INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF EAST AFRICA
'Learning to Succeed'

FACULTY OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

END OF SEMESTER EXAMINATIONS - AUGUST 2025

PROGRAMME: BPA
YEAR/SEM: YEAR 1/SEMESTER 1
COURSE CODE: PAD 1102
NAME: INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL THEORY

DATE:
TIME:

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES:

SECTION A

This section presents a detailed case study designed to assess your ability to apply key concepts of political theory to real-world or hypothetical scenarios. Carefully read the case and respond to the accompanying short essay questions. Your answers should demonstrate a clear understanding of theoretical principles, critical analysis, and the ability to connect theory with practice. All questions in this section are compulsory. This section accounts for 40% of the total examination marks.

Question 1:

CORE CONCEPTS IN POLITICAL THEORY

Political theory, the cornerstone of political science, delves into the fundamental questions that underpin the organization of power, governance, and the relationship between individuals and the state. It is a rich tapestry woven from diverse threads, each representing a distinct concept that shapes our understanding of political life. This essay explores some of these core concepts, highlighting their historical development, contemporary relevance, and the ongoing debates they inspire.

Power, arguably the most fundamental concept in political theory, refers to the ability to influence the behavior of others. It can be exercised through formal institutions like government, or informally through social pressure, economic influence, or cultural hegemony. Power dynamics are central to understanding political systems, as they determine who has the authority to make decisions, how those decisions are enforced, and who benefits from them. Early thinkers like Thomas Hobbes viewed power as a necessary evil, a force that must be concentrated in the sovereign to maintain order. However, later theorists like Michel Foucault challenged this notion, arguing that power is dispersed throughout society, operating in subtle ways through institutions and discourse. The concept of power remains contentious, with ongoing debates about its distribution, legitimacy, and the potential for abuse.

The pursuit of justice is a central theme in political theory. It delves into the question of what constitutes a fair and equitable distribution of benefits and burdens within a society. Different theorists have proposed various frameworks for achieving justice. John Locke, for example, emphasized individual rights and liberties, arguing that a just government must protect these rights and ensure equality before the law. Utilitarianism, championed by Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, focuses on maximizing overall happiness, suggesting just policies are those that benefit the greatest number of people. John Rawls, in his influential work *A Theory of Justice*, proposes the idea of a "veil of ignorance," where individuals unaware of their social position choose principles of justice, ensuring fairness for all. The concept of justice continues to be a contested terrain, with debates concerning economic justice, social justice, and global justice remaining prominent in political discourse.

Liberty, or freedom, is another core concept in political theory. It refers to the ability of individuals to act without undue restriction or coercion. Different forms of liberty exist, including negative liberty (freedom from interference) and positive liberty (the freedom to act on one's desires). Thinkers like John Locke and Isaiah Berlin explored the concept extensively, emphasizing the importance of individual freedom for self-determination and flourishing.

However, the tension between individual liberty and collective interests is a constant theme. For instance, John Stuart Mill argued for limitations on individual liberty when it harmed others, highlighting the need for a balance between individual freedom and social responsibility. This balance remains a delicate one in contemporary political debates, particularly concerning issues like national security and public health.

Equality, a cornerstone of democratic societies, refers to the idea that all individuals are of equal worth and deserve equal treatment under the law. However, achieving equality is multifaceted. There are different dimensions of equality, including social equality (equal opportunities), economic equality (equal distribution of wealth), and political equality (equal participation in decision-making). Thinkers like Jean-Jacques Rousseau argued for a social contract where individuals give up some freedoms in exchange for a system that guarantees a baseline level of equality for all. John Rawls' concept of "justice as fairness" also incorporates the principle of equality of opportunity. However, achieving equality remains a complex challenge. Issues like income inequality, affirmative action, and access to education highlight the ongoing debate about the meaning and extent of equality in a society.

The concept of legitimacy refers to the justification for political authority. A government is considered legitimate if it has the right to rule and if its citizens accept its authority. Different sources of legitimacy exist, including historical tradition, democratic consent, and adherence to the rule of law. Max Weber, a prominent sociologist, identified three ideal types of legitimacy: traditional (based on custom and tradition), charismatic (based on the exceptional qualities of a leader), and legal-rational (based on a set of laws and procedures). However, the question of legitimacy remains relevant. Issues like democratic erosion, populism, and social movements challenging established authority highlight the ongoing debate about the basis and boundaries of legitimate governance.

QUESTION ONE

1) Political theory is not static. How do technological advancements, globalization, and social movements influence the way we understand and apply core political concepts? Cite real-world examples, how does the rise of social media reshape concepts of power and democracy?

[5 MARKS]

2) There is often tension between different political concepts. Cite real-world examples, how can we balance individual liberty with the need for collective security? How can we achieve both justice and equality in a diverse society?

[5 MARKS]

3) Much of political theory originated in the Western tradition. How can these concepts be adapted to address the challenges faced by non-Western societies? Are there alternative frameworks for understanding political power and justice?

[5 MARKS]

4) What are the emerging challenges in the 21st century that require new theoretical frameworks? How can political theory help us navigate issues like artificial intelligence, climate change, and bioethics? [5 MARKS]

[TOTAL 40 MARKS]

Question 2:

Plato's Ethics

At this point, we turn to Plato's more sophisticated treatment of the matter. In the Republic, Socrates was challenged to "tell us how justice benefits a man intrinsically, and in the same way how injustice harms him" (p. 61). To do this, he had to show what justice is. His model of the just state was that of a healthy organism, where all the parts function for the benefit of the whole and the whole benefits the parts.

Socrates gave an elaborate account of the elements which go into the making of a city (a small state). Many different kinds of roles are undertaken by different people. The survival of the whole depends on each one performing their functions properly. Justice is sticking to one's role, doing one's own work and not interfering with others. It, along with the other virtues of a state, temperance, courage and wisdom, contributes to the excellence of that state. Indeed, justice is necessary for the other three virtues. In the case of the individual, Plato also appealed to a model of harmonious functioning. The soul has its divisions just as the state does. There is reason, the passions and the "spirit" that enlivens them. The just man is one who keeps these in harmony with one another. "Justice, like health, depends upon the presence of a natural order governing the soul in the relation of its parts and in the conduct of the whole." This is how justice benefits a man intrinsically, just as good health does.

In the discussion of Plato's theory of virtue, we found that he considered virtue to be an excellence of the soul. Insofar as the soul has several components, there will be many components of its excellence. The excellence of reason is wisdom, of the passions, attributes such as courage, and of the spirit, temperance. (Spirit is a kind of intensity of the soul, for Plato.) Finally, justice is that excellence which consists in a harmonious relation of the three parts. In the state, justice is each individual fulfilling his or her own function, without interfering with the others. So it is for the soul.

QUESTION ONE:

a) What is your interpretation of Plato’s account in the case study above in relation to issues of justice in your home country?

[20 MARKS]

b) What is the main goal of Plato's ethical philosophy?

[10 MARKS]

c) What is the relationship between ethics and politics in Plato's philosophy?

[10 MARKS]

[TOTAL 40 MARKS]

SECTION B

This section consists of a range of essay questions covering key themes and thinkers in political theory. You are required to select and answer any three questions. Each response should be well-structured, clearly argued, and demonstrate a sound understanding of relevant political concepts, ideologies, or philosophical perspectives. Support your answers with appropriate examples and references where applicable. This section is designed to assess your analytical skills, theoretical knowledge, and ability to construct coherent academic arguments.

Question 1:

Explain how Plato's analogy of the just state as a healthy organism illustrates his concept of justice in both the individual and society. What are the implications of this model for political organization and ethical behavior? **[20 MARKS]**

Question 2:

Critically assess Plato’s claim that justice is an intrinsic good that benefits the individual in the same way health benefits the body. How does this intrinsic view of justice compare with consequentialist theories like utilitarianism? **[20 MARKS]**

Question 3:

Evaluate Plato’s conception of justice as each person performing their appropriate societal role. To what extent is this view compatible with contemporary democratic ideals of equality and individual freedom? **[20 MARKS]**

Question 4:

Using examples from political theory, compare and contrast Plato’s view of justice with John Rawls’ concept of “justice as fairness.” How do their views reflect different assumptions about the individual and society? **[20 MARKS]**

Question 5:

Analyze the tension between Plato’s model of a hierarchically ordered society and modern liberal notions of liberty and equality. Does Plato’s model allow for genuine freedom? **[20 MARKS]**

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Analyze the tension between Plato’s model of a hierarchically ordered society and modern liberal notions of liberty and equality. Does Plato’s model allow for genuine freedom? **[20 MARKS]**

Question 7:

Discuss the role of power in Plato’s just state and compare it with Michel Foucault’s understanding of power as diffuse and embedded in discourse. Which view better explains contemporary political power dynamics? **[20 MARKS]**

Question 8:

Examine Plato’s ethical model in relation to the idea of political legitimacy. What makes a ruler or government just in Plato’s theory, and how does this compare to the criteria used in liberal democracies? **[20 MARKS]**

Question 9:

To what extent does Plato’s emphasis on virtue and the soul’s excellence offer a viable framework for moral leadership and ethical governance in the modern world? **[20 MARKS]**

Question 10:

Critically evaluate the relationship between individual liberty and social order in Plato’s political theory. How does this balance compare to the views of John Stuart Mill or Isaiah Berlin? **[20 MARKS]**

Question 11:

Debate whether Plato’s ethical theory encourages or inhibits personal autonomy and civic participation. How might his model be interpreted as either paternalistic or morally formative in shaping citizens? **[20 MARKS]**

Question 12:

Discuss how the tripartite model of the soul (reason, spirit, and passion) forms the foundation of Plato's ethical and political theory. How does this internal harmony relate to the functioning of a just society? **[20 MARKS]**