



Seminar description

The seminar explores the development of liberalism as a theory of toleration, rights, free market and individualism, and arguments against those values, both by explicit anti-liberals and by liberals themselves. It begins with the historical emergence of liberalism in the seventeenth century as a way to reconcile religious pluralism, but the seminar's focus will be more modern and contemporary debates about the relationship between (1) rights and citizenship, (2) about the relationship between liberty, on the one hand, and social and political equality, on the other, (3) about the relationship between individuals and the state, and (4) about cultural and religious pluralism. These themes are connected with one another, and we will not attend to them chronologically. Instead, we will explore them as they come up in the texts we read and in the questions and responses you have.

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Office hours:
Tuesdays, 2–3
Wednesdays, 2:30–3:30
By appointment

Course website at
<https://ctools.umich.edu>

Prerequisites

This is a capstone seminar for students who have made political theory one of their main areas. You must have taken at least one of the following political theory courses and preferably more: PS 101, 301, 302, 409. Equivalent courses taken at other universities may count.

Rules of the Game

- This course will function like a graduate seminar: Learning is a collective endeavor where everyone's participation matters. You need to come to class **on time, prepared and ready to engage** the texts, your peers and the professor.
- You must engage the texts, your peers and the professor **respectfully**. Disagreements are fine — in fact, they are great — but the terms of our discussion, whether in class or in writing, must be civil and professional.
- Because the nature of the seminar, you are allowed two absences **for any reason whatever**. After two absences, **your participation grade is E**. There will be no exceptions to this rule.
- You will submit all written work electronically through CTools.
- The quality of your written work, not effort, is the sole criterion on which it is graded. Good work almost always requires effort, though, so do expect to work hard.
- Prior preparation, talents and abilities will affect your performance in this seminar. Your grades for prior work don't; a kind of paper that earned you an A in another course may earn you C. And vice versa.
- Any instance of academic misconduct will automatically result in your failing the seminar. It is **your** responsibility to avoid even the appearance of academic misconduct.

Make sure you are familiar with proper practices for citing your sources. The course website has further information.

Requirements

Readings

Please buy the following books:

John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*. Hackett Publishers, 1983.

J. S. Mill, *On Liberty*, ed. Edward Alexander. Broadview Press, 1999.

Montesquieu, *Persian Letters*. Hackett Publishers, 1999.

Carl Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*. MIT Press, 1988.

Michael Walzer, *Politics and Passion*. Yale UP, 2006.

The books are available at Shaman Drum Bookshop. You **must** get the edition specified. This is particularly important in the case of Mill's *On Liberty*; the edition we read has important contemporary material which will be the focus of our discussion.

Other readings will be available through the course website. Some are library reserves, some are PDF's accessible on the course website itself.

Writing

There are two kinds of writing assignments: a conventional term paper at the end and a seminar blog throughout the term. On the blog, you will both write primary posts and comment on your peers' posts.

The blog. Each student is responsible for contributing at least three new blog posts of at least 500 words and for commenting on at least three of your peers' posts. Each post should tie the reading for the week to some more contemporary political, social or cultural phenomenon.

Note that anybody in the world can read the blog (but not post or comment). You need to make a serious effort to be civil and to write good, grammatically and typographically correct prose that won't embarrass you in the eyes of your peers, friends, family, future employers and the like. Because the blog is an exercise in both thinking and public writing, good thinking and good writing will matter for your grade. The three-post, three-comment requirement is a minimum; you are welcome to and indeed should contribute more than that if you care about your grade — or about being an engaged citizen and a scholar. I will grade your contributions to the blog on a portfolio model: your overall contribution will get one grade that counts for 40% of your course grade. I will, however, offer private comments and a diagnostic grade to each student after his or her first post. I will also make further private comments if they are necessary.

Term paper. The term paper should be about 2,500–3,000 words long. It is due on Wednesday, December 20. The term paper determines 40% of your final course grade.

These are the grading guidelines on the papers:

- A/A– Paper offers a clearly stated, interesting thesis which is supported with valid and sound arguments. The paper shows that the writer has thought about the assignment and developed his or her own ideas about it, instead of just offering minimal responses to the different components of the assignment. Interpretations of theories are sophisticated and supported with textual evidence; more than one source is considered. Writing is between good and brilliant: the organization of the paper is clear, prose is good and grammar flawless.
- B/B+ Paper offers a clearly stated thesis which is supported with for the most part valid and sound arguments. The paper stays on topic, considering all the relevant aspects of the assignment. Interpretations of theories are plausible and supported with textual evidence; more than one source is considered. Writing, including outline and grammar, is solid.
- B– Paper offers a thesis and attempts to support it with arguments. However, the thesis is simplistic and/or the arguments weak or unconnected to the thesis. Interpretations are weak or problematic, textual evidence weak. Paper only uses one textual source. Writing and organization have problems that affect readability.
- C/C+ Paper offers a minimal thesis and minimal or no arguments in its support. Interpretations thoroughly misguided and/or unsupported with any evidence. Writing — both at the level or paper organization and grammar — seriously problematic.
- D+/C– No thesis, no arguments or no textual evidence. Organization incoherent, writing very awkward and unintelligible.
- D No thesis, no arguments, no evidence. Writer has no conception of most rudimentary aspects of writing (paragraphs, outline).
- E The paper displays a fundamental lack of understanding of the principles that guide scholarly endeavors. Examples include but aren't limited to gross mistakes in citing source materials as well as significant errors in framing the paper (e.g., writing a short story instead of an essay).

Participation

Participation will be graded on your willingness and ability to listen to and engage others, on the intelligence of your comments and questions, and on your articulacy. (Yes, folks: “um...like...you know” at a job interview is going to cost you a job, and you might as well start paying attention to how you sound.) Participation counts for 20% of your final course grade.

Summary of grading:

Term paper:	40%
Blog entries:	40%
Participation:	20%

Seminar Calendar

- Sept. 6 Introduction. No reading.
- Sept. 13 Anonymous, “Exhortation Concerning Good Order and Obedience to Rulers and Magistrates.”*
John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*.
- Sept. 20 Montesquieu, *Persian Letters*, pp. 7–180.
- Sept. 27 *Persian Letters*, 181–273.
- Oct. 4 J. S. Mill, *On Liberty* (just review this — I assume you have read it before). Appendix D (pp. 189–291) of the Broadview Press edition of *On Liberty*.
- Oct. 11 Thomas Haskell, “Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility,” *American Historical Review* 90:2 & 3.*
- Oct. 17 Carl Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*.
- Oct. 25 John Rawls, “Justice as Fairness”** and “The Law of Peoples”**, both in *Collected Papers*.
- Nov. 1 Michael Walzer, *Politics and Passion*, pp. ix–65.
- Nov. 8 Walzer, pp. 66–140.
- Nov. 15 *Wisconsin v. Yoder* (406 U.S. 205, 1972).*
Margaret Talbot, “A Mighty Fortress,” *The New York Times Magazine*, February 27, 2000.*
- Nov. 22 **Thanksgiving: no class.**
- Nov. 29 Eamonn Callan, “Discrimination and Religious Schooling,” in Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman, eds., *Citizenship in Diverse Societies*. Oxford: OUP, 2000.**
Jeff Spinner-Halev, “Extending Diversity: Religion in Public and Private Education,” in Kymlicka & Norman.
- Dec. 6 J. M. Coetzee, “Taking Offense.”**
Coetzee, “The Problem of Evil.”**
- Dec. 13 Selected readings on the 2006 Danish cartoon controversy*
- Dec. 20 **Term paper due.**

Texts marked with an asterisk (*) are accessible in the “Readings” folder on the course website’s Resources.

Texts marked with a double asterisk (***) are in Library Reserves.