SEMESTER III

Core VII | Western Political Thought – I (UG Semester III)

By **Brajabandhu Mahanta** • July 5, 2026 • 2 min read

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.

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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 of Morality and Politics

b) Hobbes

- State of Nature and Contract
- Theory of Absolute Sovereignty

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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

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Essential Readings

1. **Boucher, D., & Kelly, P. (2017).** *Political Thinkers: From Socrates to the Present*. Oxford University Press.
2. **Jha, Shefali. (2018).** *Western Political Thought: From the Ancient Greeks to Modern Times* (2nd ed.). Pearson.
3. **Mishra, R. K. (1957).** *Political Legacy of Plato and Aristotle*. Kitab Mahal Publication.

4. **Mukherjee, S., & Ramaswamy, S. (2004).** *Western Political Thought*. PHI Learning.
5. **Nelson, B. R. (2006).** *Western Political Thought*. Pearson Education India.
6. **Russel, B. (2005).** *History of Western Philosophy*. Routledge.
7. **Sabine, G. H. (2018).** *History of Political Theory*. Oxford and IBH Publishers.
8. **Skinner, Q. (2002).** *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (Vol. I: *The Renaissance*). Cambridge University Press.
9. **Wayper, C. L. (2007).** *Teach Yourself Political Thought*. Surjeet Publication.

Source: Undergraduate (UG) Political Science Syllabus – **Core VII (Semester III): Western Political Thought – I**.

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