

# Power, Justice, and the State

Political Science 112 (3 credits)  
Fall Semester 2017  
meets 9:10-10:10 MWF Clow 224  
Office Hours: 10:15-11:30 MWF  
or by appointment

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**Course Description:** Power, Justice, and the State invites you to consider important themes of public interest. Why do we have a state? What should the state do and why? What should it not do? Does citizenship create obligations about how to treat others as well as confer benefits? We will consider several major schools of thought about these matters— theories of justice. We will discuss the strengths and the shortcomings of these theories, both in terms of their logical consistency and in practice. We do this in order to develop civic knowledge, enhance our understanding of community life, and to explore options of what kind of community we should strive for.

## Essential Learning Objectives:

- develop civic knowledge
- engage in critical and creative thinking
- objectively evaluate theories and their assumptions

**Reading Material:** In some college courses you will be expected to read a lot; in others, not at all. In this course I am shooting for a manageable amount of reading, with the clear expectation that you will do it *before class on the day it is assigned*. Our only book for purchase is Jonathan Wolff's *An Introduction to Political Philosophy* 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. It is available at the University Bookstore (or on line). All other readings will be provided on the D2L (Desire2Learn) or via a web link listed below.

## Course Requirements and Grading

Attendance	50 points
Participation	100 points
Reading Quizzes	50 points
Two Papers	75 points each
Three Exams	<u>50 points each</u>
	500 points

Like many professors, I will use a standard **scale for grading** where 93% and above is an A, 90-93% is an A-, 88-89% is a B+, etc. At any point you can figure out your grade to that date by dividing the number of points earned by the total number possible.

Professors have different **attendance** policies. I expect you to attend class and I record attendance. The reason I do this is that attendance and higher grades are strongly correlated, and it is good to get (or stay) in the habit of attending class. If you are ill, have a family emergency, have a religious holiday, or you are participating at a University-sponsored event it is University policy that your teacher must excuse you from attendance, understanding that you are still responsible for the material covered that day and any make up work. Please let me know if you are in one of those situations, and I will count you as excused. Each unexcused absence is a loss of 5 points (or 1% of the total) from your grade.

You may **participate** in class in a variety of ways: ask questions, make comments, work actively in groups, display a general enthusiasm for learning and the class itself, see me during office hours, be helpful to a peer. If you want to get above a C in this portion of the grade, you need to talk in class. I know that can be a challenge, but it is best to face that challenge and succeed in doing this now. I will give you a mid-term assessment of your participation.

**Reading quizzes:** Each week there is no test, there will be a quiz. The quiz can come on any day you have a reading assignment and it will cover the reading for that day, and that day only. Each quiz is worth 5 points. Your lowest two (out of 12 total) will not count toward your grade, your top 10 quizzes will. Questions from quizzes may be repeated on exams.

**Papers:** Papers are to be turned in at the beginning of class on the day they are due (**October 6<sup>th</sup>** and **November 10<sup>th</sup>**). Please bring two copies of your paper, each individually stapled (and preferably printed double-sided). One is for me, and one will be distributed to a peer for feedback. The topics/questions to be answered by your paper are offered below, on their due date. Each paper should be approximately 5-6 pages, double-spaced. Exceeding that page count is no problem; I read what you write. I will give you the option of rewriting one of these papers for a revised grade, and if you choose to do this rewrite, it is due December 4<sup>th</sup>.

The three **tests** in the course are scheduled for **September 27<sup>th</sup>**, **October 25<sup>th</sup>**, and **December 13<sup>th</sup>**. Tests will encompass a variety of assessment mechanisms, essay, multiple choice, identification of terms, etc. The tests will be open note. Please be advised that open note exams increase the difficulty of the questions that I can legitimately ask. Your own diligence in taking notes when reading and in class strongly correlates with a higher grade. No photocopied or group notes are allowed.

## Daily Readings, Assignments, and Topics for Discussion

- September 6 welcome; the syllabus, your learning contract  
reading: the syllabus
- September 8 introduction to basic terms in political theory; meet Maggie Vacula, peer mentor  
reading: none
- September 11 anarchism, can we live without government?  
reading: Wolff, "The Conflict between Authority and Autonomy," from *In Defense of Anarchism* (D2L)
- September 13 libertarianism, the hope for minimalist government  
reading: Friedman "The Role of Government in a Free Society," from *Capitalism and Freedom* (D2L)
- September 15 scheduled field trip to Student Success Center and student support services
- September 18 rights-based liberalism, an ethic of mutual care,  
reading: the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights to be found at <http://www.jus.uio.no/lm/un.universal.declaration.of.human.rights.1948/portrait.a4.pdf>
- \*\*6-7:30 discussion of free speech on college campuses, Reeve Union\*\***
- September 20 utilitarianism, seeking the greatest happiness,  
reading: Shaw, "Introducing Utilitarianism," pp. 1-17 from *Contemporary Ethics: Taking Account of Utilitarianism* (D2L)
- September 22 effective note taking; safety in college  
reading: "For Better Learning in College..." to be found at:  
<https://www.brookings.edu/research/for-better-learning-in-college-lectures-lay-down-the-laptop-and-pick-up-a-pen/>
- September 25 communitarianism: rediscovering our best selves?  
reading: Barber, excerpts from *Strong Democracy* (D2L)
- September 27 **first exam**
- September 29 learning to unitask with the help of Nicholas Carr, author of *The Shallows*:  
listen to podcast found at:  
[http://link.brightcove.com/services/player/bcpid57825992001?bckey=AQ~~,AAAADXaozYk~,BawJ37gnfAnGoMxEDQj\\_T9APQXRHKyAC&bctid=1128986496001](http://link.brightcove.com/services/player/bcpid57825992001?bckey=AQ~~,AAAADXaozYk~,BawJ37gnfAnGoMxEDQj_T9APQXRHKyAC&bctid=1128986496001)
- October 2 Introduction to "the state of nature"  
reading: Wolff, *An Introduction to Political Philosophy*, pp. 1-24

October 4 the state of nature, continued  
reading: Wolff, pp. 24-33

October 6 **first paper due**

assignment prompt: What is the “state of nature”? Is this a useful concept? Why or why not? If so, does it help point to which theory of justice is best?; if not, what are the specific implications for the major theories of justice?

October 9 what justifies the state, if anything?  
reading: Wolff, pp. 34-49

October 11 utilitarianism revisited  
reading: Wolff, pp. 49-61,

October 13 advice for college from upper class students  
reading: “Advice for New Students from those who Know” article found at:  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/02/education/edlife/advice-for-new-students-from-those-who-know-old-students.html?ref=collection%2Fsectioncollection%2Feducation&action=click&contentCollection=education&region=rank&module=package&version=highlights&contentPlacement=13&pgtype=sectionfront>

October 16 what is democracy good for, and is it good?  
reading: Wolff, pp. 62-77

October 18 participation, representation, and minority rights  
reading, Wolff, pp. 77-103

October 20 picking a major...liberal arts vs. vocational tracks:  
reading: “New College Grads: Who Employers Want to Hire” found at:  
<http://www.cbsnews.com/news/new-college-grads-who-employers-want-to-hire/>  
and “Students...don’t Pick Useless Majors” found at:  
<https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/students-at-most-colleges-dont-pick-useless-majors/>

October 23 on the proper extent of personal liberty  
reading: Wolff, pp. 104-133

October 25 **second exam**

October 27 The University Studies Program at UW Oshkosh with Dr. Gabriel Loiacano, USP Director (meet at Pollock House); registration and finding classes;

October 30 economic markets and politics  
reading: Wolff, pp. 134-153

November 1 John Rawls’ “two theories of justice”  
reading: Wolff, pp. 153-178

November 3 six strategies about how to learn better  
listen to podcast: <https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/learning-strategies/>

- November 6 how do we attain justice for everyone?  
reading: Wolff, pp. 179-203
- November 8 can justice be a universal, global concept?  
reading: Wolff, pp. 203-215
- November 10 **second paper due**  
assignment prompt: what is the most adequate theory of justice you have encountered and why? What are its advantages over other theories? What are its weaknesses and, being specific, why are those weaknesses less problematic than the weaknesses of others?
- November 13 theme week—race  
reading: Coates, “The Case for Reparations,” parts 1-5 found at:  
<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>
- November 15 race, continued  
reading: Coates, “The Case for Reparations,” parts 6-10, see above
- November 17 financial literacy for college students  
reading: <https://www.cnn.com/2015/06/19/11-strategies-to-cut-down-on-student-loan-debt.html>
- November 20 theme—education  
reading: Mettler, *Degrees of Inequality* excerpts (D2L)
- November 22 and 24 No class—Enjoy Thanksgiving Break
- November 27 theme week—money, markets, and wealth distribution  
reading: Walzer, “Money and Commodities” from *Spheres of Justice* (D2L)
- November 29 money, markets, and wealth distribution, continued  
podcast: “Nike Sweatshops: Behind the Swoosh” found at  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M5uYCWVfuPQ>
- December 1 what do professors do?  
readings: “College Professors Reveal...” found at  
<http://www.businessnewsdaily.com/8203-professor-jobs.html> and  
“The Duties of Professors at Colleges and Universities” found at  
[http://www.gly.uga.edu/railsback/railsback\\_profduties.html](http://www.gly.uga.edu/railsback/railsback_profduties.html)
- December 4 theme week—health care  
reading: Kawachi, “Why the US is not Number One in Health Care,” excerpt  
from *Healthy, Wealthy, and Fair* (D2L)  
**optional rewrite of paper due**

December 6 health care, continued,  
reading: Gawande, “Trumpcare vs. Obamacare” found at:  
<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/03/06/trumpcare-vs-obamacare>

December 8 review, summary, and reflection

December 11 theme—environmental justice, including nature and other living beings  
reading: Regan, “The Case for Animal Rights” to be found at  
<http://www.animal-rights-library.com/texts-m/regan03.htm>

December 13 **third exam**

December 15 course conclusion

\* Note that there will be a couple **co-curricular events** that you will be expected to attend. This is a requirement in all Quest I classes, and it helps to acquaint you with the huge number of events here at UW Oshkosh during every semester. The first of these is already scheduled: from 6-7:30 on Monday Sept. 18<sup>th</sup>, you will attend a discussion of free speech on college campuses and a proposed law about this issue in Reeve Union. Details on this and additional events will follow.

## **The University Studies Program and Liberal Arts Education**

The USP is UW Oshkosh’s general education program. All accredited Universities have a general education program, consisting of an array of courses outside of a major. The purpose of the USP is to ensure that you get a broad education, something that acquaints you with the world, science, literature, writing, and the arts in a deeper way than you did in high school. This is what is meant by a “liberal arts” education. A good liberal arts background typically makes you more desirable to employers and a more well-rounded person.

In three “Quest” classes, you will examine three different questions. The question at issue in this Quest I class is “how do people understand and engage in community life?” All Quest I and Quest II classes are paired with either a writing class or speaking class. Both classes are small in size and together constitute a “learning community,” as you take the two classes with the same group. Learning beyond your major is important. It makes you more versatile and knowledgeable; it helps develop skills that a major or concentration can’t. This Quest I course’s 3 credits count toward the “Explore” Society requirement.

### **Additional Policies and Information**

**On Writing** Writing well is an important skill, one that will help you succeed and advance in almost any profession. Writing well allows people to know what you think and for you to make a persuasive case for your point of view. Writing well is a lifetime endeavor and I want to help you to improve your writing, no matter the level of proficiency that you are at now. You will be writing two formal papers, and you will also do some writing in the class itself. I

expect to have a personal appointment with each of you to discuss your writing as well as your hopes for college and you in general.

All written work in this class must be your own, unless specifically instructed otherwise. If you quote or paraphrase anyone's argument you must cite their work (more on citations as you prepare for the first paper). Papers that are late by one class period will be docked by one grade increment (i.e. an A- becomes a B+); after that, a late paper is docked a full grade.

**Peer Mentor:** Every Quest I class comes with a peer mentor, an upperclass UW Oshkosh student who is here to help introduce you to the campus and its resources. **Maggie Vacula** is your Peer Mentor. She will regularly attend class on Fridays, and lead some class activities. She is also available to you by email or in person by appointment. It can help to have someone to talk to, and your conversations with Maggie are confidential.

**Civic Knowledge and Civic Engagement:** Civic knowledge consists of an awareness and understanding of the various political and social processes that impact the nature and quality of life in local, state, national, or global communities. It also encompasses the cultivation of skills that may be useful in public life, like effective communication and ethical reasoning. Civic engagement means having an appreciation for and applying the values gained from civic knowledge in real world settings, directed at improving the quality of life in the communities of which one is a part. Civic knowledge and civic engagement emphasize learning, reflection and action in order to create better communities.

**Early Alert:** Early Alert provides you with an early report from your teacher. This report will indicate if you have academic performance or attendance problems and, if so, will help you to remedy these issues. It is common for students to be unaware of their academic performance in classes or even overestimate their performance. This is a check, offered during Week 5, that will help you know if you are on track for passing this class and others.

**Learning Outcomes and Core Abilities:**

- know the tenets of key theories of justice and evaluate them
- articulate why thinking about justice is important
- apply concepts of justice to real-world situations
- constructively respond to and critique the work of peers

**Barring documented necessity, tests must be taken at the scheduled time.**

**Classroom electronics policy:** Using a computer to take notes is tempting, but studies show it is less effective than taking notes by hand. Thus, barring a demonstrated need to take notes by computer, I will ask you to take hand written notes. Cell phones tend to be a distraction and should be put away and not accessed during the class. If you do need to use your phone for some reason, please leave the room to do so. If you use a cell phone during class, I will likely ask you to leave the class to use it.

**Political Science majors** should take Political Methodology (245) in either their sophomore or first semester of their junior year. PS245 is a prerequisite for the senior capstone, Political Analysis (401), and cannot be taken concurrently.