INTRODUCTION TO POLITICS: POWER AND JUSTICE

David Ciepley
office: Sturm 468
office hours: M, W 12:00-12:30, 4:00-5:30; and by appointment
office phone: x1-2138 (email preferred)
email: davidciepley@gmail.com

COURSE DESCRIPTION
The study of politics is, most broadly, the study of how people live and live together, as well as how they should live and live together. In ten weeks, we can hardly cover all of the important topics raised by this broad concern. Nevertheless, this course will provide an introduction to some of the key questions in the study of politics—questions such as, what is human nature like? What is power and what forms does it take? What are the origins and goals of government? What does freedom mean in group life, and how is it preserved? What do we mean by justice, and can government advance it? We will explore rival answers to all of these questions. We will also spend several weeks talking about the relationship of government to the economy—a central concern of politics over the past century.

Required books:

Syllabus (subject to revision)

I. A brief history of power

Week 1. Course Introduction; kinds of power
Session 1: Course Introduction. Our reigning ideology of freedom and power. Modes of governance.
Session 2: * Hobbes, on power (posted on Blackboard)
   * Gaventa, “Power and Powerlessness,” 3-bottom16, bottom20-28, 30-32
   * cooperative groups, identify mode of power in newspaper articles
   * discussion of “collective power” in addition to “distributive power” (time allowing)

Week 2. The primal claim of equality, and the origins of inequality
Session 1: * Bonobo kindness
   * Sahlins, “The Original Affluent Society,” 1-20, 29-39
**Week 3** Why Farming Civilizations Rule the Earth  
Session 1: MLK Day (no class)  
Session 2: * Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, ch.4, ch.6, ch.7 (only 114-119, 125, bottom of 128-129)  

**Week 4** The Growth of Human Inequality  
Session 1: * Wenke (settled existence; debt; slavery)  
Session 2: * midterm exam  
* Video TBA  

II. Classic Accounts of the Origins of Society, Government, Property, Justice  

**Week 5** The Ancient and Medieval World  
Session 1: * Aristotle, *Politics* (selections)  
Session 2: The Roman law and the rise of representative government in Europe  
* readings TBA (Roman corporations, feudalism, divine right, taxation, Parliament, popular sovereignty)  

**Week 6** Early Modern Europe  
Session 1: * Locke, *Two Treatises*, pp. 269-272, bottom 275-top277, mid278-mid282,  
bottom285-mid286, mid287-top288, 330-333, 350-351, 412-413. (20pp total)  
* quiz  

**Week 7** Continued; Origins of modern constitutionalism  
* Marx and Engels, “Communist Manifesto,” 1-10, 17-18, 20  
Session 2: * Federalist Papers* (selections)  

III. Distributive Justice  

**Week 8**  
Session 1: * Knight, “The Ethics of Competition”*  
* In-class discussion of the limits of justice (*Fiat justitia ruat caelum).*  
Session 2: * Walzer, “Complex Equality,” 3-30*  
* Walzer, “Money and Commodities,” 95-128  
* quiz
IV. Power in the Economy

Week 9
Session 1: * In-class viewing of segments of “Food, Inc.” and discussion
Session 2: * Ciepley, “Beyond Public and Private: Toward a Political Theory of the Corporation”

V. The Nexus of Political and Economic Power

Week 10
Session 1: * Confessions of an Economic Hitman (selections)
   xi – xvi (The Preface) defining terms like EHM and jackel 6pp
   xix-xxv (Prologue) with stats on Ecuador 7pp
   3-23 Getting into the business 21pp
   33-39 Indonesia (first assignment) 7pp
   48-53 Indonesia cont. (selling out) 6pp
   59-65 Indonesia finished 7pp
   87-105 OPEC and Saudi Money Laundering scheme 19pp
   110-113 Saudi finished 4pp
   66-71 Torrejos of Guatemala 6pp
   81-86 Meets Torrejos 6pp
   117-118 hires MIT guy to work up a bogus econometric system 2pp
   161-164 how the author isn't really an economist and his staff is duped 4pp
   165-170 Ecuador and Rolodos (sp?) 6pp
   176 read the final sentence only (resigns) 0pp
   179-189 Assassinations of Rolodos and Torrejos 11pp
   [203-213] Noriega and the Panama invasion [11pp]
   243-247 top Ecuador 4pp
   249-259 on dollar as reserve currency; U.S. In Iraq; gospel of growth critiqued; Paul Revere
   and critique of British mercantilism 11pp
   [260-265] What you can do [6pp]
   [270-276] frequently asked questions, and [5pp]
   273-274 on “debt forgiveness” with restructuring 2pp

Total pages of reading: 128pp + [22]

Session 2: * Course summary and review
   * Peer evaluation
   * Course evaluation

Final Examination 2:00 pm - 3:50 pm Thursday, Mar 12, Sturm Hall 454
Course Requirements and Grading

Cooperative Learning

This course makes regular use of “cooperative learning” groups. This means working together with, usually, three other students on some assignment or project, usually in-class, but occasionally out of class. These groups will be formed in advance, and you will work with the same group throughout the quarter. Studies show that students learn more and more deeply if they solve a problem with a few others, in a way that asks each to explain their reasoning to the others. Some sessions already indicate that a cooperative learning exercise will be conducted. Others will be announced as we proceed. Cooperative learning necessitates that everyone come prepared (having done the reading and thought about it), and participate in the group discussions. Absences are deadly to a cooperative learning exercise, so should not be taken lightly. On these days, if for some reason you must be absent, you MUST email the instructor and your designated workmates at least 4 hours IN ADVANCE or get a zero for the day. Cooperative learning assignments often end with a joint piece of work of some kind, which will be evaluated by the instructor, and each member of the group will receive the same grade. In other words, you will be collectively responsible for the result. There will be an opportunity at the end of the quarter to anonymously evaluate the contributions of the other members of your group to your group work (i.e., you will give each other a grade), and this will be factored into your participation grade.

Course credit will be based on class participation, one exam, one paper, one panel debate, and occasional quizzes, notes, and outlines. I reserve the right to adjust the assignments as we proceed. In calculating your grade, the various components of this course will be weighed in roughly the following proportions: 35% final, 25% midterm, 10% 1st quiz, 10% 2nd quiz, 20% class and cooperative group participation and submission of any required notes or outlines. So long as class discussions are going well, I will seldom give quizzes or collect notes and outlines. If this is so, then at the end of the quarter their weight will be reduced as part of your evaluation and the weight given to the other elements of the course will be proportionately increased.

Exams: The midterm exam will consist primarily of multiple-choice questions, passage identification, and matching of ideas with authors, with perhaps some short answer questions. The final exam will consist of these and also one or two short essays.

Quizzes: Quizzes will consist of eight to ten questions, primarily multiple choice.

Participation: There are three components to your participation grade:

First, there is participation in our general classroom discussions. This class will be too large for me to expect every student say something in every class session in which there is significant discussion time. However, I will notice who is game to participate and who is a wallflower, and this will influence your participation grade. That said, the classroom is not a competitive arena, and you get demerits rather than credits for hogging the conversation. If you make one reasonably thoughtful comment in a class, you get full credit for the day, with no extra credit for subsequent comments, although they are welcome when pertinent and when others are silent. Also, I’ll occasionally ask a “no-brainer” question. If you’ve nothing else to say for the day, or are simply shy, at least take advantage of these. We’ll all thank you for it, as it will help us keep discussion at a steady pace. Above all, be sensitive to the classroom dynamic, for which
we are all responsible. Don’t take over the discussion; disagree respectfully; keep your comments on topic; try to refer to your classmates by name when referencing a point they have made (this helps keep things civil—reminding us that there is a person behind every opinion).

Second, there is participation in your cooperative group. Since I cannot monitor the performance of every member of every group, this will fall to your peers. At the end of the quarter, each group member will evaluate every other member of the group, including themselves, in terms of their preparedness for groups exercises (did they do the reading and come prepared to discuss it), their ability to work well with others in the group, and the value of their contributions to the group exercises.

Typed notes and quizzes: I may occasionally ask you to submit typed notes on, or outlines of, a reading, usually because I judge the reading to be particularly tricky or to require the connecting of some dots. Notes should be one or two pages long, no longer. Good notes record questions and insights you have and connections you make.

So long as everyone continues to do the reading and discussions remain lively, no recourse to quizzes will be made. But if the class is flagging, quizzes may be instituted and will be factored into final course grades.