



School of Public Affairs Lincoln Scholars Program

Certificate in Political Thought



LINCOLN SCHOLARS CORE COURSES

The Examined Life

Socrates argues that “the unexamined life is not worth living.” What can this possibly mean? In an age of polarization and persistent blindness to the claims and perspectives of the other, it is imperative to revisit Socrates’s connections between wisdom, human flourishing, and reflection. Through complex texts by Plato, Augustine, Mary Shelley, Frederick Douglass, and others, students consider a range of assumptions of what counts as a human and virtuous life, all with a view to self-awareness and self-criticism of what we value and why.

Individual Freedom vs. Authority

The study of major philosophical discussions of the conflict between individual freedom and authority with analysis of the relation between this conflict and the problem of organizing a government.

Roots of Political Economy

Debates about political economy are at the heart of our political life. Is capitalism a defensible and sustainable social order or should it be supplemented or replaced by something else; does the commercial republic of John Locke and Adam Smith do justice to human dignity and aspirations, or do we need to look to Rousseau’s participatory republic or Marx’s vision of communism? This course helps students think through the fundamental choices about political economy through the close study of some foundational texts by Adam Smith, Marx, Keynes, and Hayek, among others. Students read these texts closely and engage in substantive discussions of their meanings in order to help clarify their thinking about these questions.

The Beautiful and It’s Politics

On the one hand, Plato and Kant insisted that beauty is truth. On the other hand, beauty’s critics insist it has been pressed into the political service of classism, sexism, racism. Why has beauty been such a powerful cultural ideal, and what arguments have thinkers made on its behalf? What is it in a beautiful work of art that captivates us, and should we allow ourselves to be so captivated? Is beauty irrelevant in a world full of urgent pressing needs? Authors read include: Plato, Shakespeare, Austen, Wheatley, Kant, Dickinson, Zadie Smith, Robin Wall Kimmerer.

The Lincoln Scholars Program is a 15-credit certificate program in political thought that uses classic and contemporary texts in politics, philosophy, economics, and literature to foster discussion of moral and political controversies in a context of intellectual and political diversity. Students from across the university read challenging texts from a variety of points of view in small, conversation-based seminars. The program also offers students a community of conversation and fellowship outside the classroom, as well as a number of enrichment classes.



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The Lincoln Scholars Program is named after President Abraham Lincoln because many say there was a consistency to his moral philosophy and a consistent focus on morality.

EXAMPLE 1 CREDIT COURSES

Working as a Political Theorist

This course supplements the political theory curriculum by introducing students to professionals in think tanks, journalism, nonprofits, and education who have significant political theory interests. Students participate in discussion groups and read supplemental texts related to the lectures and debates sponsored by the Political Theory Institute (PTI) and have private meetings with its speakers. Students work on professional skills and get advice about career options.

Political Theory: Issues/Texts

In this course students explore contemporary debates in political theory by meeting with visiting scholars and public intellectuals from across the country. They participate in discussion groups and read supplemental texts related to lectures sponsored by the Political Theory Institute (PTI) and have private meetings with its speakers.



Scholars Cornel West and Robert George spoke at an event on campus in 2018 that was moderated by SPA Associate Professor Thomas Merrill, the two professors underscored the importance of engaging in civil dialogue and the value of a liberal education.



AT A GLANCE

- Dedicated faculty from areas like Government, Literature, and Philosophy & Religion teach courses in the program
- A sampling of some of the texts used in the program include Douglass, *"Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass"*, Plato, *"The Republic"*, Shelley, *"Frankenstein"*, Smith, *"Wealth of Nations"*, Homer, *"The Odyssey"*, and Ellison, *"Invisible Man"*
- Community-building initiatives throughout the course of the program
- Works with any major offered by the university
- Apply for this program when you apply to AU for the fall through your Future Eagle Portal
- Engage in serious conversations with noted speakers through the Political Theory Institute Colloquium Lecture Series

QUESTIONS?

Contact

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