

Core VII

Western Political Thought-I

Course Objectives:

This course deals with the classical thinkers and themes of western political philosophy. It will probe the key concerns of political thought such as the good ideal and possible regimes; citizenship and civil virtues; contract, consent and trust as the alternative bases of political obligation; the relative autonomy of politics vis-à-vis philosophy or economy; and concepts such as justice, liberty, and rights. There will be an attempt to understand thinkers and texts both from philosophical and historical perspectives. The main objective is to train students in the foundational texts and thinkers of Political Science.

Expected Learning Outcomes:

The course will familiarize students with the questions, ideas and values of political philosophy addressed by political thinkers and contextualize the same to contemporary political thinking. This will enhance their comprehending and analytical capacities to read and decode the classics and use them to engage contemporary socio-political issues and clearly present their own arguments and thoughts about contemporary issues and develop ideas to engage with the latter. The unit-wise outcomes are given below.

Unit-I: Students would gain comprehensive understanding of the foundational ideas and frameworks proposed by the seminal thinkers of ancient Greece. Thus, students could make an appraisal of the enduring influence of these pioneering thinkers on subsequent political discourse and the evolution of socio-political ideologies.

Unit-II: Upon completion of this Unit, students will be able to critically examine the transformative ideas that emerged during this pivotal period in intellectual history. Through the exploration of Renaissance and early modern political thought, students will gain insights into the paradigm shifts that reshaped the understanding of power, authority, and the role of the state, laying the foundations for subsequent political philosophies and ideologies. This will enable them to connect with historically written texts and their interpretations.

Unit-III: Through this Unit students will gain a nuanced understanding of the tension between individualistic and collectivist ideologies, and would develop a critical thinking in assessing the impact of social contract theories on shaping subsequent political discourse, governance structures, and societal norms.

Unit-IV: Through this exploration of utilitarian thought, students will gain a comprehensive understanding of the principles underlying this utilitarianism, its potential applications in governance and policymaking, as well as its limitations and criticisms.

Course Content:

Unit-I: Greek Political Thought

- a) **Plato:** Concept of Ideal State, Theory of Justice, Philosopher King, Concept of Communism, Concept of Education
- b) **Aristotle:** State and Its Classification, Theory of Revolution, Concept of Law and Justice, Citizenship

Unit-II: Renaissance and the Rise of Modernism

- a) **Machiavelli:** Politics and State Craft, Views on ends and means, Separation Morality and Politics
- b) **Hobbes:** State of Nature and Contract; Theory of Absolute Sovereignty

Unit-III: Individualism and Collectivism

- a) **Locke:** State of Nature and Contract; Theory of Natural Rights: Life, Liberty and Property, Concept of Limited Government,
- b) **Rousseau:** State of Nature and Contract; General Will, Concept of Popular Sovereignty

Unit-IV: Utilitarianism

- a) **Bentham:** Theory of Utilitarianism as the basis of moral and jurisprudence
- b) **J.S. Mill:** Revision of Utilitarianism, Views on Liberty, Representative Government, Subjugation of Women

Essential Readings:

- ✓ *Boucher, D. & Kelly, P. (2017). Political Thinkers: From Socrates to the Present. Oxford University Press.*
- ✓ *Jha, Shefali. (2018). Western political thought: From the ancient Greeks to modern times (2nd ed.). Pearson.*
- ✓ *Mishra, R. K. (1957). Political Legacy of Plato and Aristotle. Kitab Mahal Publication.*
- ✓ *Mukherjee, S., & Ramaswamy, S. (2004). Western political thought. PHI Learning.*
- ✓ *Nelson, B. R. (2006). Western political thought. Pearson Education India.*
- ✓ *Russel, B. (2005). History of Western Philosophy. Routledge.*
- ✓ *Sabine, G. H. (2018). History of political theory. Oxford and IBH Publishers.*
- ✓ *Skinner, Q. (2002). The foundations of modern political thought (Vol. 1, The Renaissance). Cambridge University Press.*
- ✓ *Wayper, C. L. (2007). Teach yourself political thought. Surjeet Publication.*

Additional Readings:

- ✓ *Brett, A. and Tully, J. (Eds.). (2006). Rethinking the foundations of modern political thought. Cambridge University Press.*
- ✓ *Browning, G. (2016). A history of modern political thought: The question of interpretation. Oxford University Press.*
- ✓ *Gingell, J., Little, A. and Winch, C. (Eds.). (2000). Modern political thought: A reader. Routledge.*
- ✓ *Hampsher-Monk, I. (2008). A history of modern political thought: Major political thinkers from Hobbes to Marx. Blackwell Publ.*
- ✓ *Heywood, A. (2004). Political theory: An introduction. Palgrave Macmillan.*
- ✓ *McLellan, D. (1979). Marxism after Marx. Palgrave Macmillan.*
- ✓ *Rawls, J. (2009). A theory of justice. Harvard University Press.*
- ✓ *Wootton, D. (1996). Modern political thought: Readings from Machiavelli to Nietzsche. Hackett Publishing Company Inc.*

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. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (For different political thinkers and their philosophy). <https://plato.stanford.edu/>
2. Prof. Mithilesh Kumar Jha.(2021). *Introduction to Western Political Thought* [Online course]. SWAYAM. https://onlinecourses.nptel.ac.in/noc21_hs101/preview
3. eGyanKosh. *Western Political Thought: Plato to Marx* (MPSE-003). IGNOU <https://egyankosh.ac.in/handle/123456789/24354>

Activities to do:

1. Read original books and biographies of the author of your choice.
2. Make a list of Western Political Thinkers along with their affiliation to different strings of political thought.
3. Make group discussions on concepts like state, justice, equality from the perspective of different thinkers mentioned in this course.
4. Collect the portraits of different thinkers , make a photographic diary and write down their important concepts.