

GENERAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE

REPORT TO

THE ACADEMIC SENATE

GE-019-256

New GE course proposal:

Political Science 2040 – Introduction to Political Thought
New GE Area 3B

General Education Committee

Date: 2/11/2026

Executive Committee
Received and Forwarded

Date: 2/18/2026

Academic Senate

Date: 2/25/2026

First Reading

Date: 3/18/2026

Second Reading

Background

Outlines the major political philosophers and their contributions to political thinking around making a humane and just society possible. Explains central concepts such as justice, sovereignty, natural rights, democracy, power, equality, capitalism, humanism, knowledge, and freedom, and their implications for addressing important political and moral questions. Engages canonical and non-canonical authors and texts from the ancient period to the 21st century to critically examine the development of these concepts across varying historical contexts and civilizations.

At the end of this course the student will be able to:

1. Describe the basic political philosophies of diverse political thinkers and compare them to others.
2. Identify and explain the major concepts, arguments, and debates within political philosophy as well as gender, race, class, and indigenous interventions.
3. Examine theoretical underpinnings of contemporary political systems and processes, as well as the debates about them.
4. Classify how views of politics have developed over the past 2,000 years.
5. Present analysis and/or arguments that are balanced and supported by textual evidence.
6. Apply critical thinking skills to their political and social lives, allowing them to grow as moral persons and critical democratic citizens

Required Assignments: Analytical essays, weekly reading interpretation assignments, iterative draft writing assignments, weekly seminar discussion.

Required Content: Original texts by canonical political philosophers (e.g., Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Marx, Mill, Nietzsche); original texts by feminist, critical race, and Indigenous critics (e.g., W.E.B. Du Bois, Wollstonecraft, Robert Nichols)

In the major curriculum, the course functions as an introduction to the basic political concepts (such as power, oppression, resistance) and political ideals (such as justice, equality, freedom) that underpin political systems and process. The ability to understand and identify the theoretical history and debates within politics and political thought will give our students the ability to think more carefully and critically about all the substantive subfields in Political Science: American, Comparative, IR, Public Administration, and Public Law. It aligns with the following PLOs:

#3 Effective Argumentation: Students can effectively present arguments, both about research and political positions, orally and in writing.

#7 Normative and Legal Underpinnings: Students can demonstrate knowledge of and the ability to think critically about political concepts (such as power, oppression, and resistance) and political ideals (such as justice, equality, and liberation), as well as the theoretical and legal underpinnings of political systems and processes.

#8 Global and Political Engagement: Students will produce and apply political science knowledge to engage with diverse communities and perspectives, contributing towards pluralistic forms of justice in local, global, and epistemic dimensions.

Intercultural Engagement: The required essay assignments ask students to integrate knowledge and perspectives across diverse approaches toward the creation of a humane and just society. Weekly reading assignments pair diverse political thinkers, inviting synthesis and critical comparison across diverse human experiences.

Critical Thinking: The required analytical essays must be thesis-driven arguments that make reasoned conclusions through an informed engagement with other perspectives. The iterative writing exercises are designed to develop analytical acuity around comparing diverse approaches to core concepts and debates in political thought.

Written Communication: Students will produce several writing assignments. Included in this writing is iterative drafts and feedback. These exercises familiarize students with analytical writing for the purpose of persuasion.

PLS 2040 is open to all students with all the information they need to know in order to succeed in the course. There are no prerequisites, so students can enter in their first semester. Appropriate resources are provided to students to succeed in this entry-level course.

Students will learn how the field of political science is undergirded by a host of political concepts and ideals that guide the formation and transformation of the political systems that shape our lives. Students will come to appreciate how these political concepts and ideals interact with cultural, social, economic, and discursive forces and processes. Students will ponder what it means to be a democratic citizen and how competing conceptions of freedom, justice, equality, and sovereignty shape civilized and democratic life. Students will consider what role they play in making a just and humane society possible.

Resources Consulted

PLS provided both an ECO and example syllabus for the course, uploaded to Curriculog.

On November 26, 2025, General Education Committee sent out a solicitation email to the following constituencies:

- Department chairs
- Deans and associate deans

We asked to provide input via online survey to ensure that new GE course proposals aligned with the existing GE policy, including learning outcomes and concerns surrounding expertise. Responses were collected through mid-December. GE Committee received **no responses** about this course.

Discussion

GE Committee received this referral on November 13, 2025. This course is being evaluated to ensure compliance with CPP's General Education Policy (GE-001-245), passed by the Senate in 2024.

This course is applying for **GE Area 3B: Humanities**. In addition to meeting the core subject matter requirements for this area, new courses must include the learning outcomes **Intercultural Engagement**

and at least one other SLO: **Information Literacy, Critical Thinking, Civic Literacy, Written Communication, Oral Communication, or Quantitative Literacy.**

This course fulfills the 3B Humanities requirements by engaging students with foundational philosophical texts that explore justice, freedom, power, and equality across civilizations and historical period. The course cultivates both intellectual and moral reflection on the values that make a humane society possible. Through close textual analysis, comparative interpretation, and sustained writing, students examine the philosophical ideas and traditions that have shaped different cultures and develop the capacity for historically informed and responsible ethical judgment.

The ECO meets the requisite elements of the subject matter in this area. The Committee felt that this was a strong proposal that also adequately addressed GE learning outcomes. The attached syllabus also needs to better reflect the content of the ECO, including explicitly naming the GE SLOs. Finally, GE Committee recommends the department include the identified GE SLOs in the sample syllabus, in addition to the full text of the GE Meaning and Purpose Statement (GEMPS).

Recommendation

On February 11, 2026, the GE Committee voted 9-0-0-2 (Conditional Accept – Revise and Resubmit – Reject – Abstain) to **conditionally accept** this proposal. Two members were absent.

Conditional acceptance indicates that the required revisions are limited to relatively minor editorial changes. Given the volume of new proposals under review and the limited timeline for committee action, the GE Committee is utilizing this layered review process to allow timely advancement of proposals while ensuring that required revisions are completed.

The proposal has been returned to the Department Chair on Curriculog for the requested revisions, with a deadline of March 2, 2026. The proposal's originator has also been notified. Upon confirmation that the revisions have been satisfactorily addressed, the course should move forward as approved.

If the requested revisions are not submitted by the deadline, the GE Committee's recommendation will be withdrawn. Accordingly, the GE Committee would recommend that the Academic Senate not approve the course at that time and defer action pending confirmation until the required revisions have been completed.