

COURSE SPECIFICATION DOCUMENT

Academic School/Department: Social Sciences and Humanities

Programme: Political Science
International History

FHEQ Level: 6

Course Title: Contemporary Political Theory

Course Code: PLT 6200

Total Hours 160

Timetabled Hours: 45

Guided Learning Hours: 15

Independent Learning Hours: 100

Credits: 16 UK CATS credits
8 ECTS credits
4 US credits

Course Description:

Investigates the central debates and concepts of 20th and 21st century political theory. Through a close examination of key texts representative of the spectrum of contemporary ideological positions, students will become familiar with a variety of key arguments around concepts such as equality, freedom, democracy and justice. Students will become familiar with central ideas that have shaped political activity in the 20th and 21st centuries and will become familiar with key issues and debates of contemporary political thought.

Pre-requisites:

One of the following:

PLT 5201 Research Methods and Practices: Social Sciences

INR 4100 Intro to International Relations

PLT 4100 Modern Political Thought

COM 5205 Cultural Theory

PHL 5400 Modern European Mind

PLT 5201 Capitalism and Its Critics

Aims and Objectives:

- To encourage the analysis and application of contemporary theoretical concepts found in debates relating to freedom, justice, the autonomy of the political, individualism, power, rationality, and democracy.
- To encourage students to undertake a sustained critical and creative engagement with a range of primary sources in contemporary political theory.
- To provide a background for eventual careers in fields pertaining to development studies and beyond which require articulate, clear-thinking individuals with a grasp of contemporary political concepts, ideas, and debates.
- To provide a framework to assist concerned citizens to think critically about issues that will be of increasing importance in the 21st century.
- To promote critical engagement with a wide range of literature, and the development of writing skills, and the ability to present complex arguments orally.

Programme Outcomes:

Political Science: 6A(i); 6B(iv); 6C(i); 6C(iii); 6D(ii); 6D(iv)

International History: 6B(ii), 6B(iii), 6B(iv), 6C(iii), 6C(ii)

A detailed list of the programme outcomes is found in the Programme Specification.

This is maintained by Registry and located at: <https://www.richmond.ac.uk/programme-and-course-specifications/>

Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course, the students will have achieved the following learning outcomes.

- Demonstrates a systematic understanding of the major thinkers and intellectual paradigms in contemporary political theory
- Demonstrates a systematic understanding of the contribution of political theory to major thematic debates in political science
- Takes responsibility for their own learning, and completes assigned work with a degree of clarity, contextualisation, critical thinking, and reflexive normative understanding appropriate for a 6000-level course

Indicative Content:

- Key political theorist from 1900 onwards
- Key debates among competing concepts of justice
- Key debates among competing concepts of freedom
- Key debates among competing concepts of democracy
- Key debates among competing concepts of equality
- Debates among liberals, communitarians, and their critics
- Conservative and Marxist critiques of liberalism

Assessment:

This course conforms to the University Assessment Norms approved at Academic Board and located at: <https://www.richmond.ac.uk/university-policies/>

Teaching Methodology:

This course will be taught through a combination of lectures and seminar-type activities, including group work, sub-group activities, classroom discussion, and the showing of documentaries. The general approach to classes is informal, and discussion is viewed as an essential part of an interactive and participatory learning program. Audio-visual aids, study materials and electronic learning resources will be used as appropriate.

Lectures provide a framework for the course and are designed to ensure students have an overview of main issues and concerns on a particular topic, receive clarification on the major points of debate understand the broad dimensions of core problems, and are aware of relevant literature in the specific area of concern. It is essential that lectures are supplemented with assigned readings; together, the readings and the lectures are designed to provide guidance for seminar discussion.

Seminar classes are based on the principle of active and student-directed learning, and are designed to be Safe, Enjoyable, Managed, Inclusive, Necessary, Academic, Respectful & Stimulating. The seminars provide an opportunity for discussion of contentious issues, addressing questions and exploring academic debates in more depth, group and sub-group discussion. They are encouraged to share their opinions freely but must also maintain respect for the opinions of others. It is expected that students will participate regularly in discussions in a creative, competent and critical way, as the formulation of their own thoughts and clarification of their assumptions, often in contradiction to other students' thoughts and assumptions, form a crucial part of the learning process. Students are expected to come to seminar classes prepared.

Indicative Texts:

Kymlicka, W. (2014) *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Introduction*. 2nd ed. OUP.

Clohesy, A., S. Isaacs and C. Sparks (2009) *Contemporary Political Theorists in Context*. Routledge.

Goodin, R.E., P. Petit and T. Pogge (2012) *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy*. 2nd ed. Wiley Blackwell.

Farrelly, C. (2003) *Introduction to Contemporary Political Theory*. Sage.

See syllabus for complete reading list.

Change Log for this CSD:

Nature of Change	Date Approved & Approval Body (School or LTPC)	Change Actioned by Academic Registry
Various updates as part of the UG programme review	AB Jan 2022	
Revision – annual update	May 2023	
Total Hours Updated	April 2024	