

**Introduction to Political Theory****Course Objectives:**

The course seeks to foster a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of political theory, its significance within the discipline of Political Science, and its profound influence on conceptualizing and interpreting various facets of social life. Through a critical examination of influential traditions and perspectives, students will gain insights into how theoretical frameworks shape debates and discourses on socio political issues. Furthermore, the course aims to equip learners with the ability to critically analyse and deconstruct contemporary theories and perspectives that delve into the intricate interplay between politics and social constructs. It begins with an overview of why we study political theory and what are the approaches and forms of political theory. It then proceeds to elaborate in a detailed manner on the key concepts in political theory such as ‘Liberty’, ‘Equality’, ‘Rights’ ‘Justice’, ‘Democracy’. It will also focus on recent trends of Political Theory. Each concept is explained through the thoughts and writings of noted theorists who have deliberated at length on that particular issue with emphasis given on readings of original writings.

**Expected Learning Outcomes:**

This course aims to cultivate a sophisticated understanding of the theoretical foundations that inform and shape the ever-evolving political landscape. The unit-wise outcomes are given below.

**Unit-I:** This unit familiarises the students with the basic concepts of political theory, how political theory has evolved as well as the nature of political theory. It also introduces the students to the normative and empirical dimensions of political theory. The necessity of values and the importance of empirical investigation in the theory building exercise is the primary objective of this unit. This unit also makes an attempt to explain how modernity influenced the theory building exercise and how it reshaped some of the important debates on politics and society.

**Unit-II:** This unit makes an attempt to study important traditions in political theory. These traditions influence our political decisions. Even since the evolution of industrial revolution, nation state, political questions and debates have revolved round the concepts of liberalism

and Marxism. Students will be exposed to various debates in each of these traditions and their importance in the present-day context.

**Unit-III:** Political theory, fifty years back, was only concerned about liberalism and Marxism. Of late, with the advancement of society and our understanding of society, new ideas have emerged. They have expanded the horizon of political theory. New theories have evolved and they have thrown new challenges to the society. Modernity encouraged societies to engage in theory building exercise. The emergence of post modernity challenged the grand narratives and encouraged all of us to have micro perspective and challenge everything as modern. Similarly, new theories emerged challenging the existing power structure of the state and society. The understanding of a monocultural society has also changed with people shifting their choice of living from one country to another country. This unit promises to throw many interesting ideas to the students of political science.

**Unit-IV:** This unit makes an attempt to understand some of the important political ideas within the nation state framework. Once nation state is strongly established, it is important to understand the political concepts in detail. Even though concepts like citizenship and civil society are old yet these concepts need some sort of redefinition in the modern context. Similarly, the emergence of welfare state in a political system also has reinforced its presence in the modern context. A student of Political Science needs to take concepts like welfare state and swaraj seriously as it throws many new challenges to the already existing political ideas.

### **Course Content:**

#### **Unit-I: Introduction**

- a) What is Political Theory? Why do we need Political Theory?
- b) Approaches to Political Theory: Normative and Empirical
- c) Modernity and Political Theory

#### **Unit-II: Traditions**

- a) Liberalism
- b) Neo-Liberalism
- c) Marxism
- d) Neo-Marxism

### **Unit-III: Recent Trends**

- a) Feminism
- b) Post-Modernism
- c) Green Political Theory
- d) Multiculturalism

### **Unit-IV: Concepts**

- a) Citizenship
- b) Civil Society
- c) Welfare State
- d) Idea of Swaraj

### **Essential Readings:**

- ✓ *Adams, I. (2001). Political Ideology Today. United Kingdom: Manchester University Press.*
- ✓ *Bhargava, Rajeev, and Acharya, Ashok (2008). Political Theory: An Introduction, New Delhi: Pearson Longman.*
- ✓ *Farrelly, Colin, (2003). Contemporary Political Theory, A Reader, Sage Publications*
- ✓ *Goodin, Robert E. and Philip Pettit edited (1997). Contemporary Political Philosophy, Oxford, Blackwell Publishers.*
- ✓ *Kymilika, Will. (2014). Contemporary Political Philosophy. New Delhi, Oxford*
- ✓ *Miller, David and Larry Siedentop (edited). (1983). The Nature of Political Theory, Oxford, Clarendon Press.*
- ✓ *Ramaswamy, Sushila. (2014). Political Theory: Ideas and Concepts. PHI Learning Pvt Ltd.*
- ✓ *Rawls, John, (1971). A Theory of Justice. Oxford, Oxford University Press.*
- ✓ *Sandel, Michael, (2002). Liberalism and The Limits of Justice. Cambridge University Press.*
- ✓ *Vinod, M.J. and Deshpande, Meena. (2013). Contemporary Political Theory. PHI Learning Private Limited, Delhi.*

### **Additional Readings:**

- ✓ *Arblaster, A. (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition). (2002). Democracy. Open University Press.*
- ✓ *Bakshi, Om (1988). The Crisis of Political Theory, Oxford University Press.*
- ✓ *Bellamy, Richards (1993). Theories and Concepts of Politics, Manchester University Press, New York.*
- ✓ *Heywood, Andrew (2022). Political Theory: An Introduction. Bloomsbury Publication.*
- ✓ *Kukathas, Ch. and Gaus, G. F. (2004) (eds.). Handbook of Political Theory. Sage.*
- ✓ *Mckinnon, C. (ed.) (2008). Issues in Political Theory. Oxford University Press.*
- ✓ *Parekh, B. (2005). Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory. Macmillan Press.*
- ✓ *Ramaswamy, Sushila. (2014). Political Theory: Ideas and Concepts. PHI Learning Pvt Ltd.*
- ✓ *Sen Amartya (2000). Development as Freedom. Oxford University Press.*
- ✓ *Vincent, A. (2004). The Nature of Political Theory. Oxford University Press.*

### **Internet Resources:**

The internet resources include online articles and e-contents published on websites, blogs, e-Newspaper, online magazines, or scholarly journals, digital repositories, Audio- Visual contents.

1. eGyankosh. *What is Political Theory*. IGNOU.  
<https://egyankosh.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/57829/1/Unit1.pdf>
2. O'Connor, J. (2010). Marxism and the Three Movements of Neoliberalism. *Critical Sociology*. 36(5) 691-715.  
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0896920510371389>
3. University of Mumbai. *Political Theory*. University of Mumbai.  
[https://archive.mu.ac.in/myweb\\_test/M.A.\(Part%20-%20I\)%20Political%20Science%20Paper%20-%20I%20-%20Political%20Theory%20\(Eng\)%20-%20Rev.pdf](https://archive.mu.ac.in/myweb_test/M.A.(Part%20-%20I)%20Political%20Science%20Paper%20-%20I%20-%20Political%20Theory%20(Eng)%20-%20Rev.pdf)
4. Veeravalli, A. (2011). Swaraj and Sovereignty. *Economic and Political Weekly*. 46(5). 65-69. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27918091>

**Activities to do:**

1. Identify some of the political activities with an explanation. Please exclude voting-related activities.
2. Identify the liberal/Marxist elements of the Indian state
3. Try to analyse some major policies of your locality putting it in a liberal and Marxist or any other theoretical framework.
4. Identify some of the major religious communities in your locality and try to build a theory based on their living experience.