

Political Science 603
MODERN POLITICAL THOUGHT
Winter 2006

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Office Hours:
3–4 Tuesdays
2–3 Wednesdays
& by appointment

Description

This seminar covers the three centuries which political theorist (unlike, say, artists or architects) think of as the modern period: we begin with Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651) and end with John Stuart Mill's writings from the latter half of the nineteenth century. Making sense of and coming to terms with the rapidly changing world, particularly social and political diversity, were central preoccupations of modern political theorists. We will try to understand their different approaches and answers to these questions. We will assume that all political theory aims to *persuade* its audience in some way and that a theorist's *epistemological commitments* (how she thinks we know anything) inform her attempts at persuasion.

Our selection sacrifices breadth for (a modicum of) depth. Although the theorists we'll read and discuss — Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Marx, and Mill — are some of the heaviest hitters of the modern canon, they aren't anywhere near the only important ones. We will have to ignore several equally important thinkers — Montesquieu and Hume, Kant and Hegel, Bentham and Nietzsche — and a host of important but now underappreciated writers — Grotius and Pufendorf, Wollstonecraft and Paine, Mill senior and Friedrich Engels. What you'll learn, I hope, by our focus on our five thinkers is the ability to read difficult primary texts carefully, to understand some of the main themes in the secondary literatures, and to engage theories in an intelligent, even original way. You'll have to do that on your own with the other modern thinkers we now sidestep. (You *really* will have to do that if you hope to take a prelim in political theory.)

Seminar mechanics

- People need to come to seminar meetings prepared. There will be a lot of reading, but there will be study questions which will help focus your reading a bit. Attendance is mandatory, and unexplained absences are not allowed. One unexplained absence will result in an E for participation, two will result in failure in the course.
- Registered students will write two short papers (ca. 1,000 words each) as well as a 3,500–4,000-word term paper (with a required draft). The term paper can be based on one of the two short papers. There will be a separate handout on the term paper details.
- At least one of the short papers must be written before the spring break.
- All written work — that is, **all** written work — must conform to the guidelines of the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th edition, and use American style. The course website has a link to an online version of the 14th edition, which is pretty much the same as the 15th.
- Please turn in all work electronically. E-mail me your papers as attachments, preferably as Microsoft Word or RTF files.
- There will *no* incompletes except in cases of documented medical emergencies, provided that at least half of the work has been completed.

Grading

Short papers	30%
Term paper	50%
Participation	20%

Readings

The following books have been ordered through Shaman Drum Bookshop. *You must have the edition specified.*

- Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. Hackett.
 Locke, John. *Letter Concerning Toleration*. Hackett.
 Locke, John. *Second Treatise of Government*. Hackett.
 Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. *The Marx-Engels Reader*. W.W. Norton.
 Mill, John Stuart. *On Liberty*. Broadview.
 Mill, John Stuart. *The Subjection of Women*, Hackett.
 Rousseau, J.-J. *The Basic Political Writings*. Hackett.
 Rousseau, J.-J. *Politics and the Arts*. Cornell UP.

There will be numerous required secondary readings. Most of it will be available electronically.

Calendar

This is the calendar for the semester. You will need to read the whole text if no selection is specified, but I'll flag sections to focus on (**particularly important ones will be bold**). Secondary readings are listed after the primary text. They are often review essays and so refer to texts you likely won't know. That is deliberate: they still will give you a sense of the landscape. They are all available on JSTOR unless otherwise specified.

A number of **paper topics** are available for each week. They will also serve as study questions, to orient you to the issues we may want to focus on in class discussion. You will need to write two 1,000-word papers during the semester, but you can decide when you want to write them, as long as at least one of them is before the spring break. The paper is due on the Tuesday the material is discussed. You may **not** write on an earlier week's topics. The paper topics should also serve as study questions and help you focus your reading even when you are not writing on one of them.

In addition to the topics listed below, you may also write a **book review** on the reading for the day. For examples on what book reviews in political theory look like, consult the *APSR* (or its new incarnation, *Perspectives on Politics*) or, e.g., *Political Theory*.

Week 1 Introduction. No reading.
January 10

Week 2 PRIMARY
January 17 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Epistle Dedicatory, Introduction, Pt. I (pp. 1–105).
 Focus on chs. 5–6, **13–16**.

SECONDARY

Quentin Skinner, “The Ideological Context of Hobbes’s Political Thought.” *The Historical Journal* 9, no. 3 (1966): 286–317.

Paper topics:

1. Briefly describe the method Hobbes claims to employ in his treatise.
2. What is Hobbes’s response to the fool in chapter xv?
3. Explain ¶36 in chapter xv.

Week 3
January 24

PRIMARY

Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Pt. II (pp. 106–244).

Focus on chs. 18–21, 29.

SECONDARY

David Gauthier, “Taming Leviathan,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 16, no. 3 (1987): 280–298.

Paper topics:

1. Describe the most important features of the sovereign.
2. What counts as a social contract?
3. What is Hobbes’s conception of freedom and what are its implications?

Week 4
January 31

PRIMARY

Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chs. 37, 42; pt. IV.

Focus on 37, first dozen or so pages of 42, 46, 47, R & C.

SECONDARY

A debate between Edwin Curley and A. P. Martinich (photocopy handout)

Paper topics:

1. What is the epistemic status of religious revelation?
2. Speculate (briefly) on why Hobbes is so concerned to undermine scholastic philosophy and theology.
3. Offer one argument which suggests parts III and IV are a defense of religious toleration.

Week 5
February 7

PRIMARY

Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*.

Focus on the whole darn thing

SECONDARY (Read one carefully; skim the other.)

Ingrid Creppell, “Locke on Toleration: The Transformation of Constraint,” *Political Theory* 24, no. 2 (1996): 200–240.

Kirstie McClure, “Difference, Diversity, and the Limits of Toleration,” *Political Theory* 18, no. 3 (1990): 361–391.

Paper topics:

1. What is Locke's argument for the division of labor between political and religious authority?
2. Why should atheists and Catholics not be tolerated?
3. Is Locke's conception of the nature of belief plausible?

Week 6
February 14

PRIMARY

Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, pp. 5–68.

SECONDARY

A. John Simmons, "Inalienable Rights and Locke's Treatises," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 12, no. 3 (1983): 175–203.

Paper topics:

1. Why do people want to quit the state of nature in Locke's theory?
2. Provide one counterargument against Locke's theory of property.
3. How do we find out what laws of nature are? How are Locke's laws of nature different from Hobbes's?

Week 7
February 21

PRIMARY

Locke, *Second Treatise*, rest

SECONDARY

Richard Ashcraft, "Revolutionary Politics and Locke's Two Treatises of Government: Radicalism and Lockean Political Theory," *Political Theory* 8, no. 4 (1980): 429–486.

Paper topics:

1. How does Locke's consent theory motivate a right of political resistance?
2. Briefly describe and explain some of the biggest differences between Hobbes's and Locke's social contract.
3. Democracy is sometimes defended on epistemic grounds. Is there such an argument in Locke, and if so, what is it? Make sure you explain what it would mean to defend democracy on epistemic grounds.

Spring Break
February 28

Week 8
March 7

PRIMARY

Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*

SECONDARY

Elizabeth Wingrove, "Savage Sensibilities," in *Rousseau's Republican Romance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000): 24–57. (Photocopy)

Paper topics:

1. What is the relationship between simple self-love, self-esteem, pride and vanity?
2. Why does Rousseau think Hobbes makes an epistemic error?
3. On what grounds should we find Rousseau's account compelling?

Week 9
March 14

PRIMARY

Rousseau, *The Social Contract*.

Focus on bks. I–II, bk. III.1.

SECONDARY (Read one carefully; skim others.)

Arthur M. Meltzer, "Rousseau's 'Mission' and the Intention of his Writings," *American Journal of Political Science* 27, no. 2 (1983): 294-320.

Joshua Cohen. "Reflections on Rousseau: Autonomy and Democracy," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 15, no 3 (1986): 275-297.

Bernard Grofman and Scott L. Feld, "Rousseau's General Will: A Condorcetian Perspective," *American Political Science Review* 82, no. 2 (1988): 567-576.

Paper topics:

1. How is it possible that people can be "forced to be free"?
2. Explain Rousseau's argument for the difference between general will and "the will of all."
3. Why would some people interpret Rousseau as an anti-liberal?

Week 10
March 21

PRIMARY

Rousseau, *Letter to D'Alembert*.

Focus on the whole darn thing.

NO SECONDARY READING

Paper topics:

1. What is similar in the *Letter* to the *Second Discourse*, and what is different?
2. What is the significance of the concept of *l'opinion publique*?
3. What's so bad about the arts, really?

Week 11
March 28

PRIMARY

Marx, *The German Ideology*, Part I (pp. 146–200).

SECONDARY

William James Booth, "Gone Fishing: Making Sense of Marx's Concept of Communism," *Political Theory* 17, no. 2 (1989): 205–222.

Paper topics:

1. Marx's famous 11th thesis on Feuerbach reads: "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is, to *change* it." Explain this in light of our readings.

2. The great American mystery writer Raymond Chandler once described his private eye hero, Philip Marlowe, and himself as follows: “P. Marlowe and I do not despise the upper classes because they take baths and have money; we despise them because they are phoney.”¹ Use this distinction to illustrate what is both similar *and* different in Rousseau’s and Marx’s analyses of social and political relations. (You do not need to know anything about Raymond Chandler to answer this question.)
3. Marx’s philosophy of social science is *materialist*. Explain this.

Week 12
April 4

PRIMARY

Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, selections (pp. 302–438) .

NO SECONDARY READINGS

Paper topics:

1. Explain the relationship between money and commodities under capitalism.
2. An enduring debate about Marx is the question of economic determinism. Some argue Marx’s view is that social and political “superstructures” are purely epiphenomenal; others claim Marx does think of them as having their own causal efficacy. Is either interpretation preferable to the other in light of our readings?
3. Focus on and describe some one aspect of Marx’s theory that seems to change between *The German Ideology* and the *Capital*.

Week 13
April 11

PRIMARY

Mill, *On Liberty*.

SECONDARY

Elizabeth S. Anderson, “John Stuart Mill and Experiments in Living,” *Ethics* 102, no. 1 (1991): 4–26.

Paper topics:

1. What is the political function of what we would call freedom of expression for Mill?
2. Is the distinction between self-regarding and other-regarding acts sustainable? Why or why no? If it isn’t, is the distinction useful?
3. What is Mill’s conception of human flourishing?

Week 14
April 18

PRIMARY

Mill, *The Subjection of Women*.

SECONDARY

Susan Moller Okin, “John Stuart Mill, Liberal Feminist,” in *Women in Western Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979): 197–230.

Keith Burgess-Jackson, “John Stuart Mill, Radical Feminist,” *Social Theory and Practice* 21 (Fall 1995): 369–396.

¹ *Selected Letters of Raymond Chandler*, Frank McShane, ed. (New York: Dell Publishing, 1987), p. 44.

Paper topics:

4. Mill's argument against the subordination of women is fundamentally an *epistemic* one. Describe the argument.
5. Mill's feminism is commonly interpreted to be a powerful application of his more general *liberal* theory. In what ways?
6. In chapter two of *The Subjection of Women*, Mill says: "In an otherwise just state of things, it is not, therefore, I think, a desirable custom, that the wife should contribute by her labour to the income of the family" (p. 51). Can you reconcile this claim with what seems to be the overall argument of *The Subjection of Women*? Why or why not?