

POL 305
Section J
Introduction to Political Theory

Professor Frohock
MW 5 – 6:15 pm – MM 215
spring 2010

Objectives. This course is a selective survey of political theory across large stretches of historical time which closely examines some of the great and near-great works from Plato to the present. The scanning instruments are what we know or think we know today about such topics as reason, political organizations, morality, justice, and critical interpretation of texts. At the end of the course we should have a better understanding of political theory in all of its guises, and whether and how contemporary political theorists continue the inquiries that began at earlier times in our history. In an important sense this course is a narrative, the story of political theory from classical Greece to the contemporary scene.

A variety of resources will be used in our narrative journey. Most of the time we will be reading conventional texts written (or, in the case of Socrates, dictated) by some of the great intellectuals in the Western canon. In approximately the last third of the course we will study material from more recent approaches to political theory that sometimes maintains, at other times rejects, the theoretical narratives dominating classical, medieval and modern thought. The overall course objective is to illuminate selected political thought of the past with more recent insights and concepts, often drawn from the work of theorists who question what is taken for granted in traditional theory on the nature of the self, the scope of rationality, and the proper ways to organize human communities. If successful the course will instill in all of us a substantive knowledge of selected works in ancient, modern and contemporary political theory, and a set of methodological skills (for example, historiography, the formal methods of game theory) that will provide access to other theoretical works in political inquiry.

Evaluations. There will be a mid-term exam and a final exam. Your course grade will be determined from these two written assignments. There is a modest redemption. I will give you the opportunity to drop from consideration the mid-term exam grade and count the final exam grade as your grade in the course. But this caveat: be careful here. This is not a license to skip the mid-term exam. Both exams must be completed for a passing grade, any passing grade, in the course. Hence, and this is obvious, dropping the mid-term exam grade places a higher premium on your final exam performance. The prudent course of action is to give it your best shot on the mid-term exam, in part because you will not know *a priori* how difficult (or easy?) the final exam will be, and in part because you will want to ensure against the worst type of unexpected events, like illnesses, or a bad personal day, that may cause you to do poorly on the final exam. Also, if you do outstanding work on the mid-term exam you can keep that high grade in the calculation of your course grade. Or, this maxim from your instructor: take the mid-term exam seriously. It is always better to have a trump card that you can play in your best interests, rather than having a bad outcome imposed on you. We may discuss such strategies when we encounter game theory in the study of Hobbes. Finally, the course is cumulative at the end, meaning that the final exam will cover the material for the entire semester.

Your final grade in the course will be calculated in the following way:

the mid-term exam: 40%

the final exam: 60%

And this bit of legerdemain: in the metaphysical worlds of political theory/ philosophy it is possible to secure an outcome of more than 100% in your course score by successfully answering the bonus questions provided in the mid-term exam.

Reading. The reading materials are divided into required and recommended categories. These two categories mean what they say. You are required to read only the required material. It is entirely possible to get the highest grade in the course by reading only these materials. The recommended readings are listed for those students who want to read a bit more on the topics we examine. Notice also that the required texts are available at the University Bookstore. The recommended texts may be available for purchase at a local bookstore (I will have to convince a vendor here) or, better, purchased through the internet at, say, Amazon.com (no, I do not own stock in Amazon). The reading materials required in the latter third of the course, beginning with Nietzsche, will be made available as a packet of readings later in the semester. Also, lecture notes will be distributed for each class.

Required Works:

F.M. Cornford, Before and After Socrates

John Stuart Mill, On Liberty

Brian Nelson, Western Political Thought

Recommended Works:

Grube, The Trial and Death of Socrates

Plato, Republic (Grube translation)

Aristotle, Politics (Penguin ed.)

Machiavelli, The Prince (Adams translation)

Hobbes, Leviathan (Liberal Arts ed.)

Ernest Barker, ed., The Social Contract

John Stuart Mill, On Liberty (Spitz, ed.)

Hugh Bedau, ed., Justice and Equality

Marx and Engels, The Communist Manifesto

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Genealogy of Morals

John Rawls, A Theory of Justice

Rawls, Political Liberalism

Robert Nozick, Anarchy, State, and Utopia

Nancy Fraser, Justice Interruptus

Martha Nussbaum, Women and Human Development

Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, Democracy and Disagreement

Steve Macedo, ed., Deliberative Politics

Cass Sunstein, Legal Reasoning and Political Conflict

Schedule and readings

January 20 -- Introduction and Overview

January 25 -- Socrates

F.M. Cornford, Before and After Socrates (entire – read over the next 2 weeks)

Nelson, Western Political Thought, chapter 1

January 27 – Justice and the Ordered Society

Nelson, Western Political Thought, chapter 2

Recommended: Plato, Republic, books 1, 2, 3, & 4

February 1 -- Political Authority and Education

Recommended: Republic, books 5, 6, & 7

February 3 -- Aristotle's polis

Nelson, Western Political Thought, chapter 3

Recommended: Aristotle, Politics, books 1 & 2, chapters 1-9

February 8 -- Citizenship and Social Justice

R.G. Mulgan, Aristotle's Political Theory (selections – to be distributed in class)

Recommended: Politics, book 3

February 10 -- Aquinas

Nelson, Western Political Thought, chapter 6

February 15 -- Machiavelli

Nelson, Western Political Thought, chapter 7

Recommended: Machiavelli, The Prince (entire)

February 17 -- Hobbes

Nelson, Western Political Thought, chapter 8

Recommended: Hobbes, Leviathan, chapters 17-18, 21

February 22 -- Locke

Nelson, Western Political Thought, chapter 9

Recommended: Locke, "An Essay Concerning the True Original, Extent and End of Civil Government," in Barker, ed., The Social Contract

February 24 -- Rousseau

Nelson, Western Political Thought, chapter 10

Recommended: Rousseau, "The Social Contract," in Barker, ed., The Social Contract

March 1 & 3 -- Mill and Utilitarianism

Nelson, Western Political Thought, chapters 12 & 13

Mill, On Liberty (selections)

-- Mid-term exam – Monday, March 8 --

March 10 -- Marx

Nelson, Western Political Thought, chapter 14

Recommended: Marx and Engels, The Communist Manifesto (entire)

-- March 13 – 21 -- spring break – enjoy and be safe --

March 22 -- Nietzsche

The Genealogy of Morals (selections)

March 24 - 29 – John Rawls

Political Liberalism, chapter 1 - "Fundamental Ideas"

Recommended: Frohock, "An Alternative Model of Political Reasoning"

March 31 – Robert Nozick

Anarchy, State, and Utopia, chapter 1 - "Why State of Nature Theories?" and chapter 7 – "Distributive Justice"

April 5 – Michael Walzer

Spheres of Justice (selections)

April 7 – Nancy Fraser

Justice Interruptus, chapter 1 - "From Redistribution to Recognition?"

Recommended: Fraser and Alex Honneth, Redistribution or Recognition? (selections)

April 12 – Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson

Democracy and Disagreement, "Conclusion"

April 14 -- Herbert Simon, "Theories of Bounded Rationality"

Recommended: Clem Tisdell, "Concepts of Rationality in Economics"

Recommended: William Riker, Liberalism Against Populism, chapter 10

April 19 – Cass Sunstein

"Agreement without Theory"

Recommended: Herbert Simon, "Theories of Bounded Rationality"

April 21— Richard Wertheimer

"Internal Disagreements: *Deliberation and Abortion*"

April 26 – Michael Walzer

Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations (selections)

April 28 –Last day of class – reflections