Political Science 100: Sociability and its Discontents

Core Course of the Fall 2014 “Living with Others: The Politics, Literature, and Culture of Community” First Year Interest Group

Van Hise 155
MW 2:30-3:45

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Office Hours: MW 9:30-11:00, or by appointment

I. FIG and Course Description

Each of us is part of many communities - and as first year students, you are all entering a new and large community (UW-Madison) made up of many smaller communities (honors societies, fraternities and sororities, clubs, academic departments, colleges, teams, and religious organizations, to name but a few). Yet while we use the term community, the term's ethical and political dimensions – and how we, as individuals, relate to communities - are not entirely clear. What does it mean to live in and take part in a community? What does it mean to be an individual who is a part of various communities? How do we - as individuals - balance our own values, aims, and desires with those of the broader communities to which we belong? Do we choose our communities, or do they choose us? And what should we do when our membership in one community conflicts with our membership in another community, or when our own values conflict with those of our community?

Exploring these questions is at the center of this FIG, “Living with Others: The Politics, Literature, and Culture of Community.” Participants will encounter three different dimensions of thinking about and understanding these questions: the political, the anthropological, and the literary. These ways of thinking about community are embodied in the three courses that comprise the FIG: Political Science 100, Anthropology 104, and English 168.

Political Science 100 - Sociability and its Discontents – focuses on the political and ethical dimension of human community. Humans live in communities, and it is hard to imagine us living outside of communities and being recognizably human. While participating in human communities provides undeniable and essential opportunities for happiness and fulfillment (let alone survival!), living with others requires compromises and poses obstacles to our happiness – be they conscious or subconscious. Whether it’s the pressure to conform to images held by one’s employer, peers, or family, to social roles more broadly, to different expectations based on race or gender, or the frustrations over our inability to tame our own mortality, living with others entails a number of potential and potent sources of both happiness and unhappiness.
We will encounter a wide array of analyses of the nature and potential of human community, along with diagnoses of the tensions inherent in living together, and a wide array of solutions to them. These diagnoses and solutions may be rooted in human nature (Hobbes), commercial society (Rousseau), capitalism (Marx), conventional morality (Nietzsche), or racism (Mills), to name but a few. We will explore a wide array of questions: when, why, and how do humans cooperate? Under what conditions does cooperation break down? Which elements of human psychology allow us to be sociable? Which elements of human psychology pose obstacles to sociability? What sort of power does society exercise over its members, and how does it do so? What limits should there be to social power? How does race or gender affect our membership in communities?

II. Course Objectives and Developing Capacities

1. To read and analyze texts dealing with the political and ethical dimensions of human community.

2. To explore and analyze how political and ethical theories are formulated, and to critically evaluate their strengths and weaknesses.

3. To explore and analyze how different political and ethical theories relate to each other.

4. To explore and analyze the ways in which works of political theory may inform, illuminate, and enrich contemporary political and ethical discussions.

5. To analyze and evaluate contemporary culture and individual experience through the lens of philosophical texts.

6. To integrate course material from the three FIG courses, allowing for a synthesis of humanistic and social scientific ways of knowing. (For further information on “ways of knowing,” see http://pubs.wisc.edu/ug/ls_ugstudy.htm#breadth).

Through their careful and close engagement with course material, class attendance and participation, and completion of course work, students will develop the following capacities: verbal communication and presentation; expository, analytical, and reflective writing; critical analysis of arguments, concepts, and theories; teamwork and flexibility; and independent research.

III. Course Assignments

The course assignments, their weight in your overall grade, and the objectives they pursue are listed below:

1. Reflection Papers (10% of overall grade); Objectives: 1, 2, 4
All students in this class will write 5 short (no more than 1 page, double spaced) reflection papers. These papers are to be critical reflections on a newspaper or magazine article (including electronic sources, though you will want to check with me first) through the lens of a single course reading. The 5 papers will be averaged together, and the average will be worth 10% of the overall course grade. In averaging the 5 papers, the highest grade will count for 30% of the total, while the lowest will count for 10% of the total. The remaining 3 reflections papers will each be worth 20% of the total reflection paper grade. While you have some flexibility on when these are to be turned in, you must turn in at least one on or by September 29; at least 3 on or by November 3; and at least 4 on or by November 24.

2. Short Papers (25% of overall grade); Objectives: 1, 2, 5

All students in the class will write 3 short (4-6 pages, double spaced) papers. These papers are to be critical analyses of creative works (a play, a poem, a film, a painting, a song, a video, a novel, etc.) through the lens of a course reading. For example, you could analyze the film Citizen Kane through the lens of Plato’s Apology, or Macklemore’s song “Thrift Shop” through the lens of Rousseau’s Second Discourse. There is one restriction, and one caveat. The restriction: you cannot analyze any creative works that Professor Kapust discusses in class (or the two mentioned here). The caveat: you need to run the topic by Professor Kapust before writing it. The 3 papers will be averaged together, and the average will be worth 25% of the overall course grade. In averaging the 3 papers, the lowest grade will count for 20% of the total, while the two higher grades will count for 40% each. As with the reflection papers, there is some flexibility on the due dates. However, you must turn in at least one on or by October 1; and at least two one or by November 5.

3. Integrative Project (25% of overall grade); Objectives: 1, 3, 5, 6

All students in this class will write and present (see #4 below) an integrative project that combines materials from Political Science 100, English 168, and Anthropology 104. This project is to be 10-12 pages (double spaced) in length, and is to be a critical reflection on your own experience in finding your place in the UW-Madison community. The projects will be due on or by December 1.

4. Presentation (10% of overall grade); Objectives: 1, 3, 5, 6

All students in this class will present their integrative project to the class as a whole. I have reserved the last 3 days of class for this exercise. The presentations are to take no more than 10 minutes.

5. Final Exam (20% of overall grade); Objectives: 1, 2, 3

All students will write a take-home final exam, to be turned in during the designated exam period. The exam is to be 8-10 pages, typed and double-spaced. You will receive the take-home
prompt on the last day of class. While you are free to discuss the exam with your classmates, the
work you turn in must be yours and yours alone.

6. Participation (10% of overall grade); **Objectives: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6**

In addition to the written assignments, in-class participation and participation in **mandatory**
every extra-curricular integrative activities will be worth 10% of your overall course grade. Effective
in-class participation involves actively participating in and contributing to class discussions.
This, in turn, requires effective preparation for class, bringing course materials to class, and
respectful attention to fellow students and the instructor. The mandatory extra-curricular
integrative activities will consist of 3 movie nights, to be held in participants’ dorms. All
participants must attend at least 2 of the movie nights. I will order dinner, and we will watch and
discuss a film that reflects the themes of a set of course readings. The first movie night will be
held on Sunday, September 28; the second movie night will be held on Sunday, October 26; the
third movie night will be held on Sunday, December 7. All movie nights will be scheduled from
4:00-7:00.

A note on paper formatting:

Papers are to be handed in stapled, printed in blank ink with 12 point Times New Roman Font.
They are to be double-spaced, feature 1 inch margins on the left, right, top and bottom, page
numbers (if more than one page). For a header on the first page, you need only supply your name
and the date; the first page should also feature a brief descriptive title of the paper itself. Citation
is to follow the format of the *American Political Science Review*; this link will take you to a good

IV. Attendance

I understand that all sorts of unforeseen events can happen in life – especially in the first year of
college. Thus, every student in this class can miss one class with no excuse. More than one
unexcused absence will adversely affect your participation grade. If you miss class for a religious
holiday, illness, family emergency, or university sanctioned event, please let me know, as this
will not count as your free unexcused absence.

V. Grading

Grades will be assigned based on the following scale:

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\begin{align*}
A & \geq 93.5 \\
AB & = 87.5-93.4 \\
B & = 82.5-87.4 \\
BC & = 77.5-82.4 \\
C & = 69.5-77.4 \\
D & = 60-69.4 \\
F & \leq 59.9
\end{align*}
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VI. Course Materials

I have ordered the following six books for the course; please do try to use these particular additions, as using different editions will make class discussions run less smoothly.


Readings marked by an asterisk (*) will be made available online via Learn@UW. These readings will be accessible either as PDFs or through links to electronic texts.

VI. Class Expectations

You can expect me, as your instructor, to come to class prepared, to be available for assistance during office hours or by mutually convenient appointment, to answer email correspondence in a reasonable amount of time (*provided your email uses proper punctuation, grammar, spelling, appellation, and is signed*), to provide feedback on your performance, to hand back written work in a reasonable amount of time, and to provide clear instructions and guidelines.

I expect you, as students, to come to class prepared to engage in the material and on time, to be attentive and respectful in class, to check your university-registered email regularly, to read and understand the syllabus and other course guidelines, in addition to adhering to all university policies and policies stated in the syllabus. Students **may not use** laptops, cellular phones, or similar items in this class, with the exception of devices for displaying e-texts.

**Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated, and will be dealt with severely. For information on academic honesty, see [http://students.wisc.edu/doso/acadintegrity.html](http://students.wisc.edu/doso/acadintegrity.html).**

This syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations may occur.
Schedule of Readings and Discussions

Wednesday, 9/3: Course introduction
Monday, 9/8: Plato, *Apology*
Wednesday, 9/10: Plato, *Apology*, cont’d; *Crito*
Wednesday, 9/17: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (selections TBA)
Wednesday, 10/1: Hobbes, *Leviathan* (selections TBA)
Monday, 10/6: Hobbes, *Leviathan* (selections TBA)
Wednesday, 10/8: Rousseau, *First Discourse*
Monday, 10/13: Rousseau, *Second Discourse*
Wednesday, 10/15: Rousseau, *Second Discourse*
Monday, 10/20: Marx, *1844 Manuscripts* (*Wages of Labor, Profit of Capital*) *
Wednesday, 10/22: Marx, *1844 Manuscripts*, cont’d (*Estranged Labor, The Meaning of Human Requirements...*) *
Monday, 10/27: Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals* (selections) *
Wednesday, 10/29: Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals* (selections) *
Monday, 11/3: Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*
Wednesday, 11/5: Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*
Wednesday, 11/12: Mills, *The Racial Contract*
Monday, 11/17: Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* *
Wednesday, 11/19: Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* *
Monday, 11/24: Butler (works TBA) *

Wednesday, 11/26: Library research day

Monday, 12/1: Extra Day

Wednesday, 12/3: Presentations

Monday, 12/8: Presentations

Wednesday, 12/10: Presentations