Introduction to Politics:
Political Theory, Climate Change, and the Zombie Apocalypse, WHAAAT.

Description
What is political power, what legitimizes it, and can it be exercised justly? Correspondingly, what is citizenship, and what values does it rest on—property? equality? liberty? security? virtue? What is the ideal relationship between citizenship, community, and stability? Upon what philosophical basis can people act as political subjects to generate meaningful change for—and perhaps beyond—ourselves?

This course offers an introduction to the canon of Western political thought in the modern era (meaning, from about the 17th century to the present). We explore how different political philosophies bear on questions of human nature, governing, citizenship, power, shared resources, rights, and collective action. At the heart of the course is an examination of the philosophical foundations of, as well as the ongoing tensions within, the philosophy of political liberalism, which we might rightly call an ideology and which is foundational to the U.S. governing system. Along the way, we examine other schools of thought or ideologies that critique and/or compete with liberalism, including conservatism, communism, social democracy, anarchism, fascism, feminism, nationalism and environmentalism.

Zombies R Us: The Walking Dead as a Learning Device
As a working thought experiment, we will also consider the value of political theory in relation to two pressing bio-cultural phenomena, one real and the other perhaps merely imaginary: climate change and zombies. The reverberations of human-influenced climate change illuminate the developed world’s historical assumptions about humans’ relationship to non-human species, land, and the natural environment. The causes of and possible paths for addressing climate change are intractably social and political, and require theory to think them through. Zombie apocalypse narratives, while entirely a cultural invention, provide a compelling
set of metaphors for understanding basic concepts in Western political theory. These include notions of human nature, the social contract, principles of governance, collectivity, crisis, globalization, and ethics, as well as fears about who “we” are and what we could become. Put into dialogue with the problem of climate change (as a very real potential apocalypse), zombie apocalypse stories can raise a mirror to our own actions, anxieties, and imagined solutions.

We will sample some of the academic literature on the topic of zombie narratives, but more often we will use clips from the popular television series The Walking Dead, as well as a few other zombie films. As you build the reading and reasoning skills to consider the seemingly incongruous topics of zombie apocalypse, climate change, and political philosophy in combination, you will, I hope, be persuaded that big, theoretical ideas are still relevant to addressing moral challenges in this increasingly complex, sometimes terrifying world.

The course will be challenging in at least three ways:

1. **Challenging Readings.** Many course readings are drawn from classics in political philosophy, and even when written by contemporary authors will be unfamiliar and difficult to understand at first. But with effort you will build the skills to handle it. You will, however, have to dedicate considerable time reading, and re-reading, passages in order to grasp the author’s meaning. I have built in assignments that will help you with this, but I also strongly encourage careful note-taking as opposed to the faster, but less useful, “highlighter” method. As you will be able to use these notes for discussion and exam prep, the better the notes, the better your grade. I will give some handouts on critical reading guidelines.

2. **Critical Thinking.** You will be asked to engage with course materials through in-class activities that will entail interrogating your own belief systems in ways you may not have done before. The point is not necessarily to change your beliefs, but to critically explore them, which may, at times, feel difficult and raise discomfort.

3. **Rigorous Intellectual Engagement.** The course requires rigorous intellectual engagement—which means you need to participate in small and large group discussions, not just from the top of your head, but having really thought about the readings in a careful way. I will be paying attention to your honest attempts to engage with and understand the readings. Preparation is key to comprehension and success.

**Fair Warning Clause:** Yes, this is a Core Curriculum course, but it is time consuming and intellectually challenging. I take the 3:1 rule seriously (3 hours of homework for every 1 hour of class time), so please consider your schedule carefully. If you feel you do not have time to devote to a reading-intensive course this quarter, I encourage you to save this course for a better time in your academic career.
Objectives
In this course we will endeavor to develop your:

- Ability to read and comprehend essential principles and perspectives in political theory
- Understanding of major governmental paradigms and ideologies in Western political development
- Familiarity with the character of knowledge and methods of inquiry in the social sciences, and conversations between the humanities and the social sciences
- Capacity for applying theoretical frameworks to a complex practical problem, and for interpreting texts and film in popular culture, and
- Critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and argumentation skills

Course Material:
Please purchase the following through the DU Bookstore or online. I strongly prefer that you order the book over the Kindle version. I will also have the books on reserve at the library, but because I prefer that students bring the readings to class, it is better if you have them.


Any readings not from the Love reader will be provided on Canvas, as indicated in the syllabus (as Cv).

Video: Most movie clips will be available through https://coursemedia.du.edu. (Sign in and find our class in your menu.) The clips aren’t listed directly in this syllabus, as I want to leave room to make decisions as we go, but I will clarify assignments in our weekly course modules on Canvas. Some we will view together in class; others I will assign as pre-class activities.

Please note: We will be interested in plot line, ideas, and metaphor, not the gore and violence of zombie films per se, so you are always free to fast forward through or mute scenes you find particularly unpleasant.

Other Class Purchase:
We will be making use of a new course interaction technology called TopHat. This allows for electronic in-class feedback in real time, using the Internet and mobile device technology. The cost to students is $20, and can be used for other classes employing this technology. I will provide instructions on how to access this shortly.

Grading
Grading for the course is based on a combination of exams, out-of-class and in-class participation, one paper, and attendance, as indicated below. Papers are due at the beginning of class on the designated date. (See chart next page.)
Exams
The midterms (approximately 1-hour long) will cover the material from approximately the first and second third of the class. The second midterm is not cumulative per se, but may draw on your understanding from some concepts from the first third of the class. The final exam is cumulative. All exams will involve a combination of multiple choice, matching, short answer, and longer essays and will be taken in class (the final during the final exam period on June 2\textsuperscript{nd}, so please plan to be here through then).

Paper
I will provide a paper prompt two weeks before the assignment is due. It will be an analytical assignment that requires you to think critically about some combination of zombie narratives, political theory, and the climate change crisis.

Online (Pre-Class) Assignments
I have devised some mechanisms that will help you be prepared for class discussion and keep everyone accountable for doing the readings—which really enhances what we all are able to learn in class. One mechanism is use of the Discussion Board function on our course Canvas site.

How it works: By the beginning of Week 2, students will be divided into four groups. Most days of class, as indicated by the syllabus, one group will post carefully composed questions, comments, confusions, and insights in the Discussion Board, while the other groups follow along. Sometimes I will provide prompts to help you work through the reading; other times the board will be wide open for whatever thoughts you wish to share. I will use your discussions to organize my teaching and discussion agenda, and you can draw from them as well for in-class discussion. They will also be a handy record of your progress, useful later.

Guidelines for posting:
- Posts are due by 10 a.m. on the day of class. This is the minimum I need to read through and score them.
- Typical length will be 1 paragraph, 200 words or less. There is a wide range of possibilities for how you might write these reactions, and the format is less important than the coherence of your thoughts and questions. For example, you could post a series of related inquiries, or one sustained response to a specific section of the text.
- Strong entries raise at least one good question about the set of readings as a whole.

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<td>Final exam</td>
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Sometimes it is useful to reflect on how one reading for the current session compares to at least one reading from a previous session. (This is obviously not possible on the first reading.)

When possible, try to put your own reactions in conversation with your fellow students’ postings.

Try to at least skim the group postings before you come to class.

These reflections will be scored on a 1-5 point scale, with 5 being a robust, thoughtful, and carefully edited posting. I will aggregate the scores at the end of the quarter. A missed posting counts as a zero, and late posts lose points.

Other pre-class assignments: I may occasionally assign a video or clip to watch outside of class; a small group conversation to have online; or some other means of preparing for class discussion. I will let you know as these opportunities arise. They will be scored similarly to the discussion board posts.

Participation and in-class work
I see in-class participation as critical to making this class the most rewarding and interesting it can be. I also believe that cooperative learning strategies are useful for helping students wade through challenging reading and difficult philosophical problems. Thus, for a strong grade in participation and group work, students will need to miss no more than two class periods and participate fully in all in-class discussions and group work. TopHat will also be a vehicle for in-class participation, and I encourage you to make use of it especially if you are shy.

Professor Wadsworth’s Course Policies
Academic Integrity
Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. I am vigilant about checking the authenticity of students’ work and have no qualms about prosecuting violators. If you have any questions about what constitutes academic dishonesty, please ask me or refer to DU’s policy at http://www.du.edu/honorcode.

Reading
Your success, and the success of the class, depends on your active participation in discussions about the reading. Students are required to complete the assigned readings at the beginning of each topic or week. During our study of that topic, we may have occasional pop quizzes, break into small discussion groups, and/or do free writing, so if you have not done the reading, you will not be prepared and therefore not able to contribute to your small group.

Absences
We will take attendance daily. It is the policy of the Political Science Department that more than two unexcused absences may result in a failing grade for the course. If you have to be absent, it is your responsibility to find out what the assignment was (check Canvas before you email me) and to communicate with your formal group about what you may need to do to carry your weight in the group work.
Late work
If a legitimate emergency prevents you from turning in an assignment, I need to know the relevant details as soon as possible and we can probably work out an agreement. Otherwise, late individual work will be marked down half a grade for each day that it is late. Late group work will not be accepted, which means that if you tend to be late, you need to try to break the habit so as not to impact your group.

Group work
Your individual contribution to your formal group will be evaluated periodically (and with a score at the end of the quarter) by you, the members of your group, and by me. That means that any “free riders” will be exposed and we will try to correct the problem. Please don’t take this course if you don’t think you are able to carry your weight in a cooperative learning environment.

Classroom behavior
I expect you to come to class well prepared to engage in the multi-directional learning/teaching process. Feel free to question and, at times, disagree with your peers, the reading, or me regarding thoughts and feelings on particular issues. Please do so respectfully and with an aim to facilitating, rather than impeding, the learning process for others. BEHAVE, and be BRAVE, for the love of humanity. 😊
Course Schedule

Week 1
(T) March 24
Course Introduction
_Dogmas & Dreams_ (D&D), Nancy Love’s Introduction, pp. 1-11.

(Th) March 26
(Canvas) Daniel Drezner, “Night of the Living Wonks,” Foreign Policy, June 2010

***Please View Walking Dead, Episode 1 over the weekend on coursemedia.du.edu ***

Part 1: Liberalism’s Aspirations

Week 2: What is Human Nature? Liberal Theories
(T) March 31
(Cv) Thomas Hobbes, selections from Leviathan (see directions online)
Group 1 Discussion Board

(Th) April 2
(Cv) Hobbes, remaining selections from Leviathan
D&D #1: John Locke, Treatise on Civil Government pp. 21-32
Group 2 Discussion Board

Week 3: “Nature” and Contract: Competing Theories
(T) April 7
D&D #24: Petyr Kropotkin, Mutual Aid (1902)
Group 3 Discussion Board

(Th) April 9
D&D #31: Mary Wollstonecraft, Vindication of the Rights of Women (1792)
(Cv) John Stuart Mill, On the Subjection of Women (1869), Chs 1-2
D&D #9: Susan Moller Okin, “Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?”
Group 4 Discussion Board

Week 4: Individual and Community
(T) April 14: Competing Liberties
D&D #s 11, 23, and 22, in that order: Burke (1790), Thoreau (1846) and Goldman (1910)
Midterm #1.
No discussion board.
(Th) April 16: Fascism(s)
D&D #27, 28: Mussolini and Hitler
Group 1 Discussion Board

**Part 2: Liberalism’s Challengers**

**Week 5: Property and Economics in—and as—Politics**
(Th) April 21
D&D #s 2, 3, and 5: Adam Smith, Federalists, Thomas Hill Green
Group 2 Discussion Board

(Th) April 23
(Cv) Video: Wealth Inequality in America
D&D #s 6, 7, 8: Franklin D. Roosevelt, Milton Friedman and Isaac Kramnick
Group 3 Discussion Board

**Week 6: Critiques of Capitalism**
(Th) April 28
D&D #17, 18: Marx and Engels
Group 4 Discussion Board

(Th) April 30
Group 1 Discussion Board
Analytical paper assigned. Due Sunday, May 17th, via upload, by noon.

**Week 7: Thinking Global**
(Th) May 7
D&D #51, 10, 14: Benjamin Barber meets Oakeshott & Kristol
Group 2 Discussion Board

(Th) May 7
(Cv) Dan Drezner, “Regulating the Undead in a Liberal World Order” and “Neoconservatism and the Axis of the Evil Dead”
No discussion board.
Midterm #2.
Week 8: Ethics, Appetite, and Civilization
(T) May 12: Calculating “Futurity”
   D&D # 39, 40, 43: Carson, Gore, Shiva
   (Cv): Stephen Gardiner, “A Perfect Moral Storm”
**Group 3 Discussion Board**
**Post-Midterm Extra Credit due (upload to CV or email)**

(Th) May 14: Us/Them, Self/Other
   D&D #50: Samuel P. Huntington Clash of Civilizations
   D&D #49: Edward Said, Origins of Terrorism
**Group 4 Discussion Board**
**Paper due Sunday, May 17 by NOON.**

Part 3: Climate Change and Zombie Apocalypse

**Week 9: Rights and Resistance**
(T) May 19: The Climate Commons
   D&D #52: Kwame Anthony Appiah
   (Cv): Steve Vanderheiden, “Climate Change, Environmental Rights, and Emissions Shares”

(Th) May 21: Mindful Resistance
   Martin Adamian, “Environmental (In)Justice in Climate Change”
   D&D #26: Starhawk, “How We Really Shut Down the WTO”

Week 10
(T) May 26
   Peter F. Cannavò, “In the Wake of Katrina: Climate Change and the Coming Crisis of Displacement.”
   TBA reading or guest

(Th) May 28
   TBA
   Final review

**Final Midterm** June 2, regular time and place.