

Sofia Turner

Political Theory

Lilly Goren

12/13/25

Portfolio Reflection

What did you learn about reading, writing, and participating in a discussion throughout this semester in this course? This semester I was introduced to numerous books and authors that shaped my views on society, philosophy, and politics. They were all engaging in some way and allowed me to critically think about the text I was engaging with. The reading responses and discussion posts not only allowed me to look back on the texts I read, but I also got different perspectives from other students, along with helpful feedback for future writing assignments. The in-class discussions are what really ties everything together; they allow students to ask questions and discuss among other students what we liked, dislike, misunderstood, and overall, what we got from the text. The discussions helped me understand texts and get a better understanding of what the author may have meant when they wrote it. Without the Socratic seminar, I don't believe that this class would've been as successful or helpful, at times it really helped deepen my understanding and thinking, while also helping with my anxiety in terms of hearing similar perspectives from other students and knowing that I'm not alone.

Why is normative theory an important part of an analysis? Normative theory is important because it allows us to look at and determine what is right or fair in politics. It goes beyond describing how political systems work but also asks questions about what should happen instead. Normative theory gives us a more ethical way to judge whether those systems are just or fair and

forces analysts to face questions of responsibility and moral obligation when it comes to laws, political, and institutional behavior. We did this when discussing each text, whether through discussion questions or in-class discussion, by saying what we liked or disliked, or what we believed was just and fair within these societies.

What is the relationship between political theory and political science? The relationship between political theory and political science is one in that political theory is foundational ideas, concepts, and values, whereas political science is used to study them. Political science usually focuses on empirical methods and observable political behavior, while political theory provides more of an interpretive lens through what that behavior and those methods mean. I can look at it in the way of this class being about political theory and reading about all the fantasized political behaviors, and how societies should look. The political science aspect would be Dr. Goren breaking down these ideas and explaining why they do or do not work in the context of each text and their perspective.

How did the class help you prepare for life after Carroll? This class helped prepare me for life after Carroll by strengthening my critical thinking skills, teaching me how to analyze arguments and texts, and overall to ask questions no matter what, which in total helps beyond the classroom. As someone who wants to go to law school and become a lawyer, all of these skills are essential in succeeding in that type of area. Being able to engage with political theorists, and their texts taught me how to break down complex texts, especially ones from such a long time ago, to understand and analyze their perspectives, while also developing my own arguments and opinions. Overall, this class will assist in my approach to leadership, decision-making, critical thinking, and having a better comprehension of things, especially older texts, in the law and professional field.

What will you remember in 10 years as you evaluate political candidates and professionals?

In 10 years, I will probably remember to look beyond surface-level things and evaluate political candidates and professionals based on their underlying values, their consistency, and the respect that they have with people. This class pushed the importance of asking questions like, “who will benefit from these policies or laws?” “Who will be excluded?” “Is the leader/government’s power being exercised legitimately and ethically?” I will also remember through the texts and discussions that effective leadership does not just come from simple results, but also how they are achieved. Is it through fear? Is it based on class? Those types of questions come to mind and should constantly be thought about when evaluating political candidates and professionals.