



JOHN FELICE
ROME CENTER

PLSC 100: Political Theory
John Felice Rome Center

Spring 2026

Tuesdays & Thursdays | 10:30-11:45am

Dr. Moreno Rocchi

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Office Hours: Tue./Thu., 2:00-3:00pm (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 as well as how different historical epochs, depending on the contingencies of the moment, have reformulated the nexus between thought and action, knowledge and political transformation. Many themes still essential to contemporary philosophical-political debate will thus be addressed and discussed, such as: knowledge and power, competence and democracy, individual and community, freedom and moral principles, state and sovereignty, politics and violence.

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;

Required Texts/Materials

Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* (available online)

All other readings will be 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.



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- **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)**.

Campus Health

The JFRC will conduct all activity according to policies and best practices as prescribed by the Italian Ministries of Health and Education and in consultation with the Loyola University Chicago main campus. These policies will be subject to change as the situation warrants.

Assessment Components

• Midterm Exam (in-class test)	30%
• Final Exam (take-home paper)	28%
• Presentation*	6%
• Forum participation**	14%
• In-class participation	22%

* Students are required to give a presentation on a topic of their choosing from the presentation schedule.

** One or two discussion prompts will be posted on Sakai, section "Discussions", every week. You are required to publish at least one post, either a direct answer to my prompts or a reply to someone else's answer, every week. Please try to interact with your classmates as much as possible. 7% will be for completion. The other 7% will be for the quality of your submissions. I will not grade each post individually, but I encourage you to put thought and effort into each of them so that you can demonstrate the skills and knowledge you are gaining throughout the course.

Basic requirements of each post:

- Posts should be between 150 and 250 words;
- Use language that is professional and respectful of both the authors discussed and your classmates;
- Posts that respond to classmates' posts should begin with a brief statement about what you appreciate or agree with about the classmate's post.

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

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest, and responsible manner. Academic integrity is a guiding principle for all academic activity at Loyola University Chicago, and all members of the University community are expected to act in accordance with this principle.

Failing to meet the following academic integrity standards is a serious violation of personal honesty and the academic ideals that bind the University into a learning community. These standards apply



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to both individual and group assignments. Individuals working in a group may be held responsible if one of the group members has violated one or more of these standards.

1. Students may not plagiarize; **the use of AI is considered plagiarism too and treated as such.**
2. Students may not submit the same work for credit for more than one assignment (known as self-plagiarism).
3. Students may not fabricate data.
4. Students may not collude.
5. Students may not cheat.
6. Student may not facilitate academic misconduct.

Follow this link for more details about these standards, sanctions, and academic misconduct procedures: (https://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml)

Late or Missed Assignments

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 (with addendum on classroom recording policy)

Students registered with the Student Accessibility Center requiring academic accommodations should contact the Office of the Dean at the John Felice Rome Center, the first week of classes. Loyola University provides reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Any student requesting accommodations related to a disability or other condition is required to register with Student Accessibility Center (SAC), located in Sullivan Center, Suite 117. Professors receive the accommodation notification from SAC via Accommodate. Students are encouraged to meet with their professor individually in order to discuss their accommodations. All information will remain confidential.

Please note that in this class, software may be used to record class lectures exclusively in order to provide equal access to students with disabilities. Students approved for this accommodation use recordings for their personal study only and recordings may not be shared with other people or used in any way against the faculty member, other lecturers, or students whose classroom comments are recorded as part of the class activity. Recordings are deleted at the end of the semester.

For more information about registering with SAC or questions about accommodations, please contact SAC at 773-508-3700 or SAC@luc.edu.

Notice of Reporting Obligations for Responsible Campus Partners

As an instructor, I am a Responsible Campus Partner ("RCP") under Loyola's Comprehensive Policy and Procedures for Addressing Discrimination, Sexual Misconduct, and Retaliation (available at www.luc.edu/equity). While my goal is for you to be able to engage fully and authentically with our course material through class discussions and written work, I also want to be transparent that as a RCP, I must notify the Office for Equity & Compliance ("OEC")/Title IX Coordinator when I have any information about conduct that reasonably may constitute Title IX Sex-Based Discrimination. Title IX Sex-Based Discrimination includes any of the following conduct, when the conduct was within the University's education program or activity:

- Discrimination or discriminatory harassment on the basis of sex (including sex stereotypes, sex characteristics, gender identity, sexual orientation, and Pregnancy or Related Conditions),
- Sexual harassment (including quid pro quo and hostile environment sexual harassment),



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- Sexual assault,
- Dating and/or domestic violence, and/or
- Stalking

As the University's Title IX office, the OEC coordinates the University's response to reports and complaints of sexual misconduct (as well as discrimination of any kind) to ensure students' rights are protected. The University maintains such reporting requirements to ensure that any student who experiences sexual/gender-based violence receives accurate information about available resources and support. Such reports will not generate a report to law enforcement (no student will ever be forced to file a report with the police). Additionally, the University's resources and supports are available to all students even if a student chooses that they do not want any other action taken. If you have any questions about this policy, you are encouraged to contact the OEC at equity@luc.edu or 773-508-7766.

If you ever wish to speak with a confidential resource regarding gender-based violence, I encourage you to call The Line at 773-494-3810. The Line is staffed by confidential advocates from 8:30am-5pm M-F and 24 hours on the weekend when school is in session. Advocates can provide support, talk through your options (medical, legal, LUC reporting, safety planning, etc.), and connect you with resources as needed – without generating a report or record with the OEC. More information about The Line can be found at www.luc.edu/wellness.

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

(N.B.: ALL READINGS MUST BE DONE BEFORE CLASS!)

Date	Topic	Assignment
Tue. 01/20	Introduction to the course	
Thu. 01/22	Plato: The Basics	PowerPoint presentation; <i>The Republic</i> (excerpt)
Tue. 01/27	Plato: The Ideal State	<i>The Republic</i> (excerpts)
Thu. 01/31	Aristotle's Reply to Plato	<i>Politics</i> (excerpts)
Tue. 02/03	Machiavelli: Virtue, Fortune, Opportunity	<i>The Prince</i> , Ch. I-III and V-VII
Thu. 02/05	Movie Day	
Tue. 02/10	Machiavelli: Politics and Morality	<i>The Prince</i> , Ch. XV-XIX
Thu. 02/12	Machiavelli: Italy's Destiny; Introduction to Hobbes	<i>The Prince</i> , Ch. XXIV-XXVI



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Tue. 02/17	Hobbes' Social Contract (with addendum on Locke's reply)	PowerPoint presentation; <i>Leviathan</i> (excerpts)
Thu. 02/19	Rousseau's Reply to Hobbes	<i>Discourse on the Origins and Foundations of Inequality among Mankind</i> (excerpts)
Tue. 02/24	Rousseau's Social Contract	<i>The Social Contract</i> , excerpts
Thu. 02/26	Review	
Tue. 03/03	Midterm Exam	
Thu. 03/05	Kant on History and Rousseau	«Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose»; «Conjectural Beginning of Human History»
<u>[SPRING BREAK]</u>		
Tue. 03/17	Kant on International Law and Politics	<i>Perpetual Peace. A Philosophical Sketch</i> (excerpts)
Thu. 03/19	Modern Reflections on Individual Freedom	Anthology of sources (Constant, Tocqueville, Mill)
Tue. 03/24	Debate Class: Freedom of Speech	Materials posted on Sakai
Thu. 03/26	Marx on Human Nature and Capitalism	PowerPoint presentation (part I); Manuscript on "Alienation"
Tue. 03/31	Movie Day	
Thu. 04/02	Marx on Freedom, Politics, and History	PowerPoint presentation (part II); excerpts from <i>The Communist Manifesto</i> , <i>On the Jewish Question</i> and <i>The German Ideology</i>
Tue. 04/07	Machiavellian Variations in the 20 th Century	Anthology of sources (Gramsci, Arendt, Walzer)
Thu. 04/09	Debate class: Politics and Violence	Materials posted on Sakai
Tue. 04/14	Rawls and his critics	<i>A Theory of Justice</i> (excerpts); Anthology of sources (Nozick, Sandel, Taylor)
Thu. 04/16	Feminism and Political Philosophy	Anthology of sources (Irigay, Gilligan, Okin, Fraser)
Tue. 04/21	Contemporary Reflections on Populism	Urbinati, <i>Me the People. How Populism Transforms Democracy</i> (excerpts); Zizek, «Against the Populist Temptation»



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Thu. 04/23 Study day: *work on your final paper!*

Thu. 04/30 Final Exam (= take-home paper
(*to be confirmed*) deadline)