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Office Hours: Thursday 3-6

### Modern Political Thought

POLI 271, Fall 2013

Tuesday/Thursday, 12:30-1:45pm

#### Course Description:

This course surveys the foundation of modern Western political thought. Through close readings of key texts in the Western canon, we will focus on the following questions:

- What does it mean to be part of a state as a ruler, subject, or citizen?
- Who counts as a person, in society and for the state?
- What do we mean when we talk about liberty, justice, and equality?
- Are democratic ideals like liberty, justice, and equality important? Why or why not?
- What are rights? Where do they come from?
- Why do we have governments? What form should they take?
- What are the states' responsibilities with regard to caring for subjects or citizens?
- When and why should governments act to expand or restrict economic liberties?
- How should religious and political institutions interact?
- How do contemporary political practices embody or differ from thinkers' ideals?

Engaging with readings, assignments, and class discussions will help students learn how to think and write about political principles and to develop critical perspectives on political practices.

#### Classroom Expectations

- **Bring texts to class.** You are expected to refer to texts to support your arguments, and to be able to follow along when your colleagues reference page or chapter numbers.
- **Complete all assigned reading and review notes before class.** It is difficult, if not impossible, to make substantive contributions to discussion without completing all reading.
- **Be on time.** Lateness is disruptive and missing class time will impede your ability to participate in class and succeed on written assignments. Ten points will be deducted from your participation grade for every three instances of unexcused lateness.
- **No cell phones, personal electronics, or non-academic use of laptops/tablets.** These can easily become a distraction to you and those around you. If you are texting, writing e-mails, chatting with friends, etc., you are not truly present in class. I reserve the right to answer phone calls, respond to text messages and emails, or update twitter, Facebook, tumblr, etc. on your behalf if you are engaged in these activities during class meetings. I reserve the right to individually or collectively ban laptops and tablets if they are used for purposes other than reading or note-taking. Ten points will be deducted from your participation grade for every three instances of unauthorized usage of personal electronics.
- **No food or drink in the classroom.** Eat before or after you come to class. The noise and smells associated with eating can be distracting and some foods may induce allergic reactions in your peers. If you need to eat during class for medical reasons please see me. Exceptions for water, coffee, and tea, but please be careful not to spill anything in our carpeted classroom.
- **Be respectful of your fellow students.** Differences in opinion and background provide an opportunity for intellectual growth. We all stand to benefit from being aware of and welcoming these differences. Furthermore, we can only have a successful discussion if the classroom is a comfortable space for all. If you are uncomfortable with something that happens in class, please let me know. Confrontational behavior and offensive language will not be tolerated and may result in your being asked to leave class and/or a ten point deduction from your participation grade.

## **Course Policies**

**Prerequisites:** This course does not have formal prerequisites, but does require advanced reading comprehension and writing skills. Students will find it helpful to have taken college-level courses in Political Science, Philosophy, History, Women's and Gender Studies, English, or Comparative Literature. The material may prove difficult without some background in at least one of these disciplines. If you are concerned about your preparedness, please let me know as soon as possible.

**Email:** Feel free to e-mail me with quick questions or to set up a meeting. Longer discussions and all discussions about grades must take place in person. I will respond to e-mails within 24 hours during the week. I will check my e-mail more frequently in the day or two before assignment due dates or exams, but do not wait until the last minute. There is no guarantee that I will receive and be able to respond to last minute requests or questions.

**Office Hours:** You do not need to make an appointment to attend office hours. You are encouraged to drop in, Thursday between 3 and 6pm in Hamilton 301, if you have questions about course material, class participation, or assignments.

**Note:** Many students (including those who excel in their home disciplines or subfields) find it challenging to adjust to the relatively dense and abstract material we will cover in this course. You are much more likely to succeed if you address questions or difficulties as soon as they arise, and in-person meetings are much more thorough and efficient than e-mail correspondence. If you would like to meet in person but are unable to come to office hours please e-mail me to set up a meeting.

**Syllabus and Course Resources:** Assignments, readings, resources, and grading criteria will all be made available on Sakai. While I do not expect to make changes to the syllabus, I reserve the right to do so. The most recent versions of all assignments will be available on Sakai and announced by email. You are responsible for checking emails and the course website to stay up to date.

**Honor Code:** The Honor Code applies to all coursework. Familiarize yourselves with the Code at [http://honor.unc.edu/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=44&Itemid=71](http://honor.unc.edu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=44&Itemid=71). You can also take the library's tutorial at <http://www.lib.unc.edu/instruct/plagiarism/>. Be sure to avoid plagiarism, defined as "deliberate or reckless representation of another's words, thoughts, or ideas as one's own without attribution in connection with submission of academic work, whether graded or otherwise." (UNC Instrument of Student Judicial Governance, II.B.1)

## **Assignments and Grading**

All course assignments are designed to give you an opportunity to demonstrate your familiarity with course material, your analytical skills, and the strength of your writing. More details about each assignment will be posted to Sakai and discussed in class two weeks before the relevant due date.

Course grades will be assigned according to the standard UNC grading scale, and will be determined as follows:

- Midterm Exam: 20% (February 18<sup>th</sup>)
- Essay 1: 20% (Due March 18<sup>th</sup>)
- Essay 2: 25% (Due April 17<sup>th</sup>)
- Final Exam: 20% (May 2<sup>nd</sup>)
- Participation: 15%

## **Assignments**

### Midterm Exam – 20% (February 18<sup>th</sup>)

An in-class exam consisting of a series of short-answer questions about course readings.

### Essay 1 - 20% (Due March 18<sup>th</sup>)

This five-page essay will ask you to explore one thinker's ideas or compare two thinkers on a key theme. This essay will require in-depth engagement with texts, which you will use to critique or champion thinkers' views.

### Essay 2 – 25% (Due April 17<sup>th</sup>)

This five-page essay will ask you to imagine the solutions canonical thinkers might have proposed to contemporary political dilemmas. Research on particular policies is not required. Instead, you will use assigned readings to explore how thinkers would have prioritized policy tradeoffs and what contemporary policy makers should take away from canonical texts.

### Final Exam – 20% (May 2<sup>nd</sup>)

Given during the assigned final exam slot for this class (noon on May 2<sup>nd</sup>) this exam will consist in part of short answer questions about single thinkers and in part of essays asking you to compare two thinkers.

### Participation – 15%

Your participation grade is based on your in-class performance over the course of the semester. Participation can take many forms: attentive listening, asking questions about the reading, volunteering to read aloud, and sharing your thoughts on lectures or readings. We will start each class with a few minutes reserved for questions about material from the previous meeting; if you are uncomfortable asking questions in class or something occurs to you after we meet, questions e-mailed to me, to be answered during this period, will also count towards your participation grade.

You will receive a participation grade of 0, 1, or 2 points for each class meeting. Every student starts with 50 participation points and may earn an additional 54 points over the course of the semester (up to 2 points per class x 27 substantive meetings) for a maximum possible participation grade of 104 points. Grades per class will be assigned as follows:

- 0: Absent or disruptive (checking text messages, holding side conversations, shopping, napping, etc.)
- 1: Present and attentive (in class, awake, listening actively, taking notes, etc.)
- 2: Actively engaged (asking and answering questions, making links between different aspects of course material or course material and current events, e-mailing questions for class discussion, etc.)

Lateness: Every three latenesses will result in a ten point deduction from your participation grade.

Technology: Every three instances of inappropriate use of personal electronics will result in a ten point deduction from your participation grade.

Absences: You have two "free" absences. Additional absences may be excused in cases of documented medical or family issues. Every additional unexcused absence will result in a ten point deduction from your participation grade.

If you are uncomfortable speaking in class please come see me as soon as possible. We can discuss strategies for improving your participation grade, but this will have more impact earlier in the semester.

## Grading Policies

- Essay assignments will be available on Sakai two weeks before the essay is due.
- Rubrics for each essay will be available on Sakai two weeks before the essay is due.
- All papers and exams are graded blind. Do not include your name in your heading, header or footer. Do include your PID.
- I will deduct a full letter grade (10 points) for every 24 hours of unexcused lateness on written assignments
- If you have concerns about your ability to complete an assignment on time see me *before* the assignment is due. I rarely give extensions, but may do so in cases of documented medical or personal emergency if, and only if, you are in touch with me before the deadline.
- The final exam is scheduled by the University and can't be rescheduled without permission of the Dean's Office.
- There is a 24-hour "cooling off" period before I will engage any appeals or questions about grades. I will delete any emails about grades that I receive during this 24-hour period.

## Readings:

The following texts must be purchased:

- Machiavelli, Niccolò. *Selected Political Writings*, trans. and ed. David Wootton. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994. (ISBN: 9780872202474)
- Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*, ed. Edwin Curley. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994. (ISBN: 9780872201774)
- Locke, John. *Second Treatise of Government*, ed. C.B. Macpherson. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1980. (ISBN: 9780915144860)
- Locke, John. *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. James H. Tully. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983. (ISBN: 9780915145607)
- Rousseau, Jean Jacques. *The Basic Political Writings*, trans. and ed. Donald A. Cress. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company 1987. (ISBN: 9780872200470)
- Mill, John Stuart. *On Liberty & Other Essays*, ed. John Gray. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. (ISBN: 9780199535736)
- Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels. *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1978. (ISBN: 9780393090406)

These versions have been selected for clarity of translation, editing, and format. Other versions may be harder to read and differences in translation, even when slight, may confuse the meaning of key terms. Having different page numbers will make it harder for you to follow along in class. I therefore strongly recommend purchasing these specific versions of the texts, whether from the UNC bookstore or online.

The following required readings, as well as all recommended readings, will be available on Sakai:

- Bentham, Jeremy. *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*. Indianapolis: The Online Library of Liberty.
- Burke, Edmund. *Reflections on a Revolution in France*. Indianapolis: The Online Library of Liberty.
- Kant, Immanuel. "Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals" in *Practical Philosophy*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Nussbaum, Martha. *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2011.

## Schedule of Readings

- January 9 Course Introduction  
Recommended: David Foster Wallace, "This is Water" (Sakai)
- January 14 Machiavelli, "The Prince" in *Selected Political Writings*, pp. 5-47  
Recommended: Erasmus, *Education of a Christian Prince*, excerpt (Sakai)
- January 16 Machiavelli, "The Prince" in *Selected Political Writings*, pp. 47-80
- January 21 Machiavelli, "The Discourses on Livy" in *Selected Political Writings*, pp. 81-97, 102-107, 113-124, 150-158, 161-171, 194-200
- January 23 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Hobbes's Introduction, Chs. I, VI (skim), XI (skim), XII, XIII, IV (pp. 3-7, 27-35 (skim), 57-63 (skim), 64-88)
- January 28 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chs. XV, XVI, XVII, XVIII, XIX, XX (pp. 89-135)
- January 30 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chs. XXI, XXII, XXVI, XXIX, XXX (pp. 136-155, 172-189, 210-233)
- February 4 Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*, Chs. I-VII (pp 7-51)
- February 6 Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*, Chs. VIII-XV (pp. 52-91)
- February 11 Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*, Chs. XVI-XIX (pp. 91-124)
- February 13 Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration*, pp. 23-58
- February 18 **\*\*Midterm Exam**
- February 20 Rousseau, "Discourse on the Sciences and Arts" in *Basic Political Writings*, pp. 1-21  
Recommended: Montesquieu, *The Persian Letters*, Letters 22, 26-28, 50, 71-72, 75, 96-7 (Sakai)
- February 25 Rousseau, "Discourse on the Origins of Inequality" in *Basic Political Writings*, pp. 25- 81
- February 27 Rousseau, "On the Social Contract" in *Basic Political Writings*, 141-204
- March 4 Rousseau, "On the Social Contract," in *Basic Political Writings*, 205-227  
Recommended: Rousseau, *Emile*, pp. 77-94 (Sakai)
- March 6 Essay Writing Workshop
- March 11 Spring Break
- March 13 Spring Break

- March 18 Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapters I-III, pp. 5-82  
**\*\* First Essay Due**
- March 20 Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapters IV-V, pp. 83-128
- March 25 Mill, *On the Subjection of Women*, pp. 471-523, 557-569
- March 27 Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, pp. 217-225, 269-284, 302-319
- April 1 Marx, "The Critique of Capitalism," pp. 367-376
- April 3 Marx, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," pp. 473-500
- April 8 Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844," 70-105
- April 10 Marx, "The German Ideology," 147-175, 186-188
- April 15 Kant, "Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals," pp. 61-89 (Sakai)  
 Kant, "On a Supposed Right to Lie Because of Philanthropic Concerns" pp. 63-67 (Sakai)
- April 17 Burke, selections from *Reflections on a Revolution in France*, pp. 82-88, 99,  
 107-111, 114-119, 210-211.  
**\*\* Second Essay Due in Class**
- April 22 Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Chs. I-V (pp. 12-32), Ch. X (pp. 62-81), Chs. XIII-XV (105-126) (Sakai)
- April 24 Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities* (Sakai)

**\*\*May 2, noon – Final Exam**