

PSCI 250-001:

Science, Technology, and Political Theory

Spring 2022 | TR 12:45-2:15 pm

Classroom: Brewer Hall 228

Professor: Dr. Benjamin Gross

Office: Brewer Hall 205D

Office Hours:

Virtual – MWF: 8:00 – 9:40 am

TR: 8:00 – 10:30 am

Appointment – contact for mutually agreed upon date and time

E-mail: Bgross@jsu.edu

Human knowledge and human power meet in one: for where the cause is not known the effect cannot be produced. Nature to be commanded must be obeyed; and that which is contemplation is as the cause is in operation as the rule.

- Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum*

Course Rational:

What makes our modern way of life different from what preceded it? One possible answer is our intimate dependence on the [growth](#) of modern science and the technology resulting from this science – that is, the ongoing development of artifacts that are byproducts of the specialized sciences whose overall aim is to master or control nature for the sake of human comfort and convenience. This form of science has not only dominated the examination of natural phenomena, but also the [study](#) of human nature. Psychology, sociology, anthropology, economics, and political science have incorporated the methods of modern science in examining our nature.

It cannot be denied that modern science has increased comfort and convenience for humans. Yet, we may wonder, does technological progress automatically bring only progress? Perhaps most importantly, does it bring moral progress? Along with the modern scientific project comes unprecedented crises: [global wars](#), [environmental degradation](#), [health crises](#), [spiritual emptiness](#), [mass shootings](#), and more. To face these crises adequately, we must see how we got to where we are now. Only by examining how we have arrived at our current situation can we judge the modern scientific project and, if judged as being incomplete, propose solutions to improve our situation.

In looking back, we discover the modern scientific project originates above all in the writings of such men as [Francis Bacon](#) (1561-1626) and [René Descartes](#) (1596-1650). We will examine Bacon, along with those who inherited the project. While there are many sources, we will focus on [Thomas Hobbes](#) (1588-1679). Hobbes, a former secretary of Bacon, was greatly influenced by both men in his study of politics.

We then examine the critiques of the modern scientific project. We have to judge if these critiques are of the originators of the projects, the heirs of the project (i.e. did the project change between the originators and heirs), both, or someone else. We start with a critique from a fellow liberal, [Jonathan Swift](#) (1667-1745). We will then turn to [Jean-Jacques Rousseau](#) (1712-1778), who seems to be neither a liberal nor a postmodernist. Finally, we will finish with a critique from [Friedrich Nietzsche](#) (1844-1900).

To begin the semester, we examine what is political theory and political philosophy. We introduce ourselves to this subfield of political science by returning to one of the first texts on this subject – Plato's *Apology*.

Some may question if the modern scientific project is of political importance. As suggested earlier, the effect of modern science on morality is a question requiring examination. If we think politics and morality are interconnected, then this question is of great importance. Even if we entertain the premise that they are not, we see science is a question of our current political situation. An increasing number of individuals

[distrust](#) the findings of modern science. This has led to political debates concerning what is the role of government with regards to climate change, vaccinations, and even life itself – a fundamental principle of liberalism. After preparing us for the subject matter, we turn directly to examining the intersection of the modern scientific project and politics through the subject of [cloning](#). An important controversy, [Leon R. Kass](#) (1939-Present) and [James Q. Wilson](#) (1931-2012), two thoughtful contemporaries of ours, question the dilemmas over whether or not modern science should pursue the possibilities for human cloning.

Course Goals:

By the end of the course, you will be able to...

- ...understand what the modern scientific project is;
- ...recognize important key authors, texts, and critiques of the modern scientific project;
- ...describe what the goals of modern science are;
- ...explain the effects of modern science on morality, politics, and humans;
- ...clarify what is human nature according to modern science and its critics;
- ...comprehend the various moral and political problems brought forth/created by the modern scientific project;
- ...acquire a greater appreciation for the importance of modern science for our contemporary political life;
- ...read a great book, be able to ask questions, and make, analyze, and criticize an argument;
- ...clearly and concisely communicate arguments both verbally and written, which will develop and progress your critical-thinking and problem solving skills.

Required Texts:

- * Plato. *4 Texts on Socrates: Plato & Aristophanes*. Thomas G. West (Ed.) Cornell University Press. ISBN: [9780801485749](#).
- * Kass, Leon R. and James Q. Wilson. *The Ethics of Human Cloning*. AEI Press. ISBN: [9780844740508](#)
- * Bacon, Francis. *The New Atlantis and the Great Instauration*. Jerry Weinberger (Ed.) Wiley. ISBN: [9780882951263](#)
- * Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. Edwin Curley (Ed.) Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. ISBN: [9780872201774](#)
- * Swift, Jonathan. *Gulliver's Travels*. Signet Classics. ISBN: [9780451531131](#)
- * Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *The Major Political Writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*. John T. Scott (Trans). University of Chicago Press. ISBN: [9780226151311](#)
- * Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Beyond Good & Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*. Walter Kaufmann (Trans.) Vintage Books. ISBN: [9780679724650](#)

Assignments and Grading:

Weekly Reading Quizzes	20%	Grading Scale: A = 90-100 B = 80-89 C = 70-79 D = 60-69 F = <60
Tocqueville Lectures	10%	
Professionalism	10%	
Investigation Papers	10%	
Response Papers	10%	
Midterm Exam	20%	
Final Exam	20%	

Assignment Details:

Weekly Reading Quizzes:

To facilitate students with readings, there are weekly reading quizzes. These quizzes are five multiple choice questions. They are intended to help guide your readings. They are not intended to be difficult, if you have read the assigned readings. Quizzes are administered via Canvas and are untimed. Quizzes will be posted on Canvas by 5 pm on Thursday prior to the weekly readings. Quizzes are due by 10 am of the Tuesday for that week's readings. Thus, the reading quiz for Week 5 will be posted by 5 pm on the Thursday of Week 4 and is due by 10 am on the Tuesday of Week 5. Each student will have their two lowest quiz grades dropped.

Weekly reading quizzes form 20% of a student's final grade. Students are being assessed on the course reading to develop their reading comprehension and ability to understand complex texts.

Tocqueville Lectures:

Jacksonville State University is proud to host two Tocqueville Lectures during the spring 2022 semester. These lectures bring professors, civic leaders, and professionals to present on topics that foster the academic environment of campus. These lectures relate to topics that are important with ideas in our course.

As a student in a political science course, these lectures are excellent opportunities for exposure to new ideas, practicing engagement within the discipline, and developing connections. All students in this class are required to attend two Tocqueville Lectures. By attending a lecture, you earn 5% of your final course grade.

These lectures will be presented via hybrid or virtual format. This allows all students the opportunity to attend. This fall's lectures include:

- Thursday, February 10 – 5:30-7:00 pm – Dr. Lucy Williams – “Civil Rights Exceptionalism”
- Thursday, March 31 – 5:30-7:00 pm – Dr. Joseph Knippenberg – “Forgetting or Denying ‘The Good, the True, and the Beautiful’: The Precarious Place of Liberal Education in the Contemporary University.”

Participation in these lectures contains 10% of a student's final grade. Students are graded on active participation in Tocqueville Lectures as these demonstrate the ability to participate with the materials of this course in a professional setting. This will help to prepare students for how to engage with presentations in academic, business, and governmental settings.

Professionalism:

All students begin the semester with 10% of their final grade completed. To keep this 10% of their grade, students must engage in professional behavior within class and class related activities. Students will lose points from their professionalism grade when they engage in unprofessional behaviors and activities. These behaviors and activities, as well as how many points are lost for engaging in them, can be found on Canvas.

Students are being graded on professional actions in order to prepare them to act professionally in their future career.

Investigation Papers:

We have three investigative papers. These papers come at the end of a section. They ask you to investigate a specific question that was examined during the section.

The intent of the assignment is for students to gain practice composing interpretations of political theory. Interpreting political theory is a different type of writing, which many students are unfamiliar with. Instead of assigning multiple large papers, we will use these small papers as a way to practice, improve, and develop our skills of communicating clearly and concisely. As such, the assignment is **limited to one-page**, double-space, 12-point font, 1-inch margins, and one-sided document. Students should put their identification information in the header of their document.

To develop skills of critical thinking and constructive feedback students will form small groups of three or four members. Students will read their peers' investigation papers. They then write a response to each of their group member's investigation paper. The response paper has the same formatting and limitations as the investigation paper.

In their response papers, students should focus on a question, puzzle, area of confusion, or potential issue they see in their peer's investigation paper. The response paper must also offer a way to resolve this question, puzzle, area of confusion, or potential issue. Identifying these things and then offering ways to resolve them is the foundation of constructive feedback. The professor will grade response papers on how effectively they engage with the production of constructive feedback.

Investigation and response papers must be submitted prior to class on the due date through both a digital submission to Canvas **and** a physical copy to each member of the group.

	Investigation Paper Due Date	Response Paper Due Date
Investigation Paper 1	Due on 2/22/22	Due on 3/1/22
Investigation Paper 2	Due on 3/10/22	Due on 3/17/22
Investigation Paper 3	Due on 4/19/22	Due on 4/26/22

Midterm Exam:

The midterm exam is composed of multiple choice questions. These questions require students to remember, understand, and apply materials presented from the course. The exam is open book. It is not an open note or open technology exam. A study guide will be provided two weeks prior to the exam. There is a study session prior to the midterm exam. More information about this exam will be presented during the study session.

This midterm exam is worth 20% of a student's final grade. Students are being evaluated on their ability to retain important information from the course, as this demonstrates their mastery of the course material.

Final Exam:

The final exam is composed of multiple choice questions that are comprehensive of the entire course. These questions require students to remember, understand, and apply materials presented from the course. The exam is open book. It is not an open note or open technology exam. A study guide will be provided two weeks prior to the exam. There is a study session prior to the final exam. More information about this exam will be presented during the study session.

This final exam is worth 20% of a student's final grade. Students are being evaluated on their ability to retain important information from the course, as this demonstrates their mastery of the course material.

Classroom Behavior:

Courtesy and regard for one another will guide classroom behavior. Since this course concerns politics and human rights, discussion can be passionate at times. During class, we will treat everyone with respect; especially during dialogues. This means listening and letting a classmate finish their thought before responding, debating ideas (not people), speaking to each other in a civil tone, and refusing to engage in personal attacks. During our dialogues, I ask you all to respect the viewpoints of your fellow students. Viewpoints, however, should be challenged.

Students are expected to be attentive during all aspects of class. Students who sleep, read the newspaper, persistently talk with other students, text, use their cell phones, surf the internet, use computers for any other use than note taking (although due to [findings](#), I strongly suggest against this) or are otherwise inattentive/disruptive in class will be asked to leave the class, lose professionalism points, and will be subject to being dismissed from the course at the professor's request.

Other Policies:

Late Work:

Only the investigative papers are accepted late. Every day it is late, the assignment deducts professionalism points. One week after its due date, the professor will no longer accept the investigative paper. A student must complete the investigative paper on-time to participate in the response papers. Thus, if you submit your investigative paper late you automatically earn a 0% for that response paper. Any student, who does not submit their written assignments on time, or within one week after its due date, will receive a zero for that assignment.

Make-up Quizzes & Exams:

Since students are able to drop their two lowest quiz scores, there are no make-up quizzes available.

If you cannot attend one of the tests, you need to notify me by email as soon as possible. Make-up exams will only be given to students who have been unable to sit for the examination as a consequence of illness requiring medical care, required university activities, or a personal emergency of a serious nature. To be excused without penalty, documentation or prior permission is required. Make-up exams will be scheduled as soon as possible, at a time to be mutually agreed upon by the student(s) and myself.

Academic Integrity:

This course does not tolerate academic dishonesty. The professor adheres to and enforces JSU's policy on academic honesty (e.g. cheating, plagiarism, forgery, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, and sabotage). I address violations of academic integrity in compliance with the procedures laid out in JSU's [student handbook](#) (see page 93).

Religious Observances:

If assigned work conflicts with your religious holidays, please tell me in advance so we can make alternative plans. Informing me of religious obligations after the fact, however, will not count as an excuse.

Accommodations:

I am more than happy to accommodate any student with a documented disability. If you have a disability that affects your work in this class, and for which you require adjustments or accommodations, please see a staff member in [Disability Support Services](#) (139 Doughty Hall // (256) 782.8380 // dss@jsu.edu) so your accommodations can be considered.

Please speak with Disability Support Services (DSS) and the professor, as early in the semester as possible. Students that receive accommodation letters or Individualized Post-Secondary Plans (IPP's) should meet with me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations as early in the semester as possible. All discussions will remain confidential.

Military-Connected Student Statement:

The Office of Veteran Services serves all active duty, guard, reserve, veteran, and dependent students at JSU. If you have any questions about Veteran Services please contact them at (256) 782-8838, veterans@jsu.edu, or at the physical location in the basement of Doughty Hall.

If you are a student currently serving in the military (Active Duty, Guard, or Reserves) with the potential of being called to military service or training during the course of the semester, you are encouraged to contact me no later than the first week of class to discuss the class attendance policy. I may make accommodations for this absence or suggest that you take the course at another time.

Title IX:

JSU does not discriminate on the basis of sex in the educational programs or activities that it operates. JSU is required, by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and the Department of Education regulations to implement Title IX, not to discriminate in such a manner. This requirement to not discriminate in educational programs and activities extends to employment by the university and to admission thereto. This may include sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking and other conduct that is addressed in our ["Sex-Based Harassment and Misconduct Policy."](#)

Anyone with knowledge of this type of conduct is asked to immediately report such incidents to the University Police Department at (256) 782-5050 or the Title IX Coordinator at (256) 782-5769. If an individual wishes to keep the information confidential, the individual speak with a counselor at the Counseling Services office at (256) 782-5475 or a medical provider at JSU's Health Center (256) 782-5310.

For more information about Title IX or to report a concern, please visit the JSU Title IX webpage at <http://www.jsu.edu/titleix>.

Student Notifications:

I post all notifications on Canvas via the Announcements section of our course. Be sure to check these for all notifications.

Questions About Your Grades:

I cannot discuss grades over [e-mail or phone](#) due to FERPA regulations. These protect your privacy; see [here](#) for more information.

I post grades on Canvas. **Please use the grade calculator to understand your grade.** If you need to discuss your grade, we can arrange an office hours meeting. You

will have to show your student ID prior to the discussion of your grade. At the end of the semester, your course grade will only change if there is a mathematical error.

Tutoring resources at JSU:

All JSU students can access online tutoring assistance through tutor.com. To access tutor.com, log into Canvas and click the tutor.com link in the navigation pane.

For more information about tutor.com contact Debra James at dmjames@jsu.edu. For assistance with writing, The Writing Center is available through online appointments: <http://www.jsu.edu/english/jsu-writing-clinic.html>

Withdraws:

Please be advised, the last date to withdraw from the course without academic penalty is Friday, April 1. There are other important dates regarding withdrawing from the course concerning refunding your tuition and if you receive an academic penalty, which you can find [here](#). If you choose to stop attending the course, it is your responsibility to withdraw from the course. If you do not withdraw from the course, the professor will enter the grade you have earned as your final grade.

E-mail Policy:

I will do my best to respond to all e-mails within 24 hours. **All e-mails that can be answered via the syllabus will receive the response: “Please refer to your syllabus.” and a picture of Alf.**

To ensure you have read the syllabus prior to e-mailing me, the first unrequested e-mail you send me must include a picture of a **platypus**. If your first unrequested e-mail does not have a picture of a platypus, I will respond to your e-mail with: “Please review the syllabus.” This policy ensures that you have helped yourself by using the tools I have provided you.

In order to help response time, please include an appropriate subject line in your e-mail. Furthermore, please take time to construct a formal e-mail with proper etiquette and language. **E-mails constructed in a manner like, “Yo, Dr B i will b 18 4 clas 2day” or using emojis to represent words/ideas will receive the response, “Please refer to your syllabus.” and a picture of Godzilla.**

COVID-19 Statement:

To protect the health and safety of all employees, visitors, and students during the COVID-19 pandemic, Jacksonville State University continuously monitors the conditions in our region and publishes policies that may be found here: <http://www.jsu.edu/coronavirus>.

Currently, masking requirements in classrooms are determined by the instructor. In this class, masks are required. **Students must wear at least a surgical mask**, as [empirical evidence](#) shows this is necessary to contain the virus during the [length](#) of our class session. In addition, these types of mask are freely provided by the university. It is suggested that students invest in better masks or double-mask to protect themselves.

Students violating these requirements will be referred to the Office of Community Standards and Student Ethics and will be sanctioned accordingly which could include fines, educational sanctions, disciplinary probation, housing probation, housing suspension without a refund and/or University suspension.

How to be Successful in this Class:

The best way to be successful is to be prepared. Being prepared means reading all of the assignment carefully and, most likely, rereading the assignment prior to class. By reading the assignments prior to class, you will be able to fully participate and get the most out of our classroom experience.

Furthermore, good note taking is vital. Take [physical notes](#). Learn to listen carefully. I find students who write down the questions being asked, and then the responses to these questions, are the most successful. If you only write down the answer the note is meaningless, as it lacks the context of the question.

After class, review your notes to see if they make sense. By reviewing them sooner than later you will be able to remember things from class to sort out any points of confusion in your notes.

Finally, get together with other students to form study groups. If you get together periodically and go over notes, you are more likely to have a complete set of notes. You will not only be able to go over your notes together to fill in the gaps, but by discussing with each other the topics of the class you might come to new insights.

Tentative Class Schedule:

EHC = *The Ethics of Human Cloning*

L = *Leviathan*

FD = *The First Discourse*

NA = *The New Atlantis*

GT = *Gulliver's Travels*

BGE = *Beyond Good & Evil*

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reading</u>
1/13	Introduction & approach	NO READING
An Introduction to Political Theory		
1/18 & 20	What is Political Theory/Philosophy?	Canvas
1/25, 27, & 2/1	The Start of Political Philosophy	The Apology
Contemporary Debates		
2/3	What is the relationship between science and education?	Canvas
2/8	Can cloning be ethical?	EHC: pp. 61-74
2/10 & 15	Is cloning a political and moral issue?	EHC: PP. 3-59
The Argument for Modern Science		
2/17 & 22	What are the politics for science?	NA: pp. 35-60
2/24 & 3/1	Who rules in the scientific state?	NA: pp. 60-83
3/3	Catch-up & Midterm Review	NO READING
3/8	MIDTERM EXAM	NO READING
3/10 & 15	What is the scientific approach to politics?	L: pp. 1-35
3/17	Does American political thought embrace modern science?	Canvas
Critiques of Modern Science		
3/29 & 31	<i>Gulliver's Travels</i> (The Movie)	NO READING
4/5 & 7	Is modern science missing a type of knowledge?	GT: pp. 155-224
4/12 & 14	Is modern science healthy or harmful?	FD: pp. 1-36
4/19 & 21	Is a scientific approach of philosophy possible?	BGE: pp. 9, 19-23, 30-32, 126-128, 189-192 & Canvas
What Have we Learned about Science, Technology, and Politics?		
4/26	Reflection & Review for Final Exam	NO READING
5/3	FINAL EXAM (10:30 am – 12:30 pm)	NO READING