



# Core Curriculum Supplement

**Academic Unit / Office** Political Science

**Catalog Year of Implementation** 2017-2018

**Course (Prefix / Number)** POLS / 3348

**Course Title** Left, Right, and Center

### Core Proposal Request

- Add course to Core Curriculum  
 Revise course already in Core Curriculum

	<b>Current Core Categorization</b> <small>(Fill out this column completely)</small>	<b>Proposed Changes to Categorization</b> <small>(For this column, only fill out the fields being REVISED)</small>
Foundational Component Area (must select one)	N/A (Not currently a Core course)	Government/Political Science
Component Area Option (optional)	N/A (No Component Area Option)	Writing in the Disciplines
Category Listing: Single or Double?	N/A (Not currently a Core course)	List under Component Area Option ONLY.

### Core Proposal Rationale

Under the recently changed requirements for our Major, a student must take one of three Theory courses. As of now only one of those three is a WID course. This is a request that the above, POLS 3348, be made WID so that Political Science majors will be able to fulfill their core requirements while working towards their major, without being forced to take POLS 3310 [currently WID] to do so.

### Core Objectives

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Critical Thinking               | <input type="checkbox"/> Teamwork                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communication                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Responsibility   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Empirical & Quantitative Skills | <input type="checkbox"/> Personal Responsibility |

Please explain how any of the above selected Core Objectives will be met.

When submitting this form, please remember to attach a syllabus, learning objectives, and/or sample lesson(s).

## Left, Right, and Center

POLS 3348, #24662

Spring 2016

AH 16

MW 1-2:30pm

Jeffrey Church

447D Phillip G. Hoffman Hall

Office Hours: MW 2:30-4pm, or by appointment

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### Course Synopsis

In recent years, political debates in the U.S. have become considerably less civil—the shouts of “you lie!” or the labeling of opponents as Nazis or socialists have poisoned partisan relationships. With the proliferation of voices on cable television and the internet in the 21st century, the polarizing, extreme, and superficial voices have largely come to drown out the more sober, thorough, and thoughtful. In such an environment, it is difficult to discern what is true and false in a political argument. All political discourse appears suspect as “biased” and all positions seem to be taken out of some “agenda” or “ideology.” This course seeks to deepen students' knowledge of political disagreements first by giving students a “road map” of contemporary political ideologies. Then, we will turn to the historical development of conservatism and progressivism to understand the rational core of these disagreements. The goal of the course is to prepare students to navigate political debate in a civil and thoughtful way.

### Required Texts

Jason Brennan, *Libertarianism: What Everyone Needs to Know* (Oxford University Press)

John Locke, *The Second Treatise on Government and a Letter Concerning Toleration* (Dover)

Irving Kristol, *Neoconservatism: the Autobiography of an Idea* (Elephant Press)

Jennifer Mather Saul, *Feminism: Issues & Arguments* (Oxford University Press)

Michael Sandel, *Public Philosophy: Essays on Morality in Politics* (Harvard University Press)

### Course Goals

This course aims to...

- ...teach you how to think at a theoretical level about politics;
- ...show you how to read difficult texts as a thorough and charitable reader;
- ...introduce you to the principles and disagreements of conservatism and progressivism.

### Course Format

There are two sides to this course, in class and out of class. In class, you will find that the course format is **SEMINAR** style. I will lecture on some occasions to give necessary historical background, but every class will consist of a good deal of discussion. Only by taking part in dialogue can you learn to be a better democratic participant.

In order to have a good discussion in class, we must read each text carefully and thoroughly outside of class. Thus, the format outside of class is **NO LAZY READING** allowed. You simply cannot concentrate well enough on a text to understand it while watching television or surfing the internet. Put down these distractions and read **ACTIVELY**. This course is

animated by the philosophy that you learn by doing—by participating in class, by scribbling questions in the margins of your book, by composing summaries of the author’s arguments.

In addition, since the use of the internet is distracting to other students, **computers are NOT ALLOWED in the classroom**. Also, by writing rather than typing your notes you’ll learn better. See:

### **“The Pen is Mightier than the Keyboard”**

By Pam Mueller and Daniel Oppenheimer (April 2014, *Journal of Psychological Science*)

#### **Abstract**

Taking notes on laptops rather than in longhand is increasingly common. Many researchers have suggested that laptop note taking is less effective than longhand note taking for learning. Prior studies have primarily focused on students’ capacity for multitasking and distraction when using laptops. The present research suggests that even when laptops are used solely to take notes, they may still be impairing learning because their use results in shallower processing. In three studies, we found that students who took notes on laptops performed worse on conceptual questions than students who took notes longhand. We show that whereas taking more notes can be beneficial, laptop note takers’ tendency to transcribe lectures verbatim rather than processing information and reframing it in their own words is detrimental to learning.

#### **Assignments and Grading**

**Reading Quizzes (20% total)** I will periodically give “pop quizzes” at the beginning of class. An unexcused absence results in a 0 for that day’s quiz. I will drop the lowest quiz grade of the semester.

**Essays (20% total)** You are expected to produce two three-page writing assignments (double spaced) in this course. The dates are listed on the syllabus below in bold, and you should respond to the question listed on that day.

**Midterm Exam (20%)** The midterm will consist of short answer-identifications and essays. I will distribute a study guide in advance of the final exam.

**Final Exam (30%)** There are two parts to the final exam, the take-home exam (20%) and a debate (10%). The take-home will be similar to the midterm, including a mix of short answers and essays. The debate will take place during the final exam period assigned to our class. Attendance is mandatory. You will be assigned to research and defend a conservative or progressive side of one issue. The final debate is intended to model “civil discourse,” and so I will be assessing you based on both the civility of your debating manner and the quality of your arguments.

**Participation (10%)** Attendance is essential for success in a class such as this one. Two unexcused absences are allowed, but each additional absence will lower your grade by 5 points. Additionally, it is not enough just to show up. I expect regular, high-quality participation in classroom discussion.

**Extra credit** Extra credit consists in participating in the online discussion on the course blackboard website.

## **Grading Scale**

A	100-94
A-	93-90
B+	89-87
B	86-84
B-	83-80
C+	79-77
C	76-74
C-	73-70
D	69-60
F	59-0

## **Academic Honesty**

*This class strictly adheres to the university's policy on academic honesty.* Please consult the following website for guidelines on the proper citation of sources and for avoiding plagiarism:

<http://www.class.uh.edu/wonline/plagiarism/>

## **Reading Assignments and Due Dates**

### **INTRODUCTION**

- 1/20 Introductory lecture on the state of political debate today, why ideas matter, and our responsibility as citizens to build a better public sphere for political discourse.
- 1/25 Russell Kirk, "Ten Conservative Principles"  
"Port Huron Statement for a Democratic Society"
- What are the main conservative and progressive principles you recognize?

### **CONSERVATISM**

#### **Libertarianism**

- 1/27 Jason Brennan, *Libertarianism: What Everyone Needs to Know*, chapters 1-3 (pp. 1-53)  
-Write out one argument you admire of Brennan's, and one you disagree with, and give some reasons why in both cases.
- 2/1 *Libertarianism*, chapters 4-6 (pp. 54-128)  
-Can government be useful for any public purpose? Why or why not?
- 2/3 *Libertarianism*, chapters 7-8 (pp. 129-171)  
-Do you think libertarianism is a "realistic" political philosophy? Why or why not?

- 2/8 Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chapter 13 (course blackboard)  
 John Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*, chapters 1-3, 9  
**PAPER 1:** Compare and contrast Hobbes' and Locke's views of the state of nature. Why do they come to such different views of the basic condition of human beings?
- 2/10 *Second Treatise*, chapters 10-12  
 The Declaration of Independence  
 -What are the connections between Locke and the Declaration of Independence? In what ways are these texts libertarian and in what way not?
- 2/15 *Second Treatise*, chapter 5  
 -How does Locke justify private property? What are the limits of accumulation of private property? Compare and contrast his view with Brennan's.

### Social Conservatism

- 2/17 Irving Kristol, *Neoconservatism: the Autobiography of an Idea*, "On Conservatism and Capitalism", "Capitalism, Socialism, and Nihilism"  
 -How is neoconservatism different from libertarianism? How would Kristol respond to Brennan's book?
- 2/22 *Neoconservatism*, "Men, Women, and Sex"  
 Mona Charen, "What the Left and Right Don't Get about Campus Rape,"  
<http://thefederalist.com/2015/08/31/what-the-left-and-right-dont-get-about-campus-rape/>  
 -Why do neoconservatives think that the decline of courtship and marriage is bad for society? Do you agree?
- 2/24 *Neoconservatism*, "Urban Civilization and its Discontents," "The Coming 'Conservative Century'", "Social Reform: Gains and Losses", "Welfare: the Best of Intentions, the Worst of Results"  
 Ross Douthat, "Pot and Jackpots" (blackboard)  
 David Brooks, "Weed: Been There, Done That" (blackboard)  
 -Why do conservatives think that marijuana legalization is bad? Do you agree?
- 2/29 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (course blackboard)  
 -Why is religion important for democracy? Do you agree with Tocqueville? Why or why not?
- 3/2 Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (course blackboard)  
 -Why are traditions necessary for good political order, for Burke?
- 3/7 Burke continued  
 -How would a libertarian respond to Burke?
- 3/9 **MIDTERM EXAM**

3/14, 3/16 SPRING BREAK

## **PROGRESSIVISM**

### Progressive Liberalism

3/21 FDR, “Commonwealth Club Address” (course blackboard)

-How does FDR expand the notion of rights? On what basis does he expand our rights?

3/23 Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto* (course blackboard)

-Marx is the most famous critic of the laissez-faire market process. Evaluate one of Marx’s views of the market’s bad effects.

3/28 Karl Marx, “Estranged Labor” (course blackboard)

***PAPER 2:*** Pick an occupation in the contemporary economy that Marx would think causes alienation. Use Marx’s analysis to argue that workers in this occupation are indeed alienated.

### Identity Politics Progressivism

3/30 Jennifer Mather Saul, *Feminism: Issues & Arguments*, pp. 1-44

-Pick one of the “proposals” Saul discusses in chapter 1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal?

4/4 *Feminism*, pp. 45-109

-How would a social conservative respond to Saul’s arguments, and how would Saul reply in turn?

4/6 *Feminism*, pp. 110-169

-What are the feminist concerns about “feminine appearance?” Are they justified concerns in your view? Why or why not?

4/11 Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, part 1 (course blackboard)

-Discuss one way in which women’s rights are imperiled, for Wollstonecraft.

4/13 *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, part 2 (course blackboard)

-Who offers a better defense of feminism, Wollstonecraft or Saul?

### Communitarianism

4/18 Michael Sandel, *Public Philosophy*, chapters 1, 5

-What is a “public philosophy” and why is it important to have one?

4/20 Michael Sandel, *Public Philosophy*, chapters 9, 11, 12, 14-17

- Pick one issue Sandel discusses. Offer an objection to it, then consider what his response might be.
- 4/25 Michael Sandel, *Public Philosophy*, chapters 19-21, 25
- Pick one issue Sandel discusses. Offer an objection to it, then consider what his response might be.
- 4/27 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Discourse on the Origins of Inequality," selections (course blackboard)
- How does Rousseau's view of human nature differ from the other theorists we've studied? Discuss one way in which this difference is significant.
- 5/2 *The Social Contract*, book 1, chapters 1, 3, 5-8; book 3, chapter 15 (course blackboard)
- Rousseau's view of the Social Contract differ from Locke's? Discuss one implication of this difference.

**\*\*\*\*\*Take Home Final Exam due Thursday, May 5 at 5pm\*\*\*\*\***

**\*\*\*Debates Take Place During Final Exam Period, Monday, May 9, 2-5pm\*\***