



POSC 220: Political Theory: Ancient to Modern

Term: Fall 2026

Credits: 3.0

Lecture Times & Location: Tuesday & Thursday 11:00 a.m.–12:15 p.m., Lovell Hall 130

Modality: In-Person

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Instructor Information

- **Instructor:** Dr. Omar Farouk (Assistant Professor of Political Science)
- **Email:** ofarouk@university.alkimi.ai
- **Office:** Lovell Hall 266
- **Office Hours:**
 - Monday & Thursday: 2:00–3:30 p.m. (In person, Lovell Hall 266)
 - Friday: 9:00–10:00 a.m. (Virtual via Zoom; link posted in Canvas)
 - Also available by appointment.

Course Description

Justice, authority, liberty, and the state in Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Mill, and Marx. POSC 220 surveys foundational texts in Western political theory from classical Greek antiquity through the modern revolutionary era. Students examine how thinkers including Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Mill, and Marx conceptualized justice, political obligation, sovereignty, human nature, and freedom. Through rigorous engagement with primary philosophical texts, the course interrogates enduring questions concerning the justification of state authority, the requirements of civic virtue, the tensions between liberty and equality, and the institutional dynamics of political order.

Prerequisites

POSC 101 or POSC 105.

Measurable Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of POSC 220, students will be able to:

1. **Analyze Classical Foundations of Justice:** Examine Platonic idealism and Aristotelian constitutionalism regarding the relationship between individual virtue, human flourishing, and political community.
2. **Contrast Ancient Virtue with Modern Realism:** Differentiate classical teleological political philosophy from Machiavelli's realistic appraisal of power, virtù, fortuna, and republican civic discord.
3. **Critique Social Contract Theories:** Compare how Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau deploy the state of nature to justify competing conceptions of political obligation, natural rights, and popular sovereignty.
4. **Evaluate Modern Liberalism and Socialism:** Assess John Stuart Mill's utilitarian defense of liberty and individuality alongside Karl Marx's materialist critique of bourgeois political economy and class exploitation.

5. **Compose Textual Political Analysis:** Write sustained, interpretive essays that reconstruct theoretical arguments from primary political texts, defend interpretive claims, and answer counter-arguments.

Required Course Materials & Approximate Costs

1. **Michael L. Morgan, ed. *Classics of Moral and Political Theory*. 5th ed., Hackett Publishing, 2011.** Approx. \$45 print purchase.
2. **Alkimi Political Theory Primary Source Excerpts and Commentary.** Free digital access provided via Canvas.
3. **Total estimated cost:** \$45.

Generative AI Policy (AI Level 1: AI Not Permitted for Graded Work)

In accordance with Alkimi University Academic Policies (Student Handbook §5.8), POSC 220 operates under **AI Level 1**.

- **What is permitted:** You may use generative AI tools to look up biographical timelines of political philosophers or review citation guidelines for Chicago/Turabian style references.
- **What is prohibited:** You may not use generative AI to write close textual analyses, compose thesis statements, draft paper paragraphs, or answer examination essay questions.
- **Disclosure:** All submitted essays must conclude with an academic integrity certification stating: 'I certify that this paper represents my own original political thought and writing without generative AI assistance.'

Grading Components and Weights

- **Midterm Examination:** 20% (In class, Thursday, October 8)
- **Textual Analysis Paper 1: Ancient vs. Modern Virtue:** 20% (Due Friday, September 25 at 11:59 p.m.)
- **Political Theory Term Essay: Social Contract and Sovereignty:** 25% (Due Friday, November 20 at 11:59 p.m.)
- **Primary Text Reading Responses:** 15% (Weekly close-reading reflections submitted in Canvas on Mondays at 11:59 p.m.; lowest score dropped)
- **Seminar Deliberation & Textual Debate:** 5% (Active, prepared contributions to seminar discussions and textual debates)
- **Comprehensive Final Examination:** 15% (Wednesday, December 16, 2026, 1:30–3:30 p.m.)

Grading Scale (Alkimi University Standard)

- **A:** 93–100% | **A-:** 90–92%
- **B+:** 87–89% | **B:** 83–86% | **B-:** 80–82%
- **C+:** 77–79% | **C:** 73–76% | **C-:** 70–72%
- **D+:** 67–69% | **D:** 60–66% | **F:** Below 60%
- **Extra credit:** No extra credit assignments are offered in POSC 220. Grades reflect dedicated scholarship on assigned essays, reading reflections, and examinations.

Course Schedule (Fall 2026)

Week	Dates	Topics & Readings	Assignments & Deadlines
Week 1	Aug 27	Socrates and the Origins of Political Philosophy: What is political theory? Justice, the trial of Socrates, civil disobedience, and political obligation in Plato's <i>Apology</i> and <i>Crito</i> . Reading: Morgan, pp. 1–35	<i>First day of classes: Wed Aug 26.</i>
Week 2	Sep 1, 3	Plato's Republic: The Challenge of Thrasymachus: Plato's <i>Republic</i> (Books I–II): Thrasymachus's definition of justice as the	<i>Wed Sep 2: Add/section change deadline.</i>

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		interest of the stronger; the Ring of Gyges; the city-soul analogy. <i>Reading: Morgan, pp. 75–125</i>	
Week 3	Sep 8, 10	Plato: The Ideal Polis and the Cave: Plato's <i>Republic</i> (Books IV–VII): the tripartition of the just city, philosopher-rulers, the Allegory of the Cave, and the decay of political regimes. <i>Reading: Morgan, pp. 126–180</i>	<i>Mon Sep 7: Labor Day (no classes). Wed Sep 9: Census date (last day to drop without a W).</i>
Week 4	Sep 15, 17	Aristotle: Nature, the Polis, and Citizenship: Aristotle's <i>Politics</i> (Books I & III): the human being as a political animal (zoon politikon), the nature of the polis, citizenship, and slavery. <i>Reading: Morgan, pp. 260–305</i>	—
Week 5	Sep 22, 24	Aristotle: Constitutional Forms and Mixed Regimes: Aristotle's <i>Politics</i> (Books IV & VII): regime typologies, the middle constitution (politeia), stability, and revolution; Paper 1 due Friday. <i>Reading: Morgan, pp. 306–345</i>	Textual Analysis Paper 1: Ancient vs. Modern Virtue due Fri Sep 25 at 11:59 p.m.
Week 6	Sep 29, Oct 1	Machiavelli: Power, Virtù, and Political Realism: Niccolò Machiavelli: <i>The Prince</i> , the break with classical morality, virtù, fortuna, cruelty well-used, and political realism. <i>Reading: Morgan, pp. 500–535</i>	—
Week 7	Oct 6, 8	Machiavellian Republicanism and Midterm Examination: Machiavelli: <i>Discourses on Livy</i> , republican civic virtue, popular participation, institutional checks, and the utility of civil conflict; Midterm Exam in class. <i>Reading: Morgan, pp. 536–560</i>	Midterm Examination (in class).
Week 8	Oct 15	Hobbes: The State of Nature and Human Motivation (Fall Break Week): Thomas Hobbes: <i>Leviathan</i> (Part I), materialist psychology, the state of nature as a war of all against all, and laws of nature (Fall Break week). <i>Reading: Morgan, pp. 580–625</i>	<i>Oct 12–Oct 13: Fall break (no classes). Fri Oct 16: Midterm grades due.</i>
Week 9	Oct 20, 22	Hobbes: The Sovereign and the Social Covenant: Hobbes: <i>Leviathan</i> (Part II), the social covenant, authorization, absolute undivided sovereignty, and the limits of civil obedience. <i>Reading: Morgan, pp. 626–675</i>	—
Week 10	Oct 27, 29	Locke: Natural Rights, Property, and Limited Government: John Locke: <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> , the state of nature, natural law, private property labor theory, consent, and the right of revolution. <i>Reading: Morgan, pp. 710–765</i>	—
Week 11	Nov 3, 5	Rousseau: The Natural State and the Origins of Inequality: Jean-Jacques Rousseau: <i>Discourse on the Origin of Inequality</i> , natural pity, amour-propre, metallurgy and agriculture, and the corrupt social compact. <i>Reading: Morgan, pp. 830–880</i>	<i>Fri Nov 6: Last day to withdraw (W) or elect Pass/No Pass.</i>
Week 12	Nov 10, 12	Rousseau: The General Will and Popular Sovereignty: Rousseau: <i>On the Social Contract</i> , alienation of rights, the General Will, moral freedom, sovereignty, and civil religion. <i>Reading: Morgan, pp. 881–930</i>	—
Week 13	Nov 17, 19	Mill: Liberty, Individuality, and Free Speech: John Stuart Mill: <i>On Liberty</i> , the harm principle, freedom of thought and discussion, individuality, and tyranny of the majority; Term Essay due Friday. <i>Reading: Morgan, pp. 1010–1060</i>	Political Theory Term Essay: Social Contract and Sovereignty due Fri Nov 20 at 11:59 p.m.
Week 14	Nov 24	Marx: Historical Materialism and Class Struggle (Thanksgiving Week): Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: <i>The Communist Manifesto</i> , historical materialism, class struggle, and the critique of bourgeois ideology (Thanksgiving week). <i>Reading: Morgan, pp. 1140–1175</i>	<i>Nov 25–Nov 27: Thanksgiving break (no classes).</i>
Week 15	Dec 1, 3	Marx: Alienation, Exploitation, and Emancipation: Karl Marx: <i>Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</i> , alienated labor, commodity fetishism, and the vision of human emancipation. <i>Reading: Morgan, pp. 1176–1215</i>	—

Week	Dates	Topics & Readings	Assignments & Deadlines
Week 16	Dec 8	Political Theory Synthesis and Final Review: Synthesizing ancient vs. modern conceptions of political freedom, authority, and justice; comprehensive review for final examination. <i>Reading: Review readings</i>	<i>Wed Dec 9: Last day of classes.</i> <i>Thu Dec 10: Reading Day.</i>
Finals	Dec 16	Comprehensive Final Examination: Wednesday, December 16, 2026, 1:30–3:30 p.m., Lovell Hall 130.	Scheduled during the university final examination period in Lovell Hall 130.

Course Policies

Attendance Policy

Political theory seminar sessions in Lovell Hall 130 depend on active discussion and shared textual exegesis. Punctual, regular attendance is required. Students are allowed up to two unexcused absences without penalty; each subsequent unexcused absence results in a penalty of one-third of a letter grade. Missing more than five class sessions will result in failure of the course. Students who miss the first two class meetings without notifying the instructor may be dropped. Students may miss class for religious observance without penalty if they notify the instructor in writing within the first two weeks of the semester (by Wednesday, September 9, 2026). Absences for university-sponsored activities (athletics, performances, conferences) are excused with a letter from the sponsoring office at least one week in advance.

Late Work Policy

Textual analysis papers and the term essay lose one-third of a letter grade for each calendar day overdue and will not be accepted after four days past the deadline. Weekly reading reflections must be submitted on time to inform the seminar discussion.

Final Exam Policy

The final examination (Wednesday, December 16, 2026, 1:30–3:30 p.m.) is scheduled by the University Registrar and can't be moved without the Dean's written approval (Faculty Handbook §5.5). A student with three or more final exams on the same calendar day may reschedule one of them. Requests go to the instructor of the middle exam by the last day of classes. For this term, send the request by Wednesday, December 9, 2026 (Student Handbook §6.4).

Academic Integrity

Alkimi University is an academic community devoted to rigorous scholarship, open intellectual inquiry, and uncompromising ethical conduct. All students are subject to the regulations of the Alkimi University Academic Integrity Policy. Academic dishonesty—including plagiarism, cheating on examinations, unauthorized collaboration, fabrication of empirical data, and unauthorized submission of academic work generated by artificial intelligence—undermines the integrity of the university and carries severe disciplinary sanctions. Sanctions range from a failing grade on an assignment or exam to an administrative course failure recorded as an 'XF' on the official transcript, academic suspension, or expulsion. Suspected violations are formally investigated and resolved through the Office of Academic Integrity in accordance with Faculty Handbook §6. For detailed information, consult the Office of Academic Integrity, Lovell Hall 315, (555) 555-0163, integrity@university.alkimi.ai.

Accessibility Services

Alkimi University is committed to providing equitable educational access and reasonable accommodations for all students with documented disabilities, including physical, sensory, psychological, learning, and chronic health conditions. Students requesting academic accommodations must formally register with the Office of Accessibility Services, Harlan Hall 204, (555) 555-0155, access@university.alkimi.ai. Once approved,

students will receive an official Faculty Accommodation Letter detailing approved accommodations. Students should present this letter to the instructor as early in the semester as possible, and at least one week prior to any exam or assignment requiring accommodation. Accommodations cannot be applied retroactively.

Student Wellness and Mental Health

Your physical health, psychological well-being, and mental health are essential to your academic success. If you experience heightened stress, anxiety, depressive symptoms, personal trauma, or academic burnout, free, confidential counseling and medical care are available through the Hollis Health & Counseling Center, located in the Hollis Center. Routine appointments are available Monday–Friday 8:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m. and Saturday 10:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m. during the semester by calling (555) 555-0190 or emailing health@university.alkimi.ai. Urgent, 24/7 crisis psychological counseling is accessible immediately at (555) 555-0199.

Campus Student Support Services

- **Academic Advising Center:** Lovell Hall 101 | (555) 555-0158 | advising@university.alkimi.ai
- **Writing Center:** Whitcombe Library 3rd Floor | Free consultations on papers, reports, and research projects at any stage.
- **Whitcombe Library:** Whitcombe Library, Main Floor | (555) 555-0170 | askalibrarian@university.alkimi.ai
- **Hollis Health & Counseling Center:** Hollis Center | (555) 555-0190 | 24/7 Counseling Line: (555) 555-0199 | health@university.alkimi.ai
- **The Writing Center:** Whitcombe Library 3rd Floor | Consultations on primary text argumentation, textual evidence synthesis, and revision.