



School of Public Affairs Lincoln Scholars Program

Certificate in Political Thought



LINCOLN SCHOLARS CORE COURSES

The Problem of Freedom

This course will consider why freedom is an enduring human desire and why that desire is complicated and problematic. Over the course of the semester, we will examine why freedom is a problem, at once eliciting strong attachments and deep controversies. We'll consider what it means to be free in a variety of perspectives and contexts, from the American Declaration of Independence to the visions of freedom found in classic African-American critiques of the American political order; and we'll discuss competing notions of what liberation means for women. We will also consider freedom's problematic relations with authority by comparing a classic case for civil disobedience with a classic case for obedience to the law. Finally, we consider the dark side of the desire for freedom: if we liberate ourselves from all constraints, might we not find ourselves adrift and without direction and so look to guidance in the majority opinion of those around us, regardless of whether that opinion is good or bad? Might we even come to desire malevolent forms of authority?

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.

Politics & Literature

Many of the best-known texts of Western literature are deeply engaged with questions of justice, politics, and the good life. This course explores what kind of human being is the most praiseworthy, how gender and race shape the lives that are possible for us to lead, and what true freedom looks like, as well as related questions through the close reading of classic works of literature. The course encourages sensitivity to texts as well as thoughtfulness about the moral and political dilemmas exemplified by them.

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.



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
- Community-building initiatives throughout the course of the program
- Works with any major offered by the university
- Application opens in the spring
- Engage in serious conversations with noted speakers through the Political Theory Institute Colloquium Lecture Series

QUESTIONS?

Contact

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