PS 209: Introduction to Political Thought
University of Wisconsin, Madison
Fall 2012

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Office Hours: 11:00-12:00 Monday and Thursday & by appointment

Course Description
The most important goal in this course is to enhance our critical thinking about politics by engaging with important texts in the history of political thought. “Critical thinking” in this context involves a willingness and ability to think about politics from different and unfamiliar perspectives and, in doing so, to examine our own perspectives more carefully and thoroughly. Becoming a critical thinker in this sense does not necessarily mean changing your views about politics—though that may happen for some of us as the term proceeds; it does mean arriving at a better understanding of the origins and implications of your views and considering possible alternative ways of thinking. To stimulate critical political thinking, the course introduces students to some of the central problems and issues of politics as these are developed and addressed in major texts of political thought. Questions we will consider include, though they are by no means limited to: what is the relationship between the state and the citizen? who should rule and why? what is justice and what is its role in politics, if any? what is the character of political power? what role should freedom and equality play in politics? how and why does or should political change occur? Clearly, we cannot expect to answer these questions definitively in the course of the term or even to survey all of the potential answers to them. Our aim, instead, is to consider in some depth how a set of theorists define and deal with these and other political matters, always with an eye toward how their ideas might shed light upon our own political experience and thinking.

Course Objectives
1. Students will gain knowledge of key thinkers and texts in the history of western political thought.
2. Students will be able to analyze the development of central themes and arguments over the history of western political thought.
3. Students will know and be able to analyze and evaluate important debates in contemporary political theory.

Course Materials
All course readings are drawn from the Broadview Anthology of Social and Political Thought: Essential Readings, available at the University Bookstore.
Course Requirements, Assignments & Grading
My lectures and our discussions will explore the assigned readings in considerable depth and will often focus upon specific passages. Given this, it is absolutely essential that you complete the assigned readings before class and come to class ready to think about them. It is also important that you bring the relevant text(s) with you to each lecture and discussion section meeting.

Regular attendance at lecture is crucial to success on in the course. As indicated below, performance in discussion sections will form part of your course grade. Discussions, activities and assignments in the sections will focus on particularly important passages from the week’s readings and on your own questions about the course material.

There will be three examinations. The examinations will consist of short answer and essay items and will consist of both in class and take home sections. The final will be partially comprehensive. Course grades will be calculated approximately as follows, though I reserve the right to change assignments and weightings as I deem necessary:

Examination #1  25%
Examination #2  25%
Final Examination  35%
Discussion Section  15%

PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING POLICIES:
● Students needing special accommodations to enable full participation in this course should contact the instructor as early as possible. All information will remain confidential. You also may contact the McBurney Disability Resource Center, 1305 Linden Drive, (608) 263-2741 regarding questions about campus policies and services.

● You must complete all assignments to pass the course.

● Examinations must be taken on the dates listed on the following course schedule. I will allow make-up examinations only for the most compelling reasons (not to include, for example: travel plans, heavy work load in other courses, procrastination, laziness)

● Neither I nor the teaching assistants will discuss grades on examinations for 24 hours after they have been returned. If, after 24 hours’ reflection, you have a concern about a grade, please approach your teaching assistant with a brief written explanation of your concern. Any concerns about grading must be raised with the teaching assistant no later than two weeks after the assignment has been returned.

● Any instances of plagiarism or academic dishonesty will be dealt with in full accordance with University policy and will result in a grade of “F” for the course.
Course Schedule

W Sept 5  Introduction to Course
Jefferson, *Declaration of Independence* (pp. 545-547)

M Sept 10  John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism and Liberty
Mill, *On Liberty* (pp. 627-652)

W Sept 12  John Rawls and Contemporary Liberalism
Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (pp. 862-867; 872-875; 887-906)

M Sept 17  The Trial of Socrates
Plato, *Apology* and *Crito* (pp. 11-29)

W Sept 19  Good Soul, Good City
Plato, *Republic*, Books 1 and 2 (pp. 29-59)

M Sept 24  Good Soul, Good City
Plato, *Republic*, Books 3-7 (pp. 59-93)

W Sept 26  Good Soul, Good City
Plato, *Republic*, Books 8-9 (pp. 93-112)

M Oct 1  The Beginning of the Modern: Machiavelli on the Realities of Power
Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Dedication and Chapters 5-15 (pp. 198-214)

W Oct 3  The Beginning of the Modern: Machiavelli on the Realities of Power
Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Chapters 16-26 (pp. 214-227)

M Oct 8  Exam Review

W Oct 10  **Examination #1: IN CLASS PORTION**

M Oct 15  Liberty and Obligation
Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (pp. 850-858)
Isaiah Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty” (pp. 797-823)
**Examination #1 Take Home Portion Due**

W Oct 17  Hobbes and the Sovereign
M Oct 22  Hobbes and the Sovereign
Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapters 17-21, 26, 29, 30 (pp. 248-325)

W Oct 24  John Locke and Rights-Based Liberalism
Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, Chapters 1-9 (pp. 332-365)

M Oct 29  John Locke and Rights-Based Liberalism
Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, Chapters 10-19 (pp. 365-396)

W Oct 31  Rousseau: The General Will
Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, Preface and Parts 1 & 2 (pp. 417-455)

M Nov 5   Rousseau: The General Will
Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, Foreword and Books 1 & 2 (pp. 466-486)

W Nov 7   Rousseau: The General Will

M Nov 12  Exam Review

**W Nov. 14**  Examination #2: In-Class Portion

M Nov 19  Marx, Revolution and Emancipation
Marx, *On the Jewish Question* (pdf on Learn@UW)
Examination#2: Take Home Portion Due

W Nov. 21 Marx, Revolution and Emancipation
Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (pp. 692-705)

M Nov 26 Marx, Revolution and Emancipation
Marx, *The German Ideology* (pp. 706-715)
Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach* (pp. 716-717)

W Nov 28 Marx, Revolution and Emancipation
Marx, *The Communist Manifesto* (pp. 717-733)

M Dec 3 Nietzsche: Morality, Genealogy, Perspectivism
Nietzsche, selections from various works (pdf on Learn@UW)
W Dec 5  Nietzsche: Morality, Genealogy, Perspectivism  
Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* (pp. 749-770)

M Dec 10  Power in the Contemporary World  
Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (pp. 926-943)

W Dec 12  Identity and Emancipation  
W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folks* (pp. 778-781)  
Simone De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (pp. 785-795)

FINAL EXAMINATION TBA