

## **COURSE SPECIFICATION DOCUMENT**

**Academic School/Department:** Social Sciences and Humanities

**Programme:** Political Science  
International History  
International Relations

**FHEQ Level:** 4

**Course Title:** Modern Political Thought

**Course Code:** PLT 4101

**Total Hours:** 120

Timetabled Hours: 45

Guided Learning Hours: 0

Independent Learning Hours: 75

**Semester:** FALL and/or SPRING and/or SUMMER

**Credits:** 12 UK CATS credits  
6 ECTS credits  
3 US credits

### **Course Description:**

This course provides students with an introduction to modern political thought as it developed in the Western World. It examines concepts at the core of political life, including freedom, equality, power, difference, and the state. The origins of political ideologies are discovered and explored through the study of a range of modern political thinkers up to around 1900, such as Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Burke, Wollstonecraft, Marx, Mill, and Nietzsche.

### **Pre-requisites:**

None

### **Aims and Objectives:**

- To provide students with an appreciation of the history and development of modern political thought and its main thematic debates and conceptual issues
- To encourage students to read original works in modern political thought, and to place these in historical and political context
- To provide a background for eventual careers in fields (including work in government, international organisations, business and the media) which require articulate, clear-thinking individuals with a grasp of political thought
- To provide a framework to assist concerned citizens to think critically about issues that are of increasing importance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century
- To promote critical engagement with a wide range of literature, and the development of both a succinct writing style, and the ability to present complex arguments orally

## **Programme Outcomes:**

Political Science: A4(i); C4(i); C4(iii); D4(i)

International History: A4i, B4i, C4i, C4iii, D4i

International Relations: A4(i); C4(i); C4(iii); D4(i)

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 broad understanding of the key debates in modern political thought and their significance
- Completes assigned work with a degree of autonomy, technical competence, clarity, evaluative skills, and critical reading skills appropriate for a 4000-level course

## **Indicative Content:**

- Origins of political philosophy (i.e., Plato, Aristotle)
- Realist/Mercantilist Thinkers (i.e., Machiavelli, Hobbes, List)
- Liberal Thinkers (i.e., Locke, Smith, Ricardo, Paine, the Utilitarians, Mill, Wollstonecraft, Kant, Hegel, Montesquieu, de Tocqueville, the Federalists)
- Critical Thinkers (i.e., Rousseau, 'Utopian Socialists', Marx, Engels)
- Counter-Enlightenment Thinkers (i.e., Burke, Nietzsche)
- Historical context of thinkers addressed

## **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:***

Adams, I. and R.W. Dyson (2007) *Fifty Major Political Thinkers*. 2nd ed. Oxon: Routledge.

Wootton, D. (Ed.) (2009) *Modern Political Thought: Readings from Machiavelli to Nietzsche*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Hackett Publishing.

Hampsher-Monk, I. (1993) *A History of Modern Political Thought*. London: Wiley-Blackwell.

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Change Log for this CSD:

Major or Minor Change ?	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	
	Total Hours Updated	June 2024	