

PSC 355-001:

Contemporary Values and Ideologies
Spring 2023 | TR 9:15 – 10:45 am
Classroom: Brewer Hall 228

Professor: Dr. Benjamin Gross

Office: Brewer Hall 205D

Office Hours:

Physical – T/R: 8-9 am & 2:30-4:00 pm

Virtual – W: 9:00 am – 2:00 pm

Appointment – contact for mutually agreed upon date and time

E-mail: Bgross@jsu.edu

“Liberal education is education in culture or toward culture...“Culture” (*cultura*) means primarily agriculture: the cultivation of the soil and its products, taking care of the soil, improving the soil in accordance with its nature. “Culture” means derivatively and today chiefly the cultivation of the mind, the taking care and improving of the native faculties of the mind in accordance with the nature of the mind. Just as the soil needs cultivators of the soil, the mind needs teachers. But teachers are not as easy to come by as farmer. The teachers themselves are pupils and must be pupils. But there cannot be an infinite regress: ultimately there must be teachers who are not in turn pupils...For all practical purposes, pupils, of whatever degree of proficiency, have access to the teachers who are not in turn pupils, to the greatest minds, only through the great books.”

- Leo Strauss, “What is Liberal Education?”

Course Rationale:

In 2016, Oxford Dictionaries named “post-truth” as its [word of the year](#). The word means shaping public opinion via appeals to emotion and personal opinion instead of reality. Created in 1992, the term seeds from [postmodernism](#). This philosophy argues there are no universal truths. Instead, everything is a value, belief, or interpretation.

If everything is a value, belief, or interpretation, what does this mean for political life? Can we have shared ideas of legitimacy, justice, or the good? To put it more bluntly, if we know there are no universal truths, is a common political life only possible when one [ideology](#) dominates all others? But would this be tyranny? Furthermore, if enough members of society know values are created, is it possible for one ideology to dominate?

While post-truth is a new word the phenomenon is not novel. Socrates lived in Athens where the [sophists](#) questioned truth. These rhetoricians used emotional and personal appeals to win legal cases, shape politics, and change culture. A major question for us then is, is our contemporary situation revolutionary or reactionary? By studying contemporary political theory, we will gain insight into this question.

We start the semester by introducing ourselves to what political theory and philosophy is. [Leo Strauss](#), a 20th-century student of political philosophy, thought the highest goal of education is to cultivate the mind. To do this, we need to turn to the great books. Before we can do so, however, it helps to have our bearing. By reading some of his essays, we will gain a better understanding of what political philosophy is, and how the classical, modern, and contemporary periods differ from each other.

We then turn to a great book – *Beyond Good & Evil*. A prelude to the philosophy of the future, [Friedrich Nietzsche](#) describes this work as, “a critique of modernity, not excluding the modern sciences, the modern arts, and even modern politics – along with pointers to a contrary type that is as little modern as possible– a noble, Yes-saying type.” While not the only cause, Nietzsche’s ideas are part of the contemporary moment.

Finally, we examine contemporary political theories that hinge on different values. This is not to say that all these theories must rest on the contemporary moment. It is only to say that many of the “isms” we will examine accept Nietzsche’s ideas and attempt to build their political theory upon a foundation of values. Thus, we will examine these “isms” to see if they offer possible avenues for a shared political life.

Course Goals:

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

- Read a great book, thoughtful speeches; and research articles;
- Explain what political philosophy is and why it is part of political science;
- Describe the difference between classical, modern, and contemporary political theory;
- Recognize why Nietzsche's thought represents the third wave of modernity;
- Clarify why Nietzsche thinks values are central to the philosophy of the future;
- Understand the core principles of different political ideologies/frameworks/values;
- Comprehend the shared and competing ideas of political ideologies/frameworks/values;
- Formulate and 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:

- * Strauss, Leo. *An Introduction to Political Philosophy: Ten Essays by Leo Straus*. Hilail Gildin (Ed.) Wayne State University Press. ISBN: [978-0814319024](#).
- * Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Beyond Good & Evil*. Walter Kaufmann (Ed.) Random House. ISBN: [978-0679724650](#).
- * *Twentieth Century Political Theory: A Reader*. 2nd Edition. Stephen Eric Bronner (Ed.) Routledge Press. ISBN: [978-0415948999](#).

Assessments and Grading:

Weekly Reading Quizzes	10%
Class Participation	10%
Professionalism	10%
Tocqueville Lecture Series	10%
Interpretive Calibration	5%
Short Papers	10%
Interpretive Essay	15%
Midterm Exam	15%
Final Exam	15%

Grading Scale:

A = 90-100
B = 80-89
C = 70-79
D = 60-69
F = <60

Assessment Details:

Weekly Reading Quizzes:

To facilitate students with readings, there are weekly reading quizzes. These quizzes are five multiple-choice questions, untimed, and accessible via Canvas. Quizzes open at 5 pm on Thursday prior to the weekly readings. Quizzes are due by 8 am of the Thursday for that week's readings. Thus, the reading quiz for Week 7 opens at 5 pm on the Thursday of Week 6 and is due by 8 am on the Thursday of Week 7. There are 12 quizzes. Students have their two lowest quiz grades dropped from this assessment area.

I use these quizzes to help guide your readings. I am evaluating you in this area to develop your ability to extract information when reading content.

Rationale for this assessment: Students are graded on the ability to read and comprehend foundational information from the text, as this is a necessary but not sufficient skill to successfully read complex writings. These quizzes help to ensure that students are achieving lower levels of Bloom's taxonomy as they prepare for class, which will allow the class session to focus on developing the higher levels of Bloom's taxonomy.

Class Participation:

We come to best understand political thought through examination, questions, and conversations. As such, this course demands active participation from all students. We all have some insights regarding questions of what democracy is, what is good, and what is justice. Reading, analyzing, and interpreting will not only show us how our authors understand these questions but also force us to confront our own understanding.

Rationale for this assessment: The professor includes this assessment to develop your critical thinking, communication skills, and confidence in public speaking. In previous semesters, I removed this assessment. Upon having discussions with individuals across multiple professional sectors, it has been stressed to me the need to develop this skill set. Thus, I have reintroduced this form of assessment into this course.

Professionalism:

All students begin the semester with 10% of their course grade. To keep this grade, students need to engage in professional behavior within class. Students lose points from their professionalism grade when they engage in unprofessional behaviors. The professionalism addendum on our Canvas page shares the values of professionals, unprofessional behaviors, and results of these unprofessional behaviors.

Rationale for this assessment: Students are graded on professional behavior to prepare them for their [future career](#). I have spoken with individuals in numerous sectors (e.g., accounting, mental health, logistics, construction, healthcare, and more). Consistently, these individuals inform me that recent college graduates either did not get a job offer or were fired quickly upon being hired due to unprofessional behaviors. The time to develop professionalism is now, not upon graduation.

Tocqueville Lectures:

Jacksonville State University is proud to host the Tocqueville Lectures Series. This series brings lectures to present on topics that foster the academic environment of the campus. These lectures relate to topics that are important with ideas in our course.

As a student in an upper-level political science course, these lectures are excellent an opportunity for exposure to new ideas, practicing engagement within the discipline, and developing a professional connection. All students are required to attend two Tocqueville Lectures. By attending a lecture, you earn 5% of your course grade.

These lectures will be presented via hybrid or virtual format. More information about the lecture modalities, dates, and registration process is shared during the course.

Rationale for this assessment: Students are graded on active participation in Tocqueville Lectures as this engagement demonstrates 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.

Interpretative Calibration:

How to write an interpretive essay was once a common prerequisite for college. The goal of this calibration is to assist students that are unfamiliar with interpretive essays on how to compose this style of writing. After we complete our investigation of “What is Political Philosophy?” students will be assigned to review four hypothetical essays. Students will also receive a hypothetical rubric to grade these essays. Students will then use the rubric to grade these essays.

Rationale for this assessment: This assessment assists students in learning what an interpretive essay is. In addition, it provides students with an opportunity to become familiar with the areas that the professor will assess in their interpretive works.

Short Papers:

During the semester, you will compose two short papers. These offer students low-stake assessments to develop their interpretation skills. Interpreting political thought is a different type of writing, which many students find unfamiliar. Instead of assigning multiple large papers, we will use these small papers as a way to practice, improve, and develop our skills of communicating our interpretations clearly and concisely.

To achieve this intent, the assessment is **limited to a one-page**, double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, 1-inch margins, and one-sided document. Students will put their identification information in the header of their document. The professor will not grade any material going beyond one-page to maintain fairness for all students. Each short paper has a rubric explaining the grading criteria, which is on Canvas.

Below is information on the topic and dates for these assessments:

Short Paper Topic:	Paper Opens (at 11:00 am):	Paper Due (at 9:15 am):
Friedrich Nietzsche	Thursday, February 23	Thursday, March 9
Political ideologies	Thursday, March 16	Tuesday, March 30

Rationale for this assessment: The intent of this assessment is for students to gain practice composing interpretations of political thought. Interpreting political thought is a different type of writing, which many students are unfamiliar with. Instead of assigning multiple large papers, we use these small papers to practice, improve, and develop our skills of communicating our interpretations clearly, concisely, and coherently. Developing this writing ability is a cornerstone of a liberally educated individual and will be a worthwhile skill set for any future career path.

Interpretive Essay:

Students will complete one 1,000-1,500 word essay. The interpretive essay is due Thursday, April 20. The essay is a longer version of a short paper. I will provide more information regarding the essay in a handout and rubric on Thursday, March 16.

Rationale for this assessment: I evaluate students through this assessment to determine their ability to communicate complex information clearly, concisely, and coherently to other reasonable individuals. These abilities are the hallmark of a liberal education, which fosters your critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills. This assessment demonstrates a student's competency with regards to evaluating and even creating knowledge as described within Bloom's taxonomy.

Exams:

The midterm exam contains 20 multiple-choice questions. The final exam is comprehensive and contains 20 multiple-choice questions. These questions require students to remember, understand, apply, and analyze materials from the course.

The exams are open book. This only includes physical books (no eBooks). They are **not** open note or open technology exams. A study guide will be provided one week prior to the exam, as students in a 300-level course should have the skills to prepare for an exam without a guide. **Once the first exam is submitted to the professor, a student cannot begin an exam.** Additional rules about the exam are included on the exams themselves. I will share more information about the exams during the semester.

Rationale for this assessment: Students are assessed on their ability to retain and apply important information from the course, as this demonstrates their competency of the course material. In addition, these exam questions prepare students for the types of questions they will encounter if they plan to take a test such as the LSAT.

Classroom Behavior:

Courtesy and regard for one another will guide classroom behavior. Since this is a course concerning politics, discussion can be passionate at times. We will always treat everyone with respect, especially during debates. 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 these discussions, I ask you all to respect the ideas of your fellow students. This does not mean, however, that you must agree with these ideas. Political philosophy challenges ideas and ideals; thus, you are welcome to ask your classmates to explain their ideas, to ask them questions you see in their ideals, and so forth.

Students must be attentive during all aspects of class. I will remove 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 from the class session. Students that engage in these behaviors repeatedly are subject to dismissal from the course, at the professor's request.

Other Policies:

Late Work:

I only accept written assessments (short papers and the interpretive essay) after their due date. Every business day a written assessment is late, the assessment loses three percentage points (e.g., 89% to 86%). One week after its due date, the professor will no longer accept late written assessments. Any student, who does not submit their written assessments on time, or within one week after its due date, will receive a zero for that assessment.

Make-up Quizzes & Exams:

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

Make-up exams are generally not provided.

In the most extreme emergencies (e.g., hospitalization, natural disaster, required university activities, or so forth), the professor may use discretion to offer a make-up assessment.

If such an emergency prevents you from completing an assessment, you need to notify the professor by email **prior to the** exam date and as soon as possible. This immediate communication initiates, but does not guarantee, a make-up assessment.

Upon your return the course, you must submit documentation of the emergency. If granted an extension/make-up, upon review of this documentation, the professor and student will mutually agree on a time to complete the assessment in question. Furthermore, the make-up midterm will differ from the in-class midterm to prevent sharing of information, as make-up exams are comprised of short answer and essay questions that evaluate students on the same material comprising the multiple-choice exam.

If you are unable to attend the final exam period due to extreme circumstances, please inform the professor and he will work with you to set forth the best course of action.

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 97). You can learn more about academic dishonesty [here](#). In addition, the use of Artificial Intelligence is considered academic dishonesty.

Campus Resources for Writing:

The Writing Center offers several free in-person and online services including writing and digital writing consultations, virtual presentation audiences, ESL conversation partners, and special-topics workshops for all JSU faculty, staff, and students. A team of undergraduate and graduate consultants are trained to assist with academic, personal, and professional writing. Appointments can be scheduled through the Navigate app. For more information, visit [here](#).

Accommodations:

Jacksonville State University is committed to creating an inclusive learning environment that meets the needs of its diverse student body. If you are currently experiencing or anticipate that you will have any barriers to learning in this course, please feel welcome to discuss your concerns with me.

It is my goal to create a learning experience that is as accessible as possible. If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, that may have some impact on your work in this course and for which you may require academic adjustments or accommodations, please work with a staff member in [Disability Resources](#) so that accommodations can be considered. Students that receive accommodation letters, or Individualized Post-Secondary Plans (IPPs) should meet with me to discuss the provisions of your accommodations as early in the semester as possible.

You can find more information about the Office of Disability Resources on the [web](#) or by visiting the Student Success Center on the 2nd Floor of the Houston Cole Library. You may also call (256) 782-8380 or email at disabilityresources@jsu.edu. All discussions will remain confidential.

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.

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>.

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 Daugette 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.

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.

Withdraws:

Please be advised, the last date to withdraw from the course without academic penalty is Friday, March 31. 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.

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 am more than happy to take questions about your grade in-person during my office hours/appointments. I, however, do not discuss grades over e-mail or phone due to FERPA regulations and protecting your privacy. See [here](#) for more information.

E-mail Policy:

I will do my best to respond to all e-mails within 36 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 e-mail you send me must include a picture of a **platypus**. If your first 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.

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, Mrs B i will b submitting the thing late 2day” or using emojis to represent words/ideas will receive the response, “Please refer to your syllabus.” and a picture of Godzilla.**

How to be Successful in this Class:

The best way to be successful is to be prepared. Being prepared means reading all of the assessment carefully and, most likely, reread the assessment prior to class. These texts are carefully constructed arguments, which sometimes only become visible after multiple interactions. By reading the assessments 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:

LS = *An Introduction to Political Philosophy*

BGE = *Beyond Good & Evil*

20th = *Twentieth Century Political Theory: A Reader*

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reading</u>
T-1/10	Introduction & Approach	NO READING
What is Political Philosophy?		
R-1/12	Introduction	LS: vii-xxiv
T-1/17	What is Political Philosophy? (Introduction)	LS: 2-24
R-1/19	What is Political Philosophy? (Classical)	LS: 24-39
T-1/24	What is Political Philosophy? (Modern)	LS: 39-57
R-1/26	Library (visit with Ms. Westbrook)	NO READING
T-1/31	The Three Waves of Modernity	LS: 81-98
R-2/2	Progress or Return?	LS: 249-267
T-2/7	Progress or Return?	LS: 267-289
R-2/9	Progress or Return?	LS: 289-310
What is Contemporary Political Philosophy?		
T-2/14	Preface & On the Prejudices of Philosophers	BGE: 1-3 & 9-32
R-2/16	Selections	BGE: <i>TBD</i>

Reflection		
T-2/21	Midterm Review	NO READING
R-2/23	Midterm Exam	NO READING
What are the Values of Contemporary Political Philosophy?		
T-2/28	Liberalism	20th: TBD
R-3/2	Conservatism	20th: TBD
T-3/7	Anarchism	20th: TBD
R-3/9	Communitarianism	20th: TBD
T-3/14	Socialism	20th: TBD
R-3/16	Communism	20th: TBD
T-3/21	Spring Break	NO READING
R-3/23	Spring Break	NO READING
T-3/28	Nationalism/Fascism	20th: TBD
R-3/30	Guest Lecture (Dr. Jonathan Marks)	<i>TBD</i>
T-4/4	Religion and Politics	20th: TBD
R-4/6	Racism	20th: TBD
T-4/11	Feminism	20th: TBD
R-4/13	Movie Day	NO READING
T-4/18	Postmodernism	20th: TBD
Reflection		
R-4/20	Final Exam Review	NO READING
T-4/25	FINAL EXAM (8:00 am – 10:00 am)	NO READING