

POLS 3306 - 900
The Politics of Truth and Truth-telling
Texas A&M University – San Antonio
Spring 2024

Time: 9:30 – 10:45 am, Thursdays
Location: Classroom Hall 110

Instructor:
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The question of truth or of truthfulness appears as a founding condition for our inquiries into the past and into the validity of claims made in contemporary politics. There is a demand for truthfulness, for the presence of the True as a protection from deception – from that which misleads or corrupts. The aim of this course will be to interrogate the function and identify the effects of truth in and on politics. Though we will begin with analyses of the conditions that allow for something to be deemed “true” or rendered “false”, our focus here is not to discern the correct from the erroneous or the good from the bad; rather, we will seek to explicate the function of truth as it produces specific political institutions and ways of living. Looking at the problem of the truth-teller and of truth-telling as a social activity, we will be asking: who is able to speak the truth and what truths are permissible for them to speak? If truth is a weapon used to gain political power and influence, what political forces shape the ways in which we speak the truth? In interrogating these questions, we will be highlighting the individual that functions as both truth-knower and truth-teller and the implications for both herself and for society.

This course will look at the conflict between truth and political power. In democratic politics there is a demand for truthfulness, for the presence of truth as a protection from deception, and political power is often contingent on assertions of “the true”. This course will explore what it would mean to talk about a notion of truth that does not deny a plurality of perspectives and how we might think about political institutions given a lack of absolute certainty. What, for example, are we to do with the “debate” surrounding global warming, when politicians and climatologists make competing claims about “the truth of the matter”? How do we decide whether or not we should act? Who gets to be heard? On what terms and in what form? If truth is a weapon used to gain political power and influence, what forces shape the ways in which we speak the truth? Working our way through Plato and Aristotle, Kant and Nietzsche to Arendt, Foucault, and other contemporary thinkers, we will interrogate and attempt to answer these questions concerning the role of truth in politics.

Digital Office Hours:

Time: T/W 9:30 am — 10:30 am or by appointment.

Location: <https://tamusa.webex.com/meet/thomas.beaumont>

You are highly encouraged to make use of my office hours throughout the semester to discuss any ideas you have – big or small – pertaining to this course or your general course of study. If you cannot make the designated time, please do not hesitate to email me to set up an appointment. I will be holding office hours remotely via WebEx every Tuesday and Wednesday from 9:30 am to 10:30 am.

Grading

Your grade for this course will be based on the following: discussion notes and participation (15%), weekly writing assignments (30%), a midterm paper (20%), and a term paper (20%). To receive credit for the course, your participation must be made and your work submitted by the stated deadlines and within the guidelines and confines of the course during the academic semester. Late work will be accepted, with 5% being taken off for each day passed the assignment deadline. No assignments will be accepted more than one week late.

Grade breakdown:

15% Discussion notes/Participation

45% Writing Assignments

20% Midterm Paper

20% Term Paper

Course Requirements

- *Attendance*: Attendance is expected and will be taken at each class meeting.
- *Readings*: Readings should be completed in their entirety and you must complete all required reading selections in order to adequately address the weekly assignments. Details and nuance matter in political thought, and the details are located in the text.
- *Discussion/Participation*: You should come to each class period prepared to engage thoughtfully in discussion.
- *Discussion Topic*: Each week I will post a discussion topic in BlackBoard that we will discuss in class to get a sense of your initial thoughts about the readings and to focus our interests in the material. You should come to class prepared to answer the initial question and to engage thoughtfully in discussion. **Posted on BlackBoard and due no later than the start of class Thursday.**
- *Writing Assignments*: Writing assignments should be double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, 1-inch margins, and *at least 750 words*. Take time to carefully consider your responses and be sure to proofread each submission. **Posted on BlackBoard and due Sunday no later than midnight.**
- *Midterm Paper (4 pages, double spaced)*: Midterm paper assignment will be issued approximately two weeks before the due date. The assignment will be a reflection and critical engagement piece, responding to questions raised by texts we have read so far.
- *Term Paper (7 pages, double spaced)*: Term paper assignment will be issued approximately two weeks before the due date. The assignment will be a reflection and critical engagement piece, responding to questions raised by texts we have read after the midterm.

Course Materials

Acquire your books **early** in the semester. If you prefer a physical copy, students with the use of a credit/debit card can also obtain these books at on-line merchants (e.g. amazon.com, bn.com, half.com, powells.com, abe.com). I suggest buying used, if available, for a lower priced text. **There are digital versions of all required texts available online that can be found with a Google search.** Alternate editions/versions/formats are permissible for this course.

Required Books:

- Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, trans. Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1983).
- Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1989).
- Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (New York: Penguin Books, 1977).
- Michel Foucault, *The Politics of Truth* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007).

Course Schedule and Readings

Classes begin January 16th

Week 1 (January 16 – 21): The Role of the Author

- Reading assignment: Review the syllabus and familiarize yourself with the BlackBoard course. Foucault, “What is an Author?” (handout); Barthes, “The Death of the Author” (handout).
- Weekly Discussion: No assignment this week.
- Writing Assignment: No assignment this week.

Week 2 (January 22 – 28): The Allegory of the Cave

- Reading Assignment: Plato, *The Republic* Book VII
- Weekly Discussion: Due no later than Thursday before 9:30 am.

Week 3 (January 29 – February 4): Immanuel Kant: The Truth as Enlightenment

- Reading Assignment: Kant – “What is Enlightenment?” (8 pages) and “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Intent” (12 pages)
- Writing Assignment #1 due Sunday, February 4th via BlackBoard
- Weekly Discussion: Due no later than Thursday before 9:30 am.

Week 4 (February 5 – 11): Kant: The Right to Lie

- Reading Assignment: Kant, “On the Proverb: That May be True in Theory, But It Is of No Practical Use;” Kant, “On a Supposed Right to Lie from Altruistic Motives”
- Weekly Discussion: Due no later than Thursday before 9:30 am.

Week 5 (February 12 – 18): Kant: Progress as Peace

- Reading Assignment: Kant, “Perpetual Peace”
- Writing Assignment #2 due Sunday, February 18th
- Weekly Discussion: Due no later than Thursday before 9:30 am.

Week 6 (February 19 – 25): Nietzsche and Reality as Fiction

- Reading Assignment: Friedrich Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense;” Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, The Preface; Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, “On the Prejudices of Philosophers”
- Writing Assignment #3 due Sunday, February 25th
- Weekly Discussion: Due no later than Thursday before 9:30 am.

Week 7 (February 26 – March 3): Beyond Good and Evil

- Reading Assignment: Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, “The Free Spirit”

- Weekly Discussion: Due no later than Thursday before 9:30 am.

Week 8 (March 4 – 10): Midterm Paper

- Reading assignment: Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, “We scholars”
- Writing Assignment: **MIDTERM PAPER DUE Sunday, March 10th**
- Weekly Discussion: Due no later than Thursday before 9:30 am.

Week 9 (March 11 – 17): SPRING BREAK

- Reading Assignment: none
- Writing Assignment: none
- Weekly Discussion: none

Week 10 (March 18 – 24): Hannah Arendt and Truth after the Holocaust

- Reading Assignment: Arendt, “The Crisis in Culture: Its Political Significance”
- Weekly Discussion: Due no later than Thursday before 9:30 am.

Week 11 (March 25 – 31): Is the Truth Compatible with Politics?

- Reading Assignment: Arendt, “Truth and Politics”
- Writing Assignment #4 due Sunday, March 31st
- Weekly Discussion: Due no later than Thursday before 9:30 am.

Week 12 (April 1 – 7): Freedom as Action

- Reading Assignment: Arendt, “What is Freedom”
- Weekly Discussion: Due no later than Thursday before 9:30 am.

Week 13 (April 8 – 14): Foucault and the Power of Truth

- Reading Assignment: Foucault, “What is Enlightenment”
- Writing Assignment #5 due Sunday, April 14th
- Weekly Discussion: Due no later than Thursday before 9:30 am.

Week 14 (April 15 – 21): The Relationship Between Truth and Power

- Reading Assignment: Foucault, “The Subject and Power”
- Writing Assignment #6 due Sunday, April 21st
- Weekly Discussion: Due no later than Thursday before 9:30 am.

Week 15 (April 22 – 28): Towards an Ethic of Discomfort

- Reading Assignment: Foucault, “Truth and Power;” Foucault, “For an Ethic of Discomfort”
- Writing Assignment: work on Final Paper
 - Weekly Discussion: none

Week 16 (April 29 – May 5): Finals Week

- No Discussion or Writing Assignment this week.
- Work on Final Paper.

FINAL PAPER DUE NO LATER THAN **MAY 5th @ 11:59 PM**

IMPORTANT POLICIES AND RESOURCES

Use of Generative AI: In all academic work, the ideas and contributions of others must be appropriately acknowledged and work that is presented as original must be, in fact, original. Using an AI-content generator (such as ChatGPT) to complete coursework without proper attribution or authorization is a form of academic dishonesty. It is important to note that if AI tools like chatGPT are permitted to be used for an assignment, then they should be used with caution and proper citation. AI is not a replacement for your own thinking and research. AI is a tool that can facilitate critical thinking and skillset development; don't use it as a crutch that will hinder your progress.

Academic Accommodations for Persons with Disabilities: The Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008 and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 are federal anti-discrimination statutes that provide comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Title II of the ADAAA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act require that students with disabilities be guaranteed equal access to the learning environment through the provision of reasonable and appropriate accommodation of their disability. If you have a diagnosed disability that may require an accommodation, please contact Disability Support Services (DSS) for the coordination of services. The phone number for DSS is (210) 784-1335 and email is dss@tamusa.edu.

Academic Learning Center: All currently enrolled students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio can utilize the Academic Learning Center for subject-area tutoring. The Academic Learning Center is an appointment based center where appointments are made through the Navigate platform. Students access Navigate through Jagwire in the Student Services tab. The Center is active on campus outreaching to students to highlight services offered. You can contact the Academic Learning Center by emailing tutoring@tamusa.edu or calling (210)-784-1332. Appointments can also be made through JagWire under the services tab.

Counseling Resources: As a college student, there may be times when personal stressors interfere with your academic performance and/or negatively impact your daily functioning. If you or someone you know is experiencing life stressors, emotional difficulties, or mental health concerns at Texas A&M University – San Antonio, please contact the Student Counseling Center (SCC) located in Modular C, Room 166 (Rear entrance) or call 210-784-1331 between the hours of 8:00AM and 5:00PM. All mental health services provided by the SCC are free, confidential (as the law allows), and are not part of a student's academic or university record. SCC provides brief individual, couples, and group therapy, crisis intervention, consultation, case management, and prevention services. For more information, please visit www.tamusa.edu/studentcounseling. In a crisis situation, please walk-in to the Student Counseling Center (SCC) any time between the hours of 8:00AM and 5:00PM to be seen by a licensed clinician. After hours, please contact UPD at 911 or text "HOME" to 741-741 24/7/365 to connect with a trained crisis counselor. The National Suicide Prevention hotline also offers a 24/7/365 hotline at 1-800-273-8255.

Emergency Preparedness: JagE Alert is Texas A&M University-San Antonio's mass notification. In the event of an emergency, such as inclement weather, students, staff and faculty, who are registered, will have the option to receive a text message, email and/or phone call with

instructions and updates. To register or update your information visit:
<https://tamusa.bbcportal.com/>.

More information about Emergency Preparedness and the Emergency Response Guide can be found here: <https://www.tamusa.edu/upd/index.html>.

Financial Aid and Verification of Attendance: According to the following federal regulation, 34 CFR 668.21: U.S. Department of Education (DoE) Title IV regulation, a student can only receive Title IV funds based on Title IV eligibility criteria which include class attendance. If Title IV funds are disbursed to ineligible students (including students who fail to begin attendance), the institution must return these funds to the U.S. DoE within 30 days of becoming aware that the student will not or has not begun attendance. Faculty will provide the Office of Financial Aid with an electronic notification if a student has not attended the first week of class. Any student receiving federal financial aid who does not attend the first week of class will have their aid terminated and returned to the DoE. Please note that any student who stops attending at any time during the semester may also need to return a portion of their federal aid.

Jaguar Writing Center: The Jaguar Writing Center provides writing support to graduate and undergraduate students in all three colleges. Writing tutors work with students to develop reading skills, prepare oral presentations, and plan, draft, and revise their written assignments. The Writing Center is currently holding all appointments digitally. Students can schedule appointments with the Writing Center in JagWire under the student services tab. Students wanting to work in realtime with a tutor can schedule an “Online Appointment.” Students wishing to receive asynchronous, written feedback from a tutor can schedule an “eTutoring” appointment. More information about what services we offer, how to make an appointment, and how to access your appointment can be found on our website at www.tamusa.edu/Writing-Center. The Writing Center can also be reached by emailing writingcenter@tamusa.edu.

Meeting Basic Needs: Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the Dean of Students (DOS@tamusa.edu) for support. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable them to provide any resources they may possess.

Military Affairs: Veterans and active-duty military personnel are welcomed and encouraged to communicate, in advance if possible, and special circumstances (e.g., upcoming deployment, drill requirements, disability accommodations). You are also encouraged to visit the Patriots’ Casa in-person room 202, or to contact the Office of Military Affairs with any questions at military@tamusa.edu or (210)784-1397.

Religious Observances: Texas A&M University-San Antonio recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holidays according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes for regular session classes.

Respect for Diversity: We understand that our students represent diverse backgrounds and perspectives. When we are equity-minded, we are aware of differences and inequalities and are willing to discuss them so we can act to resolve them. The University is committed to building cultural competencies, or the attitudes, skills, and knowledge that enable individuals and organizations to acknowledge cultural differences and incorporate these differences in working with people from diverse cultures. Respecting and accepting people different than you is vital to your success in the class, on campus, and as a future professional in the global community.

While working together to build this community we ask all members to:

- Share their unique experiences, values, and beliefs.
- Be open to the views of others.
- Honor the uniqueness of their colleagues.
- Value each other's opinions and communicate respectfully.
- Keep confidential discussions that the community has of a personal (or professional) nature.
- Use this opportunity together to discuss ways in which we can create an inclusive environment in this course and across the A&M-San Antonio community.

The Six-Drop Rule: Students are subject to the requirements of Senate Bill (SB) 1231 passed by the Texas Legislature in 2007. SB 1231 limits students to a maximum of six (6) non-punitive course drops (i.e., courses a student chooses to drop) during their undergraduate careers. A non-punitive drop does not affect the student's GPA. However, course drops that exceed the maximum allowed by SB 1231 will be treated as "F" grades and will impact the student's GPA.

Statement of Harassment and Discrimination: Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to the fundamental principles of academic freedom, equality of opportunity and human dignity. To fulfill its multiple missions as an institution of higher learning, A&M-San Antonio encourages a climate that values and nurtures collegiality, diversity, pluralism and the uniqueness of the individual within our state, nation, and world. All decisions and actions involving students and employees should be based on applicable law and individual merit. Texas A&M University-San Antonio, in accordance with applicable federal and state law, prohibits discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. Individuals who believe they have experienced harassment or discrimination prohibited by this statement are encouraged to contact the appropriate offices within their respective units.

Texas A&M University-San Antonio faculty are committed to helping create a safe learning environment for all students and for the university as a whole. If you have experienced any form of sex- or gender-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic or dating violence, or stalking, know that help and support are available. A&M-San Antonio has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, and more. The university strongly encourages all students to report any such incidents to the university. Please be aware that all A&M-San Antonio employees (other than those designated as confidential resources such as counselors and other healthcare providers are required to report information about such discrimination and harassment to the university. This means that if you

tell a faculty member about a situation of sexual harassment or sexual violence, or other related misconduct, the faculty member must share that information with the university's Title IX Coordinator. If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can contact the Student Counseling Center at (210) 784-1331, Modular C.

Students' Rights and Responsibilities: The purpose of the following statement is to enumerate the essential provisions for the student freedom and responsibility to learn at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. All students are required to follow all policies and regulations as set forth by The Texas A&M University System. This includes the [A&M-San Antonio Student Code of Conduct](#).

Students' Rights

1. A student shall have the right to participate in a free exchange of ideas, and there shall be no university rule or procedure that in any way abridges the rights of freedom of speech, expression, petition and peaceful assembly as set forth in the U.S. Constitution.
2. Each student shall have the right to participate in all areas and activities of the university, free from any form of discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, genetic information or veteran status in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.
3. A student has the right to personal privacy except as otherwise provided by law, and this will be observed by students and University authorities alike.
4. Each student subject to disciplinary action arising from violations of university student rules shall be assured a fundamentally fair process.

Students' Responsibilities

1. A student has the responsibility to respect the rights and property of others, including other students, the faculty and the administration.
2. A student has the responsibility to be fully acquainted with the published University Student Rules found in the Student Handbook, Student Code of Conduct, on our website, University Catalog and students must comply with them and the laws of the land.
3. A student has the responsibility to recognize that student actions reflect upon the individuals involved and upon the entire university community.
4. A student has the responsibility to recognize the University's obligation to provide an environment for learning.
5. A student has the responsibility to check their university email for any updates or official university notification.
6. We expect that students will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful, and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual orientation or disability. Behaviors that infringe on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.