



**JOHN FELICE
ROME CENTER**

**PLSC 100: Political Theory
John Felice Rome Center**

Fall 2026

Mondays & Wednesdays | 10:30-11:45

Dr. Francesco Mariani (he/him/his)

Email: fmariani@luc.edu

Office Hours: Wed. 11:45-12:45

(by appointment)

Course Description

This course aims to illuminate some of the fundamental thinkers and concepts of political theory. By tracing a trajectory from the origins of Western philosophy to the 21st century, the course intends to highlight the reciprocal relationship between philosophy and politics. Through the analysis of the thought of major philosophers, it will emerge how philosophy has from the beginning understood politics as its own inescapable mission and how different historical epochs, depending on the contingencies of the moment, have reformulated the nexus between thought and action, between knowledge and political transformation. Many themes still essential to contemporary philosophical-political debate will thus be addressed and discussed: knowledge and power, competence and democracy, individual and community, freedom and moral principles, state and sovereignty, war and peace.

Learning Outcomes

On completion of the course students should be able to demonstrate an understanding of the various approaches of the philosophical questions related to political theory, with attention to the historical and conceptual development of these questions, and be able to articulate some of the major problems and responses central to this area of philosophy.

This course will also enable students to:

- (a) distinguish alternative paradigms on political theory, the individual's understanding and evaluation of his or her role in the world, the relationship between the individual and the community;
- (b) look for and appreciate the reasons given in support of the different views, to assess the forcefulness of the challenge that each poses for the others;
- (c) grasp the historical and cultural determinacy of any philosophical conception of politics;
- (d) identify in the different philosophical conceptions the point of balance between historical material elements, on the one hand, and theoretical and spiritual, on the other hand;
- (e) engage in dialogue with great philosophers, paying close attention to their meaning, their reasons, their concerns, their vision;
- (f) insert their own reflections into the dialogue



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Required Text / Materials

Plato, *The Apology of Socrates* (available online)
Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (available online)
Marx, *The Communist Manifesto* (available online)
Assigned and supplementary readings posted on Sakai;

Attendance Policy

In accordance with the Rome Center mission to promote a higher level of academic rigor, and in compliance with full-time student visa status, all courses adhere to the following attendance policy.

Prompt attendance, preparation and active participation in course discussions are expected from every student and synonymous with academic success. Attendance is mandatory at every class meeting for each course. Lateness or leaving class early will impact the course grade at the professor's discretion. All absences, including medical absences, will be treated the same, unless they are documented long-term conditions or emergencies. Such situations will be evaluated case-by-case by the Academic Affairs office.

Twice-a-week classes:

- After 2 absences, a 2% final grade reduction will be applied for each missed class.
- Missing 6 classes or more will result in an automatic failure (F).

Assessment Components

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|--------------------------------|-----|
| • Midterm Exam (in-class test) | 35% |
| • Final Exam (take-home paper) | 35% |
| • Presentation | 15% |
| • Participation | 15% |

Grading

94-100: A
90-93: A-
87-89: B+
84-86: B
80-83: B-
77-79: C+
74-76: C
70-73: C-
67-69: D+
60-66: D
59 or lower: F



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Academic Integrity

Plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct (use of AI included) are unacceptable at the Rome Center and will be dealt with in accordance with Loyola University Chicago’s guidelines. Please familiarize yourself with Loyola’s standards here: <https://catalog.luc.edu/academic-standards-regulations/undergraduate/>. You are responsible to comply with the LUC University Catalog.

Late or Missed Assignments & Exam Policy

Late or missed assignments will not be accepted for grading without the authorization of the instructor. *As per the JFRC academic policies, students who miss any scheduled exam or quiz, including a final exam at the assigned hours will not be permitted to sit for a make-up examination without approval of the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. Permission is given rarely and only for grave reason; travel is not considered a grave reason. Make-up exams will only be given for documented absences.*

Accessibility Accommodations

Students registered with the Student Accessibility Center (SAC) requiring academic accommodations should contact the Academic Affairs office at the John Felice Rome Center during the first week of classes.

Title IX

The Rome Center follows Loyola’s [Comprehensive Policy and Procedures for Addressing Discrimination, Sexual Misconduct, Retaliation](#) and will comply with those as indicated and instructed.

DEI

In line with JFRC’s commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging, students are expected to embrace and contribute to a learning environment that is open, welcoming, and aims for mutual understanding. As members of the JFRC community, we strive to create a safe and inclusive environment that encourages the expression of diverse opinions. Both students and faculty have a responsibility to convey respect when interacting with others and to honor the dignity of all community members.

Course Schedule

Friday class: September 18th

Date	Topic(s)	Text/Assignment
Mon. 8/31	Introduction. Socrates	
Wed. 9/2	The Apology of Socrates I	<i>The Apology of Socrates</i> (full text)
Mon. 9/7	The Apology of Socrates II	<i>The Apology, Crito</i> (excerpts)



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Wed. 9/9	Socrates and parresia	Foucault (<i>Discourse and Truth</i> , excerpts)
Mon. 9/14	Plato's Republic I	<i>The Republic</i> (Book I-III-VII, excerpts)
Fri. 9/18	Plato's Republic II	<i>The Republic</i> (Book IV-VI, excerpts)
Mon. 9/21	Debate: Plato's critique of democracy	TBD
Wed. 9/23	Machiavelli I	<i>The Prince</i> (Ch. 5-6-9-15)
Mon. 9/28	Machiavelli II	<i>The Prince</i> (Ch. 17-18)
Mon. 9/30	Machiavelli III	<i>The Prince</i> (Ch. 25)
Wed. 10/5	Machiavelli IV	<i>Discourses on Livy</i> (Ch. 1-5)
Mon. 10/7	Midterm exam	
Mon. 10/19	Hobbes I	<i>Leviathan</i> (Ch. 13-17)
Wed. 10/21	Hobbes II	<i>Leviathan</i> (Ch. 21)
Mon. 10/26	Rousseau I	<i>The Social Contract</i> (Ch. 6-7-8)
Wed. 10/28	Rousseau II	<i>The Social Contract</i> (excerpts)
Mon. 11/2	Kant I	<i>What is Enlightenment?</i>
Wed. 11/4	Kant II	<i>Political Writings</i> (excerpts)
Mon. 11/9	Marx I	<i>The Communist Manifesto</i> (first section)
Wed. 11/11	Marx II	<i>The Communist Manifesto</i> (second section)
Mon. 11/16	Marx III	<i>Selected Writings</i> (excerpts)
Wed. 11/18	John Rawls I	<i>A Theory of Justice</i> (excerpts)



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Mon. 11/23	John Rawls II	<i>A Theory of Justice</i> (excerpts)
Wed. 11/25	Foucault	<i>Discipline and Punish</i> (excerpts)
Mon. 11/30	Student presentations I	
Wed. 12/2	Student presentations II	
Mon. 12/7	Final exam	