

# Spring 2026

## POLSC 670

# Law, Politics & Literature

## Dr. John Fliter

### MWF - 10:30-11:20 AM

This is not your typical political science course. The course is unique because it uses classic novels, short stories, poems, and parables to explore relevant themes and concepts in law and politics.

Some of the most important subjects of political and moral philosophy — social order, tradition, moral authority, equality, power, punishment, and injustice — are embodied in many great works of literature.

In Federalist #51 James Madison wrote: “But what is government itself, but the greatest of all reflections on human nature?” Literature has the capacity to create fictional worlds in which characters act according to their values and beliefs about right and wrong, freedom and equality, and the meaning of human life. Our laws and political institutions reflect those values.

George Orwell once argued that all literature is political because it deals with the human condition and is written by men and women who make deliberate choices about what to include in a story and what to omit. From Steinbeck to Kafka and Orwell, literature invites us to think about the social and political issues of our time.

We will have lively discussions over the state of nature, justice, discrimination, contracts, due process, lawyers and legal ethics, juries, punishment, colonialism, and the nature of war. The reading load is substantial but many of the works are interesting and fun. We will read selections from most of the following authors and others:

George Orwell Franz Kafka Margaret Atwood  
Leo Tolstoy Paul Lawrence Dunbar William Golding  
Herman Melville Susan Glaspell William Shakespeare  
Upton Sinclair John Steinbeck Joseph Conrad  
Harper Lee William Faulkner Jack London  
Rudyard Kipling Carl Sandburg James Thurber  
Henry David Thoreau

POLSC 670 counts as an upper-level political thought course for political science majors. The course can be used as an elective for the Primary Texts Certificate, toward the Literary Arts requirements in the College of Arts and Sciences, or as an elective for non-majors.

This course is part of the Law track and counts towards the Primary Texts Certificate!

