

**\*\*\*DRAFT ONLY\*\*\***

***Politics 2538G: Issues in Contemporary Political Theory***  
Winter 2022

*Instructors:* Dr Elizabeth Finneron-Burns ([efinnero@uwo.ca](mailto:efinnero@uwo.ca))  
SSC 7211

*Office Hours:* During these hours, I am in my office (SSC 7211) available to meet with you to discuss the course, your progress, questions, the meaning of life, or anything else really. No need to make an appointment; just drop by! **\*\*\*Until/unless the university changes their COVID regulations, office hours will be held on Zoom in OWL\*\*\***

*TA:* Caleb Althorpe ([calthorp@uwo.ca](mailto:calthorp@uwo.ca))

**Course Outline**

This course takes the foundational concepts you learned in 2537F and applies them to relevant contemporary political issues such as multiculturalism, race and gender, global justice, climate change, and immigration, to name just a few. As in 2537F, the focus will be on developing an understanding of the different answers to these questions, but also how to develop your own views of these matters: what do *you* think and, more importantly *why*? The emphasis throughout the course will be on critical review of the arguments provided in the readings and lectures.

**Learning Outcomes**

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

- (i) Understand and critically analyse key arguments with regard to contemporary issues in political theory
- (ii) Read, understand, analyse, and evaluate academic articles in political theory.
- (iii) Formulate your own considered opinions about various contemporary issues in political theory and express them coherently in writing and orally.

**Readings**

There is one required textbook for the course:

*Issues in Political Theory* by McKinnon, Jubb, and Tomlin

The book is available at the Western bookstore. It is also available as an e-book.

**Course Format**

This course is designated ‘blended’ meaning there is a mix of online and in person learning.

Lectures: Lecture videos will all be posted on OWL on a weekly basis to help you keep on track.

Readings: Readings are all listed in each week’s lesson on OWL. Links are provided for all readings except textbook chapters.

The videos do not necessarily cover the same material that is in the readings. In some cases they further explain the reading material, and in others to provide additional information. Each week you should make sure you watch the videos *and* do the readings. The exam will cover all assigned material.

Discussion Sessions: Most weeks there will be optional discussion sessions on Tuesdays from 12:30pm-1:20 in UCC 146. Discussion sessions are intended to give you an opportunity to discuss that week's material with your instructor, TA, and peers. You can ask any clarificatory questions, get advice on assignments, etc. \*\*\***Until/unless the university's COVID regulations change, these sessions will be held over Zoom**\*\*\*

### **Assessments**

Short Essay (15%) due February 6  
Research Essay (40%) due March 14  
Issue Response (10%) due April 6  
April Exam (35%) Date set by Registrar's Office

#### ***Short Essay (15%) – due February 6***

A short essay of approximately 1000 words. Essay questions will be posted in the Assignment on OWL. Researching/reading beyond the syllabus is not required.

*If you use an SRA for this assignment, the new due date is February 9 at NOON.*

#### ***Research Essay (40%) – due March 14***

Approximately 2500 words due on. Essay topics will be posted on the course website ('Assignments' tab) but you may also choose your own topic with help (and approval) from your TA. Your essay should take a clear position on the question chosen and have a clear thesis statement in your introductory paragraph. You should then have a number of additional paragraphs that develop your answer to the essay question (i.e. defend your thesis statement). Good essays will also include a counter argument, either in response to each of your positive arguments, or in a separate paragraph at the end. Don't give counter arguments short shrift!

This essay is a research project meaning that you are expected to consult and cite at least five academic sources beyond the scope of the syllabus. Academic sources include academic books and journal articles. They do not include blogs, websites, Wikipedia, encyclopedias, or newspaper articles among others. Non-academic sources can of course be consulted and cited, but this should be in addition to proper academic sources.

#### ***Issue Response (10%) – Due April 6***

You will reflect on an issue or question about which you have changed your mind due to learning more about political theory. You can pick any topic/question covered in POL 2537F or POL2538G. It could be that you have come to completely change your opinion, or maybe you have the same opinion but for different reasons. Either way, in the assignment, you should:

- 1) Explain what opinion you held before and why;
- 2) Explain how it has changed and why;

- 3) Give specific examples from the course material (lectures, readings, etc.) and why you found it persuasive enough to change your view.

Your reflection can take any of the following formats:

- 1) A 500-750 word essay
- 2) A 5-10min video
- 3) A 5-10min audio recording
- 4) Another format of your choice but seek approval of the instructor or TA

*If you use an SRA for this assignment, the new deadline is April 8.*

**Exam (35%):**

The exam will cover material from the readings, videos, and any other content on the course website. At present, it is expected that the exam will be held in person.

**Late Submission of Work**

Late work will incur a penalty of 5% per day or part thereof<sup>1</sup>. In extenuating circumstances, extensions may be granted, but only if arranged in **advance** of the due date. Please note that computer problems do not constitute extenuating circumstances—you are strongly advised to back up your work. If you think you may need an extension, please be in touch as early as possible.

**Inclusivity**

The course tackles topics that may be controversial and personal to some students. Members of this class are from a variety of different academic backgrounds, races, religions, etc., so whilst robust debate is encouraged, it must be done respectfully. If there are circumstances that might affect your performance in this class, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can discuss strategies to accommodate your needs. This includes discussing whether some topics on the syllabus are particularly sensitive for you.

**Schedule**

w/c January 10 – Global Distributive Justice I  
w/c January 17 – Global Distributive Justice II  
w/c January 24 – Immigration  
w/c January 31 – Ethics of War  
w/c February 7 – Multiculturalism  
w/c February 14 – Feminism(s)  
w/c February 28 – Racial Justice  
w/c March 7 – Justice for Future Generations  
w/c March 14 – Justice for Animals & the Environment  
w/c March 21 – Rectifying Historical Injustice  
w/c March 28 – Post-Colonialism

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<sup>1</sup> This means that if the assignment is due at 11:00am on January 1, submitting it at 11:01am January 1 and 10:59 January 2 will receive a 5% penalty. It also means that submitting it at 11:01am January 2 incurs a 10% penalty.

## **Readings**

w/c January 10

*Issues in Political Theory*, ch. 10

Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"

Ethics and World Politics Case Study

w/c January 17

*Ethics and World Politics*, ch. 7

Summary for *The Law of Peoples*

w/c January 24

Oberman, "Can the Brain Drain Justify Immigration Restrictions?"

w/c January 31

*Issues in Political Theory*, ch. 13

w/c Feb 7

*Issues in Political Theory*, chs. 7 & 8

w/c Feb 14

Ferguson et al., "The Feminist Sexuality Debates"

w/c Feb 28

*Issues in Political Theory*, case study in ch. 5

Jeffers, "The Cultural Theory of Race"

Shelby, "Integration, Inequality, and Imperatives of Justice"

w/c Mar 7

"The Non-Identity Problem"

Caney, "Justice and Future Generations"

w/c Mar 14

Singer, *One World*, ch. 2

*Issues in Political Theory*, case study in ch. 14

*Introducing Political Philosophy*, ch. 12

w/c Mar 21

Spinner-Halev, "Historical Injustice"

Waldron, "Superseding Historic Injustice"

w/c Mar 28

*Ethics and World Politics*, ch. 11

Fanon, "Concerning Violence" in *Wretched of the Earth*

w/c April 4

No readings/catch-up week