Major Issues in Western Political Thought II: The Modern Ages
Political Science 2106W
T/Thr 4:45-6:00 PM
Duques 251

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Course Description
This course introduces modern Western political thought, from the early sixteenth to the mid-nineteenth century. During the three and a half centuries we cover, the concerns, claims, and mode of argument of political theorists changed dramatically, evolving in interaction with sweeping cultural, economic, and political changes. We follow this evolution by concentrating on four historical periods, considering debates and disagreements as well as consensus.

While offering a historical survey, the course also pursues continuous themes through the ages studied. In particular, we consider the origins and development of distinct traditions of political thought including republicanism, liberalism, conservatism, and socialism.

This is a WID course. Writing-related exercises will be conducted in selected class sessions throughout the semester (see class schedule). These exercises will help you complete two papers, one short and one longer (see requirements). The exercises and papers will focus on two sets of skills essential to scholarship in the history of political thought. The first skill is to provide an interpretation of a complex argument in a primary text. The second is to closely compare thinkers to develop and support an engaging overall thesis.

Required Texts for Purchase

- Martin Luther and Jean Calvin, *On Secular Authority* (Cambridge University Press)
- Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Hackett)
- John Locke, *Political Writings* (Hackett)
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Basic Political Writings* (Hackett)
- Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Hackett)
- Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man* (Hackett)
- Karl Marx, *Selected Writings* (Hackett)
These texts are classics of which there are multiple translations and/or editions. I strongly recommend that you purchase the specific translations and editions listed above. Readings marked BB will be available on Blackboard.

**Learning Outcomes**

As a result of completing this course, students will be able to:

- Recognize and explain key concepts and claims of major modern Western political theorists
- Understand and apply synthetic historical interpretations of major changes in Western political thought during the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries
- Become familiar with, and develop their abilities in, two writing skills essential to scholarship in the history of political thought:
  - Interpreting complex arguments in primary texts.
  - Closely and carefully comparing the views different theorists offer on a common topic to develop and support an engaging comparative thesis

**Course Requirements**

**Reading**

The reading for this course is demanding. You should take time to read carefully, to struggle with unexpected and paradoxical formulations, and to ponder what you have read. In order to succeed in this class, you must keep up with the reading.

**Attendance and Participation**

In addition to keeping up with the reading, this course requires you to attend class regularly. Although they do not replace the reading, the lectures provide an essential supplement by identifying key terms, unpacking complex arguments, and providing important historical background. You must also participate actively in the writing-related exercises. These exercises do not only count toward your grade—they are essential to developing the skills you need to write effective papers.

**Writing**

Writing-related exercises: Several class sessions will devote part of class time to writing-related exercises, including peer review (see schedule below). Work associated with these exercises will be collected and graded on a check plus, check, check minus, or fail basis. Together these exercises will count for 10% of your grade.

Short paper: You will be assigned a first, short paper of about 2500 words (about means +/- 5%) in which you will respond to one of a set of stated questions. This will count for 20% of your grade.

Long paper: You will be assigned a second, long paper of about 3500 words (about means +/- 5%) in which you frame and execute your own comparative analysis of thinkers. This will count for 35% of your grade.

**Paper policies:** Your papers should be double-spaced, with 1-inch margins, page numbers, and 12-point standard font (such as Times New Roman). The deadlines for all papers are included on the syllabus. Late papers will be docked one third of a grade (e.g. from a B+ to a B) immediately, plus one third of a grade for every additional day they are late. If you cannot submit your paper
one time due to illness or family emergency, it is your responsibility to get in touch ASAP to provide an explanation and, if necessary, written documentation of your emergency.

Final Exam
A cumulative final exam will be given at the day and time to be announced in the University Final Exam Schedule. This will count for 35% of your grade.

Academic Integrity
All members of the university community are expected to exhibit honesty and competence in their academic work. Students have a special responsibility to acquaint themselves with, and make use of, all proper procedures for doing research, writing papers, and taking exams. Members of the community will be presumed to be familiar with the proper academic procedures and will be held responsible for applying them. Failure to act in accordance with such procedures will be considered academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty is defined as “cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one’s own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.” Acts of academic dishonesty are a legal, moral, and intellectual offense against the community and will be prosecuted through the proper university channels. The University Code of Academic Integrity can be found at http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html. If you have questions about the appropriate use and citation of sources, please come see me in office hours before you turn in your work.

Support for Students Outside the Classroom

DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES (DSS)
GW’s Disability Support Services (DSS) provides and coordinates accommodations and other services for students with a wide variety of disabilities, as well as those temporarily disabled by injury or illness. Accommodations are available through DSS to facilitate academic access for students with disabilities. Additional information is available at www.gwu.edu/~dss.

UNIVERSITY COUNSELING CENTER (UCC) 202-994-5300
The University Counseling Center (UCC) offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students’ personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include:
- crisis and emergency mental health consultations
- confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals
http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices

Security
If we experience an emergency during class time, we will try to stay at this location until we hear that we can move about safely. If we have to leave the classroom, we will meet at the NW corner of the intersection of G and 18th St. in order to account for everyone and to make certain that everyone is safe. Please refer to Campus Advisories for the latest information on the University’s operating status: http://www.campusadvisories.gwu.edu/.
Class Schedule

Jan 13 T – Introductory Lecture: What is Modern Political Thought?

Jan 15 R – Machiavelli, *The Prince* (all)

Jan 20 T – Machiavelli, *The Prince* (review all)

Jan 27 R – Machiavelli, *Discourses*, Book I.1-11, 55, 57-58

Feb 3 T – Machiavelli, *Discourses*, Book II.1-4, Book III.1, 3, 8, 25, 29

Feb 5 R – Writing Exercise (review Machiavelli readings and notes)

Feb 10 T – Luther, *On Secular Authority*, all except part III

Feb 12 R – Calvin, *On Civil Government*, §1-4, 7-12, 17-26, 29-32

FIRST PAPER DUE


Feb 26 R – Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chapters 10-18

Mar 3 T – Locke, *Second Treatise*, §§ 211-31

Mar 5 R – Locke, *Letter on Toleration* (all)

Mar 10 - SPRING BREAK

Mar 12 - SPRING BREAK

March 17 T – Rousseau, *On the Origins of Inequality*, Part One (read notes 9 and 15)


March 24 T – Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, Bk I (all), Bk II Chs. 1-6, Bk III Chs 1-6, 10-18

March 26 R – Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, Book III Ch. 7, Bk IV Chs. 1-2, 8-9; Writing Exercise


April 7 T – Bentham, “The Greatest Good of the Greatest Number” (Liberty Fund); Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Chs. 1-2

April 9 R – **PEER REVIEW**


April 16 R – Mill, *On Liberty*, Chs. 4-6

**SECOND PAPER DUE**

April 21 T – Marx, “On the Jewish Question”, “Communist Manifesto”

April 23 R – Concluding Remarks and evaluations

**Essay portion of final exam deals with material from March 31-April 21.**