

Course Information

**Government 3301
Political Theory
Collegium V Honors**

Spring 2016



Professor Contact Information

Professor: Dr. Edward J. Harpham
Course Time: MW 10:00-10:15AM
Room: GC 1.208B
Office: GC 2.204
Office Phone: 972-883-6729
Office Hours: MW 1:00-2:00 PM
and by appointment
e-mail: harpham@utdallas.edu

Course Pre-requisites, Co-requisites, and/or Other Restrictions

This course is a Collegium V Honors Course. You must have the permission of the Collegium V Honors Director to register.

Course Description

This course provides students with an introduction to the study of western political thought. Through a critical reading of the works of five seminal thinkers, students will investigate some of the most important perspectives that have emerged over the past 2000 years for discussing political issues. Among the questions to be considered in the course are: What is justice? What is the good society? What is the relationship between politics and truth? Do the ends justify the means in politics? What are natural rights? What role has a religious perspective played in shaping western political ideas? Are humans naturally good or bad? What is the relationship between economics and politics? What are the limits to liberty in a modern society?

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

On completing this course, students will be able to

- 1) evaluate the role that ethics and assumptions about human nature play in political thought
- 2) evaluate competing Platonic, republican and liberal philosophical perspectives on the nature of justice, political obligation, and legitimacy found in the western political tradition
- 3) describe the key philosophical arguments underlying Platonic, republican, and liberal traditions in western political theory
- 4) understand how Platonic, republican, and liberal political ideas shape political thought in the early 21st century in the United States

Required Textbooks and Materials

Exodus Chapters 1-23, 32-34 (any edition of the Bible)

Plato *The Republic* (Hackett: Grube/Reeves edition)

Machiavelli *Selected Political Writings* (Hackett)

Locke *Political Writings* (Hackett)

Rousseau *The Basic Political Writings* 2nd edition (Hackett)

J.S. Mill *Mill* (Norton)

Suggested Course Materials

Exodus Chapters 1-23, 32, 34

Aristotle: *Politics* Book 2: Chapters 1-5

St. Paul: Corinthians 1: 1-7
Epicurus: "Principal Doctrines"
Seneca: "On the Happy Life"

Thomas Hobbes: *Leviathan*: Book 1. Chapter 13
Spinoza *Theological-Political Treatise* Chapter 20
Bernard Mandeville: The Poem: Fable of the Bees
David Hume: "Of the Refinement in the Arts"

Assignments & Academic Calendar

TOPICAL OVERVIEW

Introduction to the Study of Political Thought

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me."

"... for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments."

"You shall not abuse any widow or orphan. If you do abuse them, when they cry out to me, I will surely heed their cry..."

"You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in their lawsuits."



1/11 and 1/13: read Exodus Chapters 1 to 23, 32-34

Websites:

[Bible History](#)

Plato and the Origins of Political Theory

"Nothing can harm a good man, either in life or after death."
Plato's *Apology*

"The unexamined life is not worth living."
Plato's *Apology*



1/20: read Plato Book 1
1/25 and 1/27: read Plato Books 2,3,4
2/1 and 2/3 : read Plato Books 5,6,7,8
2/8: read Plato Books 9,10

2/10: Plato Meets His Critics
Aristotle: *Politics* Book 2: Chapters 1-5
St. Paul: Corinthians 1: 1-7
Epicurus: "Principal Doctrines"
Seneca: "On the Happy Life"

Republicanism and the Origins of Modern Political Thought

"It is necessary for him who lays out a state and arranges laws for it to presuppose that all men are evil and that they are always going to act according to the wickedness of their spirits whenever they have free scope."

Machiavelli's *Discourses*

"Since, then, a prince is necessitated to play the animal well, he chooses among the beasts the fox and the lion, because the lion does not protect himself from traps; the fox does not protect himself from wolves.

The prince must be a fox, therefore, to recognize the traps and a lion to frighten the wolves."

Machiavelli's *Prince*



2/15 and 2/17: read Machiavelli pp.5-80
2/22 and 2/24: read Machiavelli pp. 81-216

Wednesday February 29: Exam 1

Classical Liberalism

"All men are liable to error; and most men are, in many points, by passion or interest, under temptation to it."

Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*

"Man being...by nature all free, equal, and independent, no one can be put out of this estate, and subjected to the political power of another, without his own consent."

Locke's *Second Treatise*



3/2 and 3/7: read Locke pp. 267-330

3/9 and 3/21: read Locke pp. 330-428

3/23: Locke Meets His Critics

Thomas Hobbes: *Leviathan*: Book 1. Chapter 13

Bernard Mandeville: *The Poem: Fable of the Bees*

David Hume: "Of the Refinement in the Arts"

The Republican Critique of Liberalism

"Man was born free, and everywhere he is in chains."
Rousseau's *Social Contract*



3/28: read Rousseau pp. 1-21
3/30: read Rousseau pp. 25-109
4/4 and 4/6: read Rousseau pp. 141-227

The Individual and the State

"No great improvements in the lot of mankind are possible, until a great change takes place in the fundamental constitution of their modes of thought."

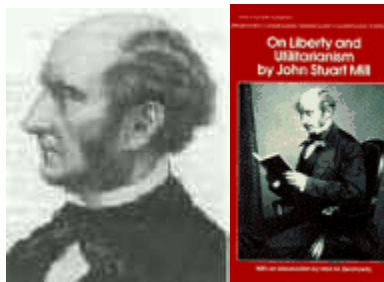
J.S. Mill's *Autobiography*

"If all mankind minus one were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind."

J.S. Mill's *On Liberty*

"What is now called the nature of women is an eminently artificial thing--the result of forced repression in some directions, unnatural stimulation in others."

J.S. Mills' *On the Subjection of Women*



4/11, 4/13 and 4/18: read Mill's "Spirit of the Age" and "On Liberty"
4/20 : Read Mill's "On the Subjection of Women" pp. 133-55.

4/25: Mill Meets His Critics

Hillary Clinton
Pope Francis
Franklin Roosevelt
Barry Goldwater
Vladimir Lenin
Osama Ben Laden

4/20: Second Exam Questions distributed
4/25 Reflection papers are due at the beginning of class

Wednesday April 27: Second Exam

Grading Policy

Grading will be calculated in the following way:

- two essay exams, each worth 40 % of the final grade.
- one 5-7 page paper, worth 10% of the final grade
- participation in 3 "author meets his critics" presentations, worth 5% of the final grade
- general in-class participation will comprise 5% of the final grade.

Exams: Three exam questions will be handed out the week before each test date. Students will be expected to prepare an answer for each question during that week. Tests will be closed book (no notes or books allowed). On the test date one question will be chosen by the instructor as the actual exam question. Students are encouraged to meet and to discuss the questions with one another before the exam. This course is not a zero sum game. We are all here to learn something about political thought and nothing facilitates that more than good old fashion dialogue with one's peers. So talk...

Papers and group presentations:

- There will be a 5-7 page reflection paper required in the course. Students will write a short essay that brings together the ideas of the three "critics" that they read during the semester. Papers will be due on December 4.

- Three times during the semester, students will be divided into groups. Each group will be assigned a short reading from a critic of the theorist under consideration. Groups will be responsible for
 - understanding the historical context in which each particular critic lived
 - writing a 1-2 page summary of these key events to be handed out one class period before the group exercise.
 - mastering the key ideas found in the reading and representing them in the classroom discussion during the “author meets his critics” session.
 - engaging in a debate with Dr Harpham representing the ideas of your group’s theorist. The goals of the debate are twofold: (1) to develop a deeper appreciation of theorist's thought (2) to broaden other students' exposures to the ideas of other political theorists in history and to explore how they draw upon or react to the thought of other theorists considered in the course. Each group will be evaluated on its ability to use their political actor's ideas to deepen our understanding the ideas considered in the course.

Other requirements: Students are expected to keep up with the reading assignments and to come to class prepared to discuss the material under consideration for that day. Remember, participation and quizzes are worth 10% of the final grade.

Course & Instructor Policies

(make-up exams, extra credit, late work, special assignments, class attendance, classroom citizenship, etc.)

Students are expected to attend class and to participate in classroom discussions. IF you are unable to attend an “Author Meets His Critics Class” or an exam, you must notify Dr. Harpham 24 hours before the class. Late papers will be lowered 1 grade for every day that they are late.
