
- **Dialogue about contentious topics with open-mindedness and respect.** The practice of political theory demands intellectual courage. It demands that you hear your classmates out even when you object to their arguments or clash with their personalities. By being present for these conversations, you’re preparing yourself to be critically engaged in political and civic life.
- **Prescribe and defend your ideal form of government using the principles of political theory.** This class isn’t just about wading through abstract political arguments. It’s about *your* ideas for how humans should live in political communities, and how these communities should be governed. GOVT 2650 will give you the tools you need to make an argument that is truly yours – and to back it up using logic and reason.

To evaluate whether you can do these things, I will use a variety of assessments. Early in the semester, you will complete a reflection paper based on first-hand observations of a community group or campus group. Twice during the semester, you will moderate the class discussion for the entire period, based on questions you have circulated to your classmates ahead-of-time. You will write an in-class midterm exam, responding to a pre-assigned prompt. You will complete a final project – a substantive essay where you propose and defend your ideal form of government using the principles of political theory, with an accompanying in-class presentation summarizing your arguments. Finally, you will assign *yourself* a participation grade for each week of class, writing a short memo every 4-5 weeks evaluating your participation and justifying your self-grading for the previous weeks. This will help you become more introspective about your participation, and help *me* design class discussions more attuned to students’ particular strengths and ways of learning. More information on these requirements is found below.

## Course Connect

You should familiarize yourself with the [Course Connect page for GOVT 2650](#). You'll use Course Connect to submit your written assignments. Assigned readings not in the textbook will be available on Course Connect, along with discussion questions (by Dr. Schmidt and, where applicable, a student discussion leader) to guide your reading for each week. And you can always use Course Connect to see your current grade.

## Emails

Throughout the semester, I will use email to communicate with the class. **Please check your Millsaps email at least once per day**, even if you usually use a different email account. Emails will often contain important announcements, updates, or clarifications about the course material.

## Textbook and Other Readings

**This is a reading-intensive course.** Most weeks, we'll cover about 75-125 pages from the assigned readings. Each week will cover a distinct topic; you should **complete the assigned readings by the first class of the week** (in most cases, Tuesday). There are two required books:

Don DeLillo (2020), *The Silence*. **I will provide copies of this novel to students, to borrow for the duration of the semester.** It's a quick read; I'd like you to read it by our second day of class (Thursday, January 16).

*Princeton Readings in Political Thought* (2018), ed. Mitchell Cohen. **You should receive a paperback version of this book through the bookstore. The readings we will cover are too intellectually demanding for an eBook to be of much use.**

Note that while many of our readings are from the textbook, **some readings are from other sources.** These readings will be posted on Course Connect; you are responsible for completing these assigned readings, too.

## Attendance Policy

Irregular attendance under normal circumstances indicates that a student may be having difficulties adjusting to the course or to the College. Email your professors with any questions/concerns about engaging in courses when you miss classes due to illness.

**In-person attendance for all class/lab meetings is the expectation for all students.** Students should notify their instructor of the need to miss a class, laboratory, or studio session prior to the meeting time and provide a valid reason why they will be absent. Faculty will be regularly reporting attendance to the College, regardless of whether or not that attendance is a factor in a student's grade.

**Students will be excused from class in cases of documented illness, family emergency, religious observance, or participation in a co-curricular activity.** If you visit the Health Center and receive a note excusing you from class due to illness, there's no need to deliver it in

person; just take a photograph and email it to me.

**If you accumulate three (3) unexcused absences, I will ask that Dr. Lewton-Yates (Assistant Dean of Student Success) issue you a yellow card. After six (6) unexcused absences, I will request that the Office of Records drop you from the class roster with an F. Please remember that attendance and active engagement in the course are critical for meeting the learning objectives outlined above.**

## **Deadlines and Make-Up Assignments**

Students must complete the midterm exam during the allotted class period; make-up exams will only be permitted in cases of illness, family emergency, religious observance, or participation in a co-curricular activity. **If you miss the exam without a valid excuse, you will receive zero (0) percent on the exam, and will not have the opportunity to complete a make-up exam.**

Similarly, students must give their in-class presentations as scheduled during the Finals Period. **If you miss your final presentation without a valid excuse, you will receive zero (0) percent on the presentation, and will not have the opportunity to give a make-up presentation.**

It is in your interest to submit written assignments on time. **Both the Observation and Reflection Paper (due March 3) and the Final Paper (due April 28) will lose ten (10) percentage points for each day that the assignment was overdue.** Papers will be considered “one day late” if they were submitted the day the assignment was due but after the 7:30pm deadline.

The only other written assignments in the course are the three reflection memos about your class participation. These, too, should be completed on time. Since you are responsible for awarding yourself a participation grade, not turning in your reflection memo is the equivalent of giving yourself a 0/10 for participation. **I will provide a three-day grace period; if you still have not submitted your memo three days after it was due, you will receive 0/10 for participation for each of the previous five weeks.**

## **Religious Observance**

For a majority of the world’s citizens, religion is an important dimension of human life. In a religiously diverse country like the United States, it is more important than ever to honor and respect our colleagues’ diverse religious traditions.

**Students will not be penalized for missing class due to religious observance, including Ash Wednesday services on Wednesday, March 5.** Please let Dr. Schmidt know ahead of time if you cannot attend class due to religious observance. More generally, please let me know if I can do anything to accommodate your religious practice.

In addition, please note that the Holy Month of Ramadan runs from Friday, February 28 through Saturday, March 29. For practicing Muslims, Ramadan is a time for prayer and fasting; Muslims refrain from eating or drinking (including water) from sun-up to sun-down. **During the Holy Month of Ramadan, please be respectful of classmates that might be fasting.** To show

respect to classmates that might be fasting, I encourage you to refrain from eating and drinking in class during this time.

## Office Hours

Regardless of your performance in this class, I encourage you to stop by my Office Hours. During this time, I will certainly help students that might be struggling in GOVT 2650, or who need clarification about the course material. However, I am also interested in your professional and intellectual development. Please see me as a resource and ally as you progress through your academic careers.

My Office Hours are **Mondays and Wednesdays (9:30-11:00am) and Fridays (3:00-4:00pm)**, in the GOVT offices (first floor, Sullivan-Harrell). To make an appointment to see me, visit <https://calendly.com/ericrobertschmidt>. However, you can drop by my office even if you haven't made an appointment. If I'm not in a meeting or otherwise occupied, I'll be happy to speak with you.

## Emergency Remote Instruction Plan

**In the event GOVT 2650 shifted to remote instruction (either for a shorter period of time or for the remainder of the semester), we would hold class over Zoom.** I would continue to communicate with the class by email; the Zoom link to attend class would be available on Course Connect. Insofar as possible, I would still expect students to participate in class discussion with their cameras on; you would still be required to evaluate and self-grade your participation by submitting reflection memos every five weeks. If needed, I would convert the midterm exam to a short *paper* due at 7:30pm the day that the exam would have taken place. If class moved to remote instruction before March 3 (the deadline to submit the Observation and Reflection Paper), students would have the option to either (1) write up their paper based on group functions they'd been able to attend or (2) complete an alternate assignment that could be conducted remotely. Students that had not yet served as discussion leader would be expected to do so over Zoom. End-of-semester presentations would take place over Zoom, too. If students were unable to present, facilitate discussion, and/or participate in class due to Internet connectivity issues, I would address those situations on a case-by-case basis. Otherwise, grading policies and assignment deadlines would remain unchanged, as would the attendance policy.

## Course Requirements

### Participation (10% of Grade)

All our classes will be round-table discussions. **I take students seriously as intellectuals** – and I expect you to dialogue both with me and your classmates about the topics we're discussing. I recognize that participating in class can be intimidating. However, **confident class participation requires practice**. When necessary, I may call on students to share their insights about the material or respond to one of their classmates' points. Don't worry about being perfectly articulate or 100-percent confident about everything you say. Just *try* – and know that you will be rewarded for trying.

In my career thus far, I've learned that students participate in different ways. Some students speak a lot in class, and try to say at least a few things about every question I ask. Other students are more quiet, but make extremely important insights when they do speak. Still other students prefer to actively listen to the conversation, affirming or validating their classmates' contributions through non-verbal cues. Indeed, students themselves have different ideas about what quality participation is.

This makes grading participation difficult. On the one hand, I don't want participation points to be a reward for simply attending class. On the other hand, I don't want to privilege one particular *type* of participation over another. So this semester, I'm trying an experiment: **I want you to give *yourself* the participation grade you think you deserve, and explain to me why you deserve it.** Here's how this will work:

- **Every five weeks, you must submit a reflection memo ( $\approx$  1-2 pages, or 3-4 paragraphs) about your participation.** Talk about the different ways that you participated – the insights you brought to the table, and/or the ways in which you made the class discussion more fruitful than it would otherwise have been. (**The more specific, the better – don't just speak in vague terms about how well you think you participated.**) Also, address any reasons why you might not have participated as much as you would have liked (e.g., difficulty understanding the material, the perception that others have more useful things to say). Please also help me understand what quality participation means to *you* – what kind of participation you are used to, and what kinds move you outside of your comfort zone.
- Then, **give yourself a grade (between 0-10 points) for each of the five previous weeks.** For example, you might give yourself 9/10 for Weeks 1 and 2, 8/10 for Week 3, and 10/10 for Weeks 4 and 5. It should be clear from your memo *why* you have chosen to grade yourself this way.

**If you complete your memo by the deadline (with a three-day grace period), I will honor your self-assigned participation grades**, with two exceptions. First, if you accumulated an unexcused absence during a particular week, I will deduct 5/10 points from your score for that week. (Alternately, you can build this into your grade and save me a step!) Second, if I believe you are being too hard on yourself, I may adjust your grade *upward* (but never downward).

Assignment	Deadline	Evaluate yourself on...
Participation Memo 1	Sunday, February 16	Weeks 1-5
Participation Memo 2	Sunday, March 23	Weeks 6-8, 10
Participation Memo 3	Sunday, April 27	Weeks 11-15

An assignment like this is based on trust. **I trust you to evaluate yourselves fairly, and to give a concise but thorough account of the quality of your participation.** Let's see how this works.

## **Discussion Leadership (20% of Grade; 10% Each)**

During the semester, **each student must serve as the discussion leader for two classes, both on Thursday.** We will sign up for time-slots the second day of class. The goals for this assignment

are twofold:

**First, I want our conversations to be shaped by *students'* values and priorities – not just mine.** Each Tuesday, I will have more than enough time to situate the week's topic within the broader framework of the class. But on Thursdays, students get to tell me what matters to *you* about the topic of discussion and to build our conversation around these things. This is your chance to steer our conversation in unexpected but fruitful directions. By bringing your insights to the table, you will make the class infinitely more interesting.

**Just as importantly, I want you to see how political theory prepares you for leadership.** Most students in GOVT 2650 won't go on to be professional political theorists. Nevertheless, if you aspire to any kind of leadership position, you will have to facilitate discussions on complex topics. You will need to mediate disagreements between people that see things very differently – accepting that all parties have entered the discussion in good faith. And you will need to ask the kinds of questions that motivate quality participation from team members. This assignment is an opportunity to gain this practical experience.

So, what's required?

1. **No later than Sunday evening at 7:30pm (the week of your scheduled discussion), email me at least eight (8) questions that you plan to ask the class.** I will circulate your questions to your classmates. Be thoughtful about your questions. Write the kinds of questions that will spark discussion and follow-up thoughts. At least three (3) questions should be based directly on the assigned readings. You can take the remaining questions in whatever direction you like, so long as you tie things back to the topic for that week.
2. **Facilitate the discussion for the full class period.** At the beginning of class, I will make any relevant announcements; then, I'll step back. **Your job is simply to open a dialogue based on the questions that were circulated to the class.** How you do this is largely up to you. For example, you might start with the question you consider most fundamental and ask everyone to go around and share their thoughts. Or you could ask the class which of your questions *they* found most intriguing and steer the conversation that way. There are many other good discussion-facilitation strategies too; so long as you're moving the conversation along, that's just fine. This might involve some improvisation in the moment, but that's what good conversation is all about.

**If you are *not* facilitating the discussion for a particular Thursday, I expect you to treat the discussion leader with the same respect that you would treat me.** Respect their role as the discussion leader. Raise your hand rather than interrupting. Step back and let others talk rather than dominating the conversation. If the discussion leader is having trouble motivating quality dialogue, step up and help them keep the conversation flowing. Prepare for class – both by completing the assigned reading and thinking about possible answers to your classmate's questions. Finally, don't judge the discussion leader if they seem nervous or disorganized; people deserve even more respect for doing something outside their comfort zone.

## **Observation and Reflection Paper (20% of Grade)**

You must submit a creative writing assignment based on your **observations of a registered student organization at Millsaps *or* a community organization in the Jackson area.**

To complete this assignment, choose a registered student organization or community group that you'd like to write about. **You are *not* allowed to select the Young Democrats, College Republicans, any other organization whose *primary* purpose is to advocate a political perspective, or any organization of which you are a member.**

Once you've selected the organization you'd like to write about, **email the group's leaders**. Explain the assignment to them and ask for permission to attend at least two (2) organization meetings or functions. (In your email, emphasize that the organization has the right to decline your request. Have some back-ups in mind just in case.) Once you know the organization you're writing about, decide (or coordinate with the group's leadership) which meetings or functions you're going to attend.

At each function, your job is simply to **observe**. There's no need to interview particular members of the group or ask questions, unless it would help clarify something relevant to the assignment. Reflect on the following questions and take notes as you observe:

- What kind of **community** is the group? What kind of **authority** structure does it have, and how important is this authority structure to the **decisions** the group makes? Are there any **unwritten rules** that seem to hold the group together – and if so, what do you think these are? What **obligations** do group members believe they have to each other, and what makes you say this?
- How do members of the group **think about themselves in comparison** to their fellow group members? Do some group members have higher **status** than others – whether because of their accomplishments, leadership skills, service to the group, or authority within the group? Do members of the group value each other as **individuals** – or is there **pressure to conform**?
- Based on your observations, what do group members seem to believe about **justice**? What do they seem to believe about **equality**? What definitions of justice and equality do you think the group subscribes to? Or are these concepts not relevant to the group's affairs?
- Of the concepts we've discussed in class thus far, which do group members seem to **value most**? Which do they seem to **value least**? What makes you say that?

After you've attended at least two group meetings or functions, write up your observations with attention to the above questions. (There's no need to answer the questions one-by-one or answer all of them; it's likely that some questions will be more relevant than others to the group you choose to study.) **If you refer to individual participants, please change their names to preserve anonymity.**

Papers must be **approximately 6-7 pages (double-spaced, 12-point font)**. Submit your papers on Course Connect (in .doc or .docx format) by **Monday, March 3 at 7:30pm CST**. No later than the second week of the semester, I will post a rubric outlining my expectations for this assignment.

## **Midterm Exam (15% of Grade)**

**The midterm exam will take place in class on Thursday, March 6.** The exam is closed-book. It will have only one essay question, with the following prompt:

**Question:** In your judgment, what does it mean for a political community to be a “success?” Explain and justify your position.



I'm serious. That's it. **You have the entire first half of the semester to think about your answer to the question.** On March 6, you just need to come to class and write it down.

As you prepare for this exam, I'm delighted to talk about the course material with you. However, I will not (1) read any drafts of exam answers or (2) answer questions that take the form "If I said \_\_\_\_\_ on the exam, what grade would I get?" Trust that over the course of our discussions, I will provide enough different perspectives on this question for you to develop your own thoughts.

As you prepare for the exam, you are not allowed to memorize exam answers generated using AI software (including Chat-GPT and other paraphrasing tools), or work with other students to compose and memorize the same answers. I do not want to see any identical or near-identical exam responses. **There are a wealth of different perspectives; show me what *you* have to say.**

How much should you write? Enough to show me that you've thought seriously about the question and that you understand why the question matters to political theorists. Do you need to fill up an entire Blue Book? Probably not. But if you turn in your exam well before the class period is over, it's unlikely that your essay was comprehensive enough to receive a high grade. Plan to spend most or all of the class period (75-90 minutes) composing your exam.

Responses will be graded on how creatively and comprehensively you answered the question. Students will lose points if it is unclear how your response relates to the concepts we've discussed in class.

## **Final Project (Written Component) (25% of Grade)**

You must submit a final paper that **presents and defends your ideal form of government.** While this is a creative writing assignment, I want you to write as a political theorist – building an argument grounded in logic and reason rather than emotion. Successful papers will do the following:

- **Describe your ideal form of government.** How will leaders be selected and/or how will power be distributed? How will decisions be made? What obligations will citizens have to the government and how will these obligations be enforced? How will you know whether people have consented to live under the form of government you propose (if this is something that matters to you)? (Don't limit yourself to the above questions – but if you start there, you'll have an easier time fleshing out additional details.)
- **Explain the values that underpin your ideal form of government.** When the government makes decisions, what values (e.g., freedom, equality, justice, obligation) will these decisions reflect? Of the values we've discussed, which does your form of government value **most** – and why?
- **Explain the assumptions about human nature that led you to propose this form of government.** What makes you so confident that people will agree to live under this form of government, rather than revolt in favor of something else? For the decision-making process you've outlined to make sense, what would need to be true about the way human beings act in communities? Are you assuming that those in power will value the same things you do – and if so, what is the basis for this assumption? Alternately, have you set up your government so that certain components of human nature do **not** influence the decisions that get made?
- **Defend your form of government to skeptical readers.** What are the best arguments against your proposed form of government? How would you respond to these arguments?

(**Note:** by the time you start writing this paper, you'll have heard numerous examples of arguments and counterarguments in class.)

Papers are due on **Monday, April 28 at 7:30pm CST**; upload your papers to Course Connect in .doc or .docx format. Papers must be **approximately 8-9 pages (double-spaced, 12-point font)**, but you will not be penalized for writing more than this.

Mid-semester, I will circulate a rubric that outlines my expectations in more detail. **As you prepare your papers, I'm happy to provide feedback on drafts (partial or complete), as well as workshop any other part of the project that you find confusing.**

## **Final Project (In-Class Presentation) (10% of Grade)**

During the Finals Period for GOVT 2650, you must give a class presentation that outlines and justifies your proposed form of government. **Presentations should be 9-10 minutes, with an additional five (5) minutes to answer questions from your instructor and classmates. You are required to use PowerPoint slides; please email these to Dr. Schmidt by 7:30pm the evening before your presentation.**

**This is a formal presentation;** avoid casual asides, in-jokes, or commentary on the project itself. Instead, describe your proposed government as cogently, systematically, and persuasively as possible. Mid-semester, I will circulate a rubric that outlines my expectations in more detail.

## **Course Schedule**

### **PART I: SEARCHING FOR THE “GOOD SOCIETY”: HUMANS IN POLITICAL COMMUNITIES**

**Week 1 (Tuesday, January 14 - Thursday, January 16):** Course Introduction; The Practice of Political Theory.

- **Read (for Tuesday):** Course syllabus. (Remember that **syllabi are contracts** between the student and instructor; you are responsible for **carefully** reading this syllabus, reviewing the course requirements, and asking your instructor to clarify anything that is unclear.)
- **Read (for Thursday):**
  - Don DeLillo, *The Silence* (entire novel)
  - Aristotle, excerpts from *The Politics* (Princeton Readings, pp. 96-106)

**Week 2 (Tuesday, January 21 - Thursday, January 23):** The Individual and the Political Community, Part I

- Plato, *Apology of Socrates* (Princeton Readings, pp. 21-37) and *Crito* (posted on Course Connect)
- Henry David Thoreau, “A Plea for John Brown” (posted on Course Connect)
- Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” (Princeton Readings, pp. 621-631)

- Malcolm X, “The Ballot or the Bullet” (Princeton Readings, pp. 632-636)

**Week 3 (Tuesday, January 28 - Thursday, January 30):** The Individual and the Political Community, Part II. (**Note:** the readings for Week 3 are more demanding and dense than the readings for Week 2. I recommend getting a head-start on Rousseau, Locke, and Hobbes – don’t save them for Monday evening.)

- Rousseau, excerpts from *On the Social Contract* (Princeton Readings, pp. 270-297)
- Locke, excerpts from *Second Treatise of Government* (Princeton Readings, pp. 213-243)
- Hobbes, excerpts from *Leviathan* (Princeton Readings, pp. 176-207)

**Week 4 (Tuesday, February 4 - Thursday, February 6):** Religion, Community, and Authority

- Romans 11-13 (King James Version; posted on Course Connect)
- Martin Luther, excerpts from *The Christian in Society* (Princeton Readings, pp. 167-171)
- John Calvin, excerpts from *On God & Political Duty* (Princeton Readings, pp. 172-175)
- St. Augustine, excerpts from *City of God* (Princeton Readings, pp. 115-123)
- Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, excerpts from *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (posted on Course Connect)

**Week 5 (Tuesday, February 11 - Thursday, February 13):** Justice

- **Note:** on Wednesday, February 12, the College will host its **Research and Experiential Learning Day. Students can earn up to six (6) percentage points of extra credit on the midterm exam, by attending up to three events (each worth two (2) percentage points).** To make sure your attendance is recorded, be sure to check-in using the QR codes provided at each event.
- **Readings for Week 5 are as follows:**
  - Book of Job (King James Version), Chapters 38-42 (posted on Course Connect)
  - Plato, excerpts from *The Republic* (posted on Course Connect)
  - Machiavelli, excerpts from *The Prince* (Princeton Readings, pp. 145-166)
  - Rawls, excerpts from *A Theory of Justice* (Princeton Readings, pp. 685-708)
  - Martin Luther King, Jr., “The Three Evils of Society” (transcript of speech; posted on Course Connect)

**Week 6 (Tuesday, February 18 - Thursday, February 20):** Freedom

- **Submit Reflection Memo #1 by Sunday, February 16 at 7:30pm.** You should evaluate and grade yourself on your participation in each of Weeks 1-5.
- **Readings for Week 6 are as follows:**
  - Thucydides, “Pericles’ Funeral Oration” (Princeton Readings, pp. 11-20)
  - John Stuart Mill, excerpts from *On Liberty* (Princeton Readings, pp. 369-387)

- Isaiah Berlin, excerpts from “Two Concepts of Liberty” (posted on Course Connect)
- Edmund Burke, excerpts from *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Princeton Readings, pp. 337-341)

### Week 7 (Tuesday, February 25 - Thursday, February 27): Equality

- Thomas Jefferson, Declaration of Independence (Princeton Readings, pp. 316-318)
- Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (Princeton Readings, pp. 334-336)
- Mary Wollstonecraft, “A Vindication of the Rights of Women” (Princeton Readings, pp. 347-354)
- Frederick Douglass, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” (Princeton Readings, pp. 411-426)
- Simone de Beauvoir, excerpts from *The Second Sex* (Princeton Readings, pp. 603-613)
- Marx and Engels, excerpts from *The Communist Manifesto* (Princeton Readings, pp. 438-451)

**Your OBSERVATION AND REFLECTION PAPER is due on Monday, March 3 at 7:30pm CST.** Upload your paper to Course Connect in .doc or .docx format.

**Your MIDTERM EXAM will take place in class on Thursday, March 6.** The exam prompt and instructions are on pp. 8-9 of this syllabus.

### Week 8 (Tuesday, March 4 - Thursday, March 6): Individualism; Midterm Exam

- **Tuesday, March 4:** Assigned readings are as follows:
  - Ayn Rand, excerpts from *The Virtue of Selfishness* (posted on Course Connect)
  - Robert Nozick, excerpts from *Anarchy, State, & Utopia* (Princeton Readings, pp. 709-717)
  - Herman Melville, “Bartleby the Scrivener” (posted on Course Connect)
  - F.A. Hayek, excerpts from *The Road to Serfdom* (Princeton Readings, pp. 558-562)
- **Thursday, March 6: Midterm exam.** You will have the full class to **write or type** your exam; if you plan to compose your exam on your laptop, email it to me immediately after class.

**SPRING BREAK runs from March 8-16. We will not meet on Tuesday, March 11 or Thursday, March 13.**

## PART II: DEBATING DEMOCRACY: “WORST FORM OF GOVERNMENT EXCEPT FOR ALL THE OTHERS?”

### Week 10 (Tuesday, March 18 - Thursday, March 20): Participatory or Deliberative Democracy

- John Dewey, “Creative Democracy: The Task Before Us” (Princeton Readings, pp. 563-567)
- John Dewey, excerpts from *The Public and its Problems* (posted on Course Connect)
- Jane Mansbridge, excerpts from *Beyond Adversary Democracy* (posted on Course Connect)
- Elinor Ostrom, “A Long Polycentric Journey” (*Annual Review of Political Science*; posted on Course Connect)

### **Week 11 (Tuesday, March 25 - Thursday, March 27):** Representative Democracy

- **Submit Reflection Memo #2 by Sunday, March 23 at 7:30pm.** You should evaluate and grade yourself on your participation in each of Weeks 6-8 and 10.
- **Readings for Week 11 are as follows:**
  - Madison, Hamilton, and Jay, selected chapters from *The Federalist Papers* (posted on Course Connect)
  - Tocqueville, excerpts from *Democracy in America* (Princeton Readings, pp. 389-410)
  - Edmund Burke, “Speech to the Electors of Bristol” (posted on Course Connect)

**REMINDER: Your last day to drop GOVT 2650 is Wednesday, March 26.** If you believe you must withdraw from GOVT 2650 (or that you are in danger of failing the course), I **strongly** encourage you to consult both myself and your academic advisor **in advance** of this deadline.

### **Week 12 (Tuesday, April 1 – Thursday, April 3):** Challenging the Assumptions of Democracy

- Gaetano Mosca, excerpts from *The Ruling Class* (Princeton Readings, pp. 493-502)
- Robert Michels, excerpts from *Political Parties* (Princeton Readings, pp. 503-507)
- Achen and Bartels, excerpts from *Democracy for Realists* (posted on Course Connect)
- Walter Lippmann, excerpts from *The Phantom Public* (posted on Course Connect)

### **Week 13 (Tuesday, April 8 – Thursday, April 10):** The Allure of Authoritarianism

- Benito Mussolini, “Fascism” (Princeton Readings, pp. 540-543)
- Vladimir Lenin, excerpts from *What Is to Be Done?* (Princeton Readings, pp. 481-492)
- Erich Fromm, excerpts from *Escape from Freedom* (posted on Course Connect)
- Freedom House, “Freedom in the World 2024: The Mounting Dangers of Flawed Elections and Armed Conflict” (posted on Course Connect)
- Shirin Ebadi, excerpts from *Iran Awakening* (posted on Course Connect)

### **Week 14 (Tuesday, April 15 – Thursday, April 17):** Totalitarianism

- Hannah Arendt, excerpts from *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Princeton Readings, pp. 544-557)

- Aleksandr Solzhenitskyn, excerpts from *The Gulag Archipelago* (posted on Course Connect)
- Christopher Hitchens, "Visit to a Small Planet" (*Vanity Fair* article, posted to Course Connect)

### **Week 15 (Tuesday, April 22 - Thursday, April 24): Anarchism**

- Kropotkin, excerpts from *The Conquest of Bread* (posted to Course Connect)
- James C. Scott, excerpts from *Two Cheers for Anarchism* (posted to Course Connect)
- Noam Chomsky, "The Relevance of Anarcho-Syndicalism" (posted to Course Connect)

**Reminder: Your FINAL PROJECT (WRITTEN COMPONENT) is due on Monday, April 28 at 7:30pm CST.** Upload your paper to Course Connect in .doc or .docx format.

### **Week 16 (Tuesday, April 29 - Thursday, May 1): Last Week of Classes**

- **Submit Reflection Memo #3 by Sunday, April 27 at 7:30pm.** You should evaluate and grade yourself on your participation in each of Weeks 11-15.
- **There are no regular class meetings of GOVT 2650 during Week 16;** on Tuesday, April 29, you should report to your *Friday* classes; Thursday, May 1 is Reading Day.
- **Final presentations will take place on Saturday, May 3 (9:00-11:00am) in our usual classroom.**

## **FINALS PERIOD: STUDENT PRESENTATIONS**

Student presentations will take place on Saturday, May 3 (9:00-11:00am), in our usual classroom. Remember to send Dr. Schmidt your PowerPoint slides by 7:30pm the evening beforehand.

Students' presentations should run for 9-10 minutes, with an additional five (5) minutes for audience questions. Presentations that go substantially over time will be penalized.

## **Grading**

Your final grade will be weighted as follows:

- **Discussion Leadership**, 20 percent (two sessions × 10 percent each)
- **Midterm Exam**, 15 percent
- **Observation and Reflection Paper**, 20 percent
- **Participation**, 10 percent

- **Final Project (written component)**, 25 percent
- **Final Project (in-class presentation)**, 10 percent (but see note below)

If you are a senior that has passed comprehensive examinations, the final presentation is optional. If you opt to not give a presentation during the Finals Period, the final *paper* will count toward 35 percent of your final grade.

Note that no matter how well you do on the above assignments, you will be unable to pass GOVT 2650 if you accumulate six (6) unexcused absences. After your sixth (6th) unexcused absence, I will ask the Office of Records to drop you from the class roster with an **F**. If you accumulate six absences before March 26, I will advise you to drop the course to avoid a failing grade.

Final grades will be assigned as follows, based on your final weighted percentage in the class:

Percentage	Grade	Percentage	Grade	Percentage	Grade
100-93	A	92-90	A-	89-87	B+
86-83	B	82-80	B-	79-77	C+
76-73	C	72-70	C-	69-67	D+
66-63	D	62-60	D-	59-0	F

**Note:** Before final grades are reported to the registrar, your weighted percentage will be rounded to the nearest whole number. For example, a student who finishes the class with 89.7% would earn an A- (90%); a student with an 89.1% would earn a B+ (89%). Grades on individual assignments will not be rounded.

## Campus Resources and Information

### Course Connect Support

Course Connect is Millsaps' learning management system. Your courses in Course Connect will provide access to syllabi and important course information. To access Course Connect, visit <https://courses.millsaps.edu> and login with your Millsaps username and password.

For questions about using Course Connect, visit the Course Connect LibGuide for Students: <https://libguides.millsaps.edu/courseconnectstudents>. If you experience issues with Course Connect, contact Rachel Long, Instructional Technology Librarian, at [rachel.long@millsaps.edu](mailto:rachel.long@millsaps.edu) or [librarian@millsaps.edu](mailto:librarian@millsaps.edu).

## Honor Code

Millsaps College is an academic community dedicated to the pursuit of scholarly inquiry and intellectual growth. The foundation of this community is a spirit of personal honesty and mutual trust. Through their Honor Code, **the students of Millsaps College affirm** their adherence to these basic ethical principles.

An Honor Code is not simply a set of rules and procedures governing students' academic conduct. It is an opportunity to put personal responsibility and integrity into action. When students agree to abide by an Honor Code, they liberate themselves to pursue their academic goals in an atmosphere of mutual confidence and respect.

The success of the Honor Code depends on the support of each member of the community. Students and faculty alike commit themselves in their work to the principles of academic honesty. When they become aware of infractions, both students and faculty are obligated to report them to the Honor Council, which is responsible for enforcement. Important information pertaining to the Honor Code can be found in Major Facts. The pledge affirmed by all students upon entering the College is as follows:

**As a Millsaps College student, I hereby affirm that I understand the Honor Code and am aware of its implications and of my responsibility to the Code. In the interest of expanding the atmosphere of respect and trust in the College, I promise to uphold the Honor Code and I will not tolerate dishonest behavior in myself or in others.**

Each examination, quiz, or other assignment that is to be graded will carry the affirmed pledge: **"I hereby certify that I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this assignment. (Signature)"** The abbreviation "Pledged" followed by the student's signature has the same meaning and may be acceptable on assignments other than final examinations.

The following is a representative, but not exhaustive list of academic offenses and violations covered by the Millsaps Academic Honor Code:

- At Millsaps College, **plagiarism** includes, but is not limited to, the following actions:
  - using *words* or *ideas* that are not your own without citing the source
  - copying from a text word for word without both using quotation marks *and* citing the source
  - paraphrasing or summarizing a source without citing the source
  - using language or sentence structures that are *too close* to the original text even while the paraphrase has *mostly* your own language
  - using online paraphrasing tools and artificial intelligence (AI) generators to generate all or part of your assignment, unless you have specific and direct permission from an instructor to do so
  - copying pictures, charts, graphs, or other illustrations without citing the source
  - using your own work from a past class without citation or approval from the instructor
- Dishonesty on examinations and tests



- Using any outside materials deemed not usable by the professor of the course
- Giving or receiving answers while taking a test
- Revealing the content of an exam before others have taken it
- Dishonesty on assignments
  - Receiving unauthorized help on an assignment
  - Submitting the same paper for two classes unless approved by the professors of both classes
  - Interfering with another student's course materials
- Lying about academic matters, including missed assignments or absences
- Unauthorized use of a computer file, program, username, or password
- Unauthorized use of, tampering with, or removing community materials from laboratories or the library

*It is the responsibility of students and faculty to report offenses to the Honor Council in the form of a written report.* This account must be signed, the accusation explained in as much detail as possible, and submitted to **AcademicAffairs@millsaps.edu**.

### **Honor Council Members Spring 2025:**

#### **Student Members**

Caroline Eschete, Chair, senior  
Elyse Warren, Vice-Chair, junior  
Jack Gaar, Sergeant-At-Arms, junior  
Natalie Burke, senior  
Shagun Gautam, sophomore  
Madeline Black, sophomore  
Phillip Antis III, freshman

#### **Faculty Members:**

Dr. Krissy Rehm  
Dr. Priscilla Fermon  
Dr. Shalini Bhawal

## **Value of Diverse Perspectives, Backgrounds, and Identities**

As your instructor, I am committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion at Millsaps. Ultimately, **inclusion is a quality-of-life issue**. Students are unlikely to succeed in (let alone enjoy) an educational environment where their contributions are neither valued nor noticed. More than ever, liberal arts education must celebrate students with under-represented racial and ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations or gender identities, religious beliefs, and socioeconomic statuses. Students with physical or learning disabilities must be fully included in campus life. And instructors must proactively *and quickly* address discrimination in all its forms.

Just as importantly, if you feel under-valued and unnoticed in class, this is probably not your fault. Rather, it is your instructor's responsibility to promote an inclusive learning environment. During the semester, I will do my utmost to promote diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and identities in the classroom. But if I ever fall short, please let me know. Like everyone at Millsaps, I am still learning; like everyone, there are "blind spots" in my cultural sensitivity and awareness. For this reason, I value *any* feedback that makes my classroom more inclusive – and would consider it a privilege to learn from you.

## Pronouns and Identity

Because all people have the right to be addressed in accordance with their personal identity, the instructor will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please let him know how you would prefer to be addressed as soon as possible.

## Millsaps-Wilson Library

Library resources can be found on the library's webpage: <https://www.millsaps.edu/library/>. Once on the webpage, you can find the library search engine Big Search, a list of scholarly databases, librarian-created research guides, the hours, and many other resources. Library hours are also available through this link: <https://www.millsaps.edu/library/hours-calendar/>.

Librarians are available to assist with research requests Monday-Friday. We encourage you to visit the library. You can email us at [librarian@millsaps.edu](mailto:librarian@millsaps.edu) to ask questions or to set up a meeting.

## Help Desk

ITS HelpDesk is the resource for technical support for students. Services provided include: email, wireless, Office 365 software installation, ID card access, smart classroom - audio visual, faculty staff office computer and network printing and also the College telecom system. The HelpDesk is located in AC100 and can be reached by phone 601-974-1144 or by email at [help@millsaps.edu](mailto:help@millsaps.edu).

## The Centers for Writing and Academic Success

All students are strongly encouraged to visit the **Writing Center** and **CASE** (the Center for Academic Success and Excellence). Both centers are staffed by peers trained as academic consultants who support learning and writing across all disciplines of study. Both centers offer appointments in-person as well as limited virtual availability. The Writing Center and CASE share a common appointment scheduler at <https://millsaps.mywconline.com>. To select a consultant in a specific subject area, select that subject area from the "limit to" dropdown menu to view hours and availability in that subject area. Not all consultants offer all types of appointments.

- **The Millsaps Writing Center**

- The Writing Center is located in John Stone Hall, with satellite locations in the library and in CASE. Writing Consultants work with all writers, in all disciplines, at all skill levels, and in all stages of the writing process. We recommend visits **early in the**

**writing process**, such as when you first receive your assignment or are just beginning your research or first-drafting work. Visit <https://millsaps.mywconline.com> for more information about hours, locations, and upcoming events.

- **CASE (Center for Academic Support and Excellence)**
  - CASE is located in Academic Complex suite 109 and offers one-to-one consultations and small group study sessions for all students in a range of disciplines, such as math, economics, chemistry, biology, and languages. (Writing Consultants also serve at the CASE location.) Visit <https://millsaps.mywconline.com> for more information about hours, locations, and upcoming events.

## Title IX

As an instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment on campus. I also have a mandatory reporting responsibility as a member of the faculty. I will seek to keep information you share private to the greatest extent possible. However, if I am made aware of information regarding sexual misconduct or information about a crime that may have occurred on campus, I am required to share it with the College. If students wish to speak with someone confidentially, they should contact Student Life at 601-974-1200.

## ADA Accommodations

Under the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504, reasonable accommodations may be available for students with disabilities or learning differences. If you have questions or require academic accommodations, please contact the Accessibility Coordinator at [ada@millsaps.edu](mailto:ada@millsaps.edu).

Accommodations will not be granted until you meet with the Coordinator, your letters/documentation are processed, and you meet with your instructor.

## CARE

If you find yourself struggling with managing your coursework, physical or mental health, finances, relationships on or off campus, or any other aspect of being a student, Millsaps has resources available to help you. Our team of campus professionals can help you get connected to these free resources. Likewise, if you're concerned about the well-being of a friend or classmate, you can report using this online form [https://millsaps-advocate.symlicity.com/care\\_report](https://millsaps-advocate.symlicity.com/care_report) and we can get them connected to the help they need. All emergency concerns should be reported to Campus Safety 601-974-1234.

## College COVID-19 Information

If a student becomes ill or needs to be quarantined/isolated during the semester, they should consult appropriate medical professionals and follow instructions. It is the responsibility of the student to notify their faculty members that they will be absent from class due to illness. If a faculty member

wishes to verify that a student is quarantining or isolating, they may request confirmation from **StudentLife@millsaps.edu**.