Course Description:

Behind political conflict and the game of politics—campaigns and elections, pundits and commentators, policy analysts and advocates, protesters and authorities, behind even those who fight and die—lie certain fundamental issues that persist from generation to generation and that give political life its energy and form. In this course, we will begin to explore several such issues: the question of justice at war, the question of the role of government in relation to the economy, the question of constitutional design, and the question of the cultural foundations of political freedom.

We will read several books in this course, most of them written relatively recently, but we will also sample several great works of political philosophy. Lectures, quizzes, and tests will be designed around the reading assignments, which are given in the syllabus class by class. To succeed in the course, you should come to class having read the assignment for that day—a daily quiz will give you an incentive to keep up—and having thought about its significance for our study.

Professor:  
James R. Stoner, Jr. 
poston@lsu.edu  
225-578-2538

Teaching Assistant:  
Peidong Wu 
pwu6@lsu.edu

Office Hours:  
M, 1:00–2:30 p.m.  
F, 9:00–10:00 a.m., and by appointment  
225-578-2538

Class Time and Location:  
MWF 10:30–11:20 a.m.  
Dodson Auditorium

Attendance: Attendance in class is expected, unless you are ill, have been required to isolate or quarantine due to covid-19, or a similar emergency. For those who cannot attend in person, the lecture will be webcast synchronously on Zoom. You must email Peidong Wu (and copy Prof. Stoner) before class to get the link for the day’s Zoom-cast.

Class Discussion: The instructor will pause for questions during lecture and encourages you to speak up. For students, the Chatham House Rule applies: no student question or comment made in class should be attributed to the speaker outside of class. Please show courtesy to one another, of course.
Course Materials:
The following books are required and are (or will soon be) available in the bookstore. Please obtain these specific editions so that we can all work from the same translations and/or page numbers. The books are listed in the order in which we will study them. Additional articles are available through the Moodle website, either in pdf or as an internet link.


NOTE: You will need to bring to class every day an electronic device that can access the internet (specifically, the Moodle site for the course): a smartphone, a tablet, or a laptop.

Grading:
- Daily quizzes (open book; make-ups only if arranged beforehand) 25%
- In-class test (Fri., Feb. 18) 20%
- In-class test (Fri., Apr. 8) 20%
- Final Exam (Sat., May 14, 7:30-9:30 a.m.) 35%

Grading scale:
- A+ (98%-100%), A (93%-97%), A- (90%-92%)
- B+ (88%-90%), B (83%-87%), B- (80%-82%)
- C+ (78%-80%), C (73%-77%), C- (70%-72%)
- D+ (68%-70%), D (63%-67%), D- (60%-62%)
- F (below 60%)

General Education Credit and the Integrative Learning Core:
General education credit for the social sciences will be earned by students in this course, since our study shares the goals of the general education program at LSU. According to an earlier LSU catalogue, “General education courses are not hurdles to be overcome; rather, they are means by which students learn to think, describe, interpret, and analyze the world. Their primary aim is to educate rather than train, and to instill a desire for life-
long learning.” We are now mandated to add the following: “Integrated learning allows students to make simple connections among ideas and experiences and across disciplines and perspectives. The LSU Integrative Learning Core (ILC) curriculum is designed to develop student abilities to transfer their learning to new situations, and demonstrate a sense of self as a learner. A fundamental goal of the ILC is to foster students’ practical and intellectual capacities associated with integrative learning in preparation for high competence and functionality in their post-baccalaureate careers. This course fulfills the BOR Area of Social/Behavioral Sciences and provides students experience with the ILC proficiency of Inquiry and Analysis.”

SYLLABUS:


I. War and Peace

Mon., Jan. 24: Walzer, chapters 2, 3
Wed., Jan. 26: Walzer, chapters 4, 6
Fri., Jan. 28: Walzer, chapters 8, 9
Mon., Jan. 31: Walzer, chapters 12, 14, 16
Wed., Feb. 2: Walzer, chapters 18, 19

II. Wealth and Poverty

Fri., Feb. 4: John Dewey, *Liberalism and Social Action*, chapter 1
Mon., Feb. 7: Dewey, chapter 2
Wed., Feb. 9: Dewey, chapter 3

Mon., Feb. 14: Hayek, chapters 4-6
Wed., Feb. 16: Hayek, chapters 7-8, 14

Fri, Feb. 18: Test

III. First Principles

Fri., Feb. 25: Aristotle, Book 7

[Mardi Gras Break]
Fri., Mar. 4: Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, q. 91, aa. 1-4; q. 94, aa. 1-6; q. 95, aa. 1-2; q. 97, aa. 1-4


Fri., Mar. 11: The Declaration of Independence

[Spring Break]

**IV. Forming and Re-Forming Government**

Mon., Mar. 21: Constitution of the United States;


Fri., Mar. 25: *The Federalist* ##47-51 in Wootton, pp. 231-250


Keith E. Whittington, “How to Read the Constitution” (2006)

Burdett Loomis (pro) and Byron E. Shafer (con), “Resolved, The president should be elected directly by the people,” in Richard Ellis and Michael Nelson, eds., *Debating the Presidency*, 4th ed. (CQ Press, 2018)


Fri., Apr. 8: Test

V. Character and Culture

Mon., Apr. 11 Allan Bloom, The Closing of the American Mind, pp. 20-61

[Good Friday/Easter Break]

Mon., Apr. 18: Bloom, pp. 336-382

Wed., Apr. 20: Shelby Steele, White Guilt, pp. 3-56
Fri., Apr. 22: Steele, pp. 57-110
Mon., Apr. 25: Steele, pp. 113-181

Wed., Apr. 27: Erika Bachiochi, Rights of Women, introduction, chapter 1
Fri, Apr. 29: Bachiochi, chapters 4, 7
Mon., May 2: Bachiochi, chapters 8-9
Wed., May 4: Bachiochi, chapter 10

Barack Obama, “Farewell Address,” January 10, 2017

FINAL EXAMINATION: Saturday, May 14 (7:30-9:30 a.m.)