JUNIOR SEMINAR: FOUNDATIONS OF POLITICAL THOUGHT AND ACTION

This course aims to provide students with a rigorous introduction to core topics in political theory and applied political theory. The course centers on four major themes: power, equality, freedom, and community. The syllabus is divided into sections that focus on each of those themes, respectively, as well as a final section that touches on all four.

Our class sessions will focus on discussions of course readings. Students must complete all readings for the week in advance of our seminar meetings. All readings are available electronically on the bcourses page. Requirements consist of two short papers, a final paper, and attendance and active participation in seminar discussions. Grades will be based on a 100-point scale: each short paper counts for 15 points (for 30 points in total); the final paper for 30 points; and attendance and participation for 40 points.

Use of any electronic or internet devices, including laptops and cellphones, is not allowed during class.

Our books for the course are:


**Syllabus**

**Week 1 (Aug 29): Introduction to the Course**

(no reading)

**PART I: POWER**
Week 2 (Sept 12): Thinking about Power


Week 3 (Sept 19): Power as Domination

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* [1886] (entire).

PART II: EQUALITY

Week 4 (Sept 26): Foundational Justifications for Equality

*The Bible*: Isaiah, chs. 56-58; Amos (entire); Matthew, chs. 5-7; I Corinthians chs. 7-11; James (entire).


Week 5 (Oct 3): Class


Week 6 (Oct 10): Gender

Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* [1792] (entire).

“Ain’t I a Woman,” speech originally delivered extemporaneously by Sojourner Truth at the Women’s Rights Convention, May 29, 1851, Akron, Ohio, as recalled and rendered by Frances Dana Barker Gage, 1863.

**Week 7 (Oct 17): Race and Nation**

Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* [1952] (entire).


**First preliminary essay** (covers material weeks 1-7)

**PART III: FREEDOM**

**Week 8 (Oct 24): Freedom as Individual Autonomy**


**Week 9 (Oct 31): Freedom as Absence of State-Imposed Constraint**


**Week 10 (Nov 7): Freedom as Rights**


**Week 11 (Nov 14): Freedom as Inner Integrity**


Second preliminary essay (covers material weeks 8-11)

PART IV: COMMUNITY

Week 12 (Nov 21): The Community and the Individual

Week 13 (Ap 19): Community as Lived Experience

PART V: POWER, EQUALITY, FREEDOM, AND COMMUNITY

Week 14 (Nov 28): A Case Study