

PSCI 3320
Spring 2003
MWF 10-10:50 AM
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Prof. Richard Ruderman
157 Wooten (x4944)
Office Hours: M 11-2; T 10-12; F 11-12
and by app't

POLITICAL THEORY (HONORS): 1700 TO TODAY

Required Texts:

Hobbes, Thomas, *Leviathan*. Ed. Edwin Curley (Hackett)
Locke, John, *Two Treatises of Government*. Ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge) or Goldie (Penguin)
Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, *First & Second Discourses*. Trans. Judith Masters (St. Martin's)
Marx, Karl & Friedrich Engels, *Communist Manifesto*. Ed. Malia (Signet)
Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Tr. Walter Kaufmann (Vintage)
Swift, Jonathan, *Gulliver's Travels* Ed. Dixon (Penguin)

Course Format and Requirements: What is—and ought to be—the goal of political life, here in the US and in “the West” in general? Do we still understand and support “liberal democracy” and the kinds of lives it produces? Critics of our way of life, after all, abound today. At home, the postmodern left condemns liberalism for being a secret and unjust hegemony of *reason* that represses our “selves,” our “identities,” and non-white cultures in the name of order and profit. The socially conservative right blames liberalism for leading to a wild license or individualism that dissolves the family, religion, the authority of institutions, and all bonds between citizens. And we all wonder whether frenzied activity (both at work and play), lack of human connectedness (or “community”), and the growing sense of a loss of “meaning” to life may not be too high a price to pay for the creature comforts and long, healthy lives we enjoy. The fierce (and generally mindless) debate over school curriculum is perhaps the clearest indication that we no longer know what we stand for or what a just society should look like.

Moreover, we have been jolted by the events of 9/11. Not only were thousands of lives lost to an act of terrorism, it became apparent that there are many people out there who resent and even hate us and the “West.” Since we are nothing if not open-minded and tolerant of diverse cultures, it seemed bizarre to us that any culture could feel threatened by ours. In particular, we have long believed (even if we rarely said so) that there is nothing worth taking so seriously that one would die and kill for it. To “modernize” meant, in effect, to learn to stop taking what puts us at war with one another so seriously. How, then, should we respond to those who say that life is only worth living when one is devoted to something serious? That it is sacrilegious not to take religion, family, chastity, etc. seriously? Are we not, in fact, condemned to silence in the face of such attacks by our doctrine of toleration? What are we to make of the fact that John Walker Lind, product of the most tolerant, least judgmental culture in recorded history, tossed it aside for a form of radical Islam that promotes violence, subordination of women, hatred of homosexuality, and replaces autonomous choice with unquestioning submission to Islamic Law? Is he right? Wrong? Who's to say?

Political philosophy is devoted to trying to answer these and related questions. It tries to give us tools with which to *resolve* the dispute between rational self-guidance and submission to divine command. Modern political philosophy begins by rejecting as “useless” or “imaginary” the efforts of its classical cousin to resolve, through vigorous debate, disputes over the *meaning* of justice, love, the best life, etc. Instead, it tries to solve disputes by “bracketing” them or by consigning them to a “private

sphere” where we are “free to differ,” that is, free to stop thinking—and ultimately even caring—about them. Yet it is now precisely that liberal refusal to think hard or to care deeply about these issues that invites the contempt and hatred of so many.

We are therefore compelled to wonder whether the modern and postmodern approaches to these problems have failed to resolve them. As we shall see from our reading of Hobbes and Locke, the modern world is dedicated to satisfying our “low but solid” bodily needs (health, safety, income) by means of destroying our capacity to long for anything higher (justice, nobility, dignity, truth, glory, etc.). It promises us comfort and safety if we agree to become less “dangerous” or more domesticated. But much of humanity (perhaps especially in the newly liberated countries of Eastern Europe who can look on our liberal democracy with greater detachment) is now claiming that liberalism has failed. Its replacement of robust political life—dedicated to principles of justice that inspire men and women to transcend their petty lives—with the “rational administration of things” (bureaucracy) cannot satisfy true human beings. Accordingly, we will then examine the various criticisms of liberal democracy that can be found in the pages of Swift, Rousseau, Marx, and Nietzsche. Can liberal democracy meet these objections? Can it be modified to satisfy its critics? Or must we begin to consider ways of thought and life that will replace it? If the greatest achievement of liberal democracy is the freedom to read and to think, then the subject matter of this course is the highest justification for our liberal democratic lives.

Course Format and Requirements: The course consists of a careful reading of a few classic texts of political philosophy and a novel. The number of pages to be read is kept small, so that you will be able to read—and *reread*—each text thoroughly. Classes will be a combination of lecture and discussion. Since discussion will help to clarify important matters for both you AND your colleagues, it is crucial both that you attend classes and that you read the assigned texts carefully *before* each class.

NOTES: Because of the benefits to everyone involved, your class participation can be used to improve your grade. Unexcused absences (more than TWO) WILL be used to lower your grade so do not use them up for anything other than a dire emergency (e.g., bubonic plague, civil war). You must supply valid evidence (e.g., a doctor's note) for an absence to be excused. Students with a third or fourth absence will have their final grade reduced one-third of a grade for each of those absences. I will assign a "WF" or "F" grade to students with more than four absences.

*Please keep all papers that are returned to you as a check on our record keeping.

*Unforeseen events may require a change in scheduled tests and/or classes.

*If you are having any difficulties in class, please see me AT ONCE. Only then can I help you succeed in the course.

Your **course grade** will be calculated as follows:

participation	10%
one short (4-5 page) paper	15%
a mid-term examination	20%
one (6-8 page) paper	25%
a final examination	30%

The exams will consist of short answer questions--which should be routine if you have *done* all the readings--and essay questions--which make sure you have *thought* about the readings. More information will be given regarding the papers at the appropriate times. Paper extensions cannot be granted, except in the most extenuating circumstances. You must request permission for such

extensions IN WRITING, at least 48 HOURS before the due date. Grades on late papers will be reduced. ALL written work must be completed to pass this course.

Goals: This course attempts to acquaint you with the meaning and practice of political philosophy, specifically in its modern forms. To that end, we will examine several views of various moral and political problems: are freedom and authority compatible? is human nature permanent or historical? is equality natural or constructed? is politics natural? is religion good for politics (and vice versa)? should government be limited or extended? does freedom produce oppression? does it produce conformism? does it produce vulgarity? does reason improve or destroy politics? does it improve or debase private life? and, above all, what is the meaning of justice?

As part and parcel of this project, we will learn how to read a great book with care, and how to make, analyze, and criticize an argument. Therefore, you **cannot** do well in this class merely by repeating on papers and exams what you have heard in the lectures. You must take the approaches and questions to which you were introduced in class and *return* to the book with them in mind. You will be expected, that is, to demonstrate that you have learned something *on your own* directly from the books that we will be studying.

Tentative Schedule:

M. Jan. 13: Introduction: What is Political Philosophy? (1 class)

A. ORIGINS OF MODERN THOUGHT

1) Hobbes and the Protoliberal Politics of Comfort and Safety (7 classes, Jan. 15-31)
Hobbes's *Leviathan*

Read: Dedicatory Letter, Author's Introduction; Part IV, ch. 46.

M. Jan. 20: CLASS CANCELLED: Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday
Part I, chs. 6, 10-15.
Part II, chs. 17-18, 21.
Part II, chs. 26 (174-181), 29, 30 (219-231).
"Review and Conclusion."

2) Locke and the Liberal Politics of Individual Rights (7 classes)

Locke's *First Treatise*, Title page, Preface, chs. 1, 6 & 9 (Feb. 3)

Locke's *Second Treatise*, chs. 1-4 (plus discussion of lecture) (Feb. 5)

F. Feb. 8: CLASS CANCELLED (Out-of-town conference)

Locke's *Second Treatise*, ch. 5-7 (Feb. 10 & 12)

Locke's *Second Treatise*, chs. 8-14 (Feb. 14 & 17)

Locke's *Second Treatise*, chs. 15-19 (Feb. 19)

***F. Feb. 21: **FIRST PAPER DUE** (details TBA)

B. DOUBTS ABOUT THE MODERN PROJECT

- 3) Swift and the Classical Critique of Modernity (6 classes)
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| Swift's <i>Gulliver's Travels</i> , Book One | (Feb. 21 & 24) |
| Swift's <i>Gulliver's Travels</i> , Book Two | (Feb. 26) |
| Swift's <i>Gulliver's Travels</i> , Book Three | (Feb. 28 & Mar. 3) |
| Swift's <i>Gulliver's Travels</i> , Book Four | (Mar. 5) |

***F. Mar. 7: **MIDTERM EXAM**

C. FIRST CRISIS: THE CRITIQUE OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

- 4) Rousseau's Critique of Progress and Enlightenment (8 classes)
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| Rousseau's <i>First Discourse</i> , Forward, Preface, Intro | (Mar. 10) |
| Rousseau's <i>First Discourse</i> , Part One | (Mar. 12) |
| Rousseau's <i>First Discourse</i> , Part Two | (Mar. 14) |

***Mar. 17-21: **SPRING BREAK** (return to State of Nature: proceed with caution!)

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| Rousseau's <i>Second Discourse</i> , Dedicatory Letter, Preface, Intro | (Mar. 24) |
| Rousseau's <i>Second Discourse</i> , Part One | (Mar. 26 & 28) |
| Rousseau's <i>Second Discourse</i> , Part Two | (Mar. 31 & Apr. 2) |

- 5) Marx and Engels' Critique of Bourgeois Liberalism (3 classes)
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| Marx and Engels' <i>Communist Manifesto</i> (all) | (Apr. 4, 7 & 9) |
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D. SECOND CRISIS: THE CRITIQUE OF REASON AND MORALS

- 6) Nietzsche's Critique of Nature, Reason, the State, and Morality (7 classes)
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| Nietzsche's <i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i> , Zarathustra's Prologue | (Apr. 11 & 14) |
| Nietzsche's <i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i> , Part One | (Apr. 16-30) |

***F. Apr. 18: Class cancelled (Passover—use for writing final paper)

***Monday, April 21: **FINAL PAPER DUE** (in class).

***W. Apr. 23: Class cancelled: W. Apr. 23 (Passover—use for reviewing for Final Exam)

REVIEW SESSION: Friday, May 2 (optional).

FINAL EXAM: Monday, May 5, 8-10 AM (sorry!)