



Exchange programme Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam - Exchange programme Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam - 2024-2025

Exchange

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam offers many English-taught courses in a variety of subjects, ranging from arts & culture and social sciences, neurosciences and computer science, to economics and business administration.

The International Office is responsible for course approval and course registration for exchange students. For details about course registration, requirements, credits, semesters and so on, please [visit the exchange programmes webpages](#).

History of Political Thought

Course Code	S_HPT
Credits	6
Period	P4
Course Level	200
Language Of Tuition	English
Faculty	Faculty of Social Sciences
Course Coordinator	dr. P. Overeem
Examiner	dr. P. Overeem
Teaching Staff	mr. G.P. Luteijn MA, dr. P. Overeem, P.R. Hargrave LL.M, M. Kourpa, L.J. Grace, M.W. Sediq MSc, E.J.P. Zwarthoed MSc, S.M.O. Ornstein
Teaching method(s)	Lecture, Written partial exam, Study Group

Course Objective

Learning objectives:

Knowledge and understanding – The student has acquired knowledge and understanding of:
(1) the main theories in the history of Western (and, by consequence, much international) political thought;
(2) the meaning of core political concepts (e.g., justice, state, sovereignty, liberty, democracy) and the ways in which they have been understood in the past.

Skills - The student is able to:
(3) conduct a close reading and textual analysis of primary political philosophical texts;
(4) constructively engage in academic argumentation about normative political questions;
(5) apply ideas and theories from the history of political thought to understand and analyze current political issues.

Attitude - The student displays:
(6) a demonstrable interest in the intellectual background of political concepts, theories, and practices;
(7) a critical attitude towards political philosophical literature and towards prevailing views on politics, including one's own.

Course Content

Political science is rooted in a long tradition of normative reflection on the foremost political questions: How should we as human beings live and how should we live together? How should we rule and be ruled and how can we ensure freedom? Which form of government (if any) allows us best to achieve our personal and common goals? Such questions do not allow for easy answers, but they underlie the way in which politics has been shaped (and studied) throughout history well into in our own time.

Hence, a course on the history of political thought is a crucial part of any Political Science undergraduate program. This course introduces students to a range of classical texts in the Western tradition (from Plato up until recent thinkers) that offer widely influential answers to the questions mentioned. These texts can be called 'classical' because they have long and generally been considered worthwhile for advancing political reflection. Studying them can ultimately help us to better understand rivaling political convictions, including our own.

Additional Information Teaching Methods

Lectures and seminars

Method of Assessment

Interim and final exams.

Literature

Cahn, S. (2022). *Political Philosophy: The Essential Texts*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Fourth edition. (An

earlier edition will not suffice.) ISBN 9780197609170. Note: the book will be available at the VU book store.

Most of the assigned works are also available online, e.g. via www.gutenberg.org. Wherever you obtain the texts, make sure to read the correct parts!

Additional Information Target Audience

First-years Bachelor's students in Political Science

Additional Information

The lectures in this course will be delivered in English. The tutorials will be in English for the students in the English track, and in Dutch for those in the Dutch track.

Custom Course Registration

In this course, you cannot enroll for one of the study groups yourself, but you will be assigned by the course coordinator. The allocation will be announced via Canvas. Please note: You do have to register for the course and the other course components on VU.nl.