

Syllabus: Modern Political Thought
Political Science 202
Professor Benjamin Hertzberg
Summer 2008
Mon., Wed., Fri. 10:00—11:50 AM (SWKT 240)

Instructor:

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Overview of the Course:

This course is designed as an introductory survey of the major canonical thinkers in the tradition of modern, Western political thought. It is designed to be part of BYU's general education history of civilization core, as well as a foundational course in the Political Science major. If you approach the material we will cover this semester diligently and carefully, you will 1) read some of the core texts in the history of modern Western political thought; 2) gain some ability to discuss essential modern political concepts like sovereignty, equality, legitimacy, authority, freedom, progress, and rights in an informed and sophisticated manner; and 3) increase your critical thinking, reasoning, writing, and argumentative abilities.

Student Expectations

Reading: This course has the potential to be one of the most rewarding political science courses you take at BYU. Obviously, it will not achieve that potential unless you are willing to work hard at it. The texts we will be reading are complex. They are almost all at least 100 years old. We will encounter many difficult questions of interpretation, some likely irresolvable. Our thinkers do not always articulate their ideas clearly. The responsibility to interpret and make sense out of these texts lies more with the reader than we are accustomed. My job will be to help you in that task. Your job is to read each text slowly and carefully (more than once if necessary). Do not skim and presume that you will get the main idea. (*I would use a rate of roughly 20 pages per hour as a good maximum.*) These thinkers are those that the smartest and best informed of our culture have chosen over the generations to read, reread, respond to, and criticize. If we pull this course off right, you will learn far more from *them* than you do from *me*. We should all

presume that we are less intelligent than the thinkers we consider. (So, if you feel tempted to call an idea of Machiavelli's, Rousseau's, or Marx's stupid, the problem most likely lies with your abilities and not theirs!) That said, they are not super-human. They have bad ideas too, and you should be alert for them. You should just make sure that you have darn good reasons for thinking an idea is stupid before making the accusation.

Criticism: This is a course in *Modern* political thought, and since we live in a modern (or perhaps post-modern) age, our readings, thoughts, and discussions will also be exercises in self-examination. Good, critical self-examination—asking questions like “Why do I believe X to be the case?” and “Do I have sufficient reasons to continue to hold my belief that X is the case?”—is one of the most difficult and rewarding intellectual tasks that make up a university education. As such, you should expect this course to stretch you, and not just academically (though it will certainly do that). Our adherence to certain political concepts is almost always bound up with visceral parts of our own personal identities. (It means something deep and often uncritically accepted to say, “I am a conservative” or, “I am a democrat.”) Since we will be studying some of the most influential early articulations of these and other positions, it is my hope that you will turn a critical eye to your own unexamined political assumptions. Accordingly, it is essential that our classroom be a space of mutual respect. The best way to do this is by having good *reasons* for your opinions. Avoid *ad hominem* attacks, inappropriate appeals to authority, and the like.

Discussion: Class discussion will supplement our careful reading. Since this is an introductory course, I will be forced to lecture some of the time. However, I hope to keep lecture to a minimum. The texts we consider are far richer than we can do justice to in a semester. As a result, there will be plenty of space to adjust our discussions to your interests and questions. That, however, cannot be done without your careful preparation and willingness to contribute to the class. Flag interesting or perplexing passages, thorny questions, and the like as you read and bring them up in our discussions. Doing so will not only improve our discussions, it will also win you great appreciation from your instructor.

Writing: Writing is also an essential part of careful reading and critical thinking. Being able to explain another thinker's ideas clearly, concisely, critically, and in your own words is the best indication that you have mastered their views. Writing in this class should likewise be a slow, carefully reasoned process. I hope that you will take notes while you read in addition to whatever you take in class. Realize that just because a given thinker (or I) claims that something is the case does not make it the case. You need to have reasons to support your views, in our discussions and *especially* in your writing. (Also note that University policies concerning academic honesty, the honor code, and plagiarism will be *strictly* followed.)

Required Texts

Modern Political Thought: Readings from Machiavelli to Nietzsche. 1996. Edited, with Introductions, by David Wooton. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company.

Kant, Immanuel. 1993. *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*. Translated by James W. Ellington. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company.

Other selections, as assigned, available on Blackboard and E-Reserve.

Assignments and Grading

Quizzes: Good preparation is essential to success in this course. There will be occasional, short, unannounced reading quizzes at the beginning of class. The questions will not be complicated; they are designed to reward you for completing the assigned reading. There will be about five quizzes spread out over the semester (depending on how much incentive I feel you need). I will drop the lowest score. Each quiz will be worth about ten points (depending on the number of quizzes administered), for a total of 50 points.

Response Papers: A short, one page, single-spaced response to the week's readings will be due at the end of each week. These are to be emailed to Cristina by 5:00 pm on Friday. Please use the following format in your subject heading: "202 Weekly Response, [date], [your name]." These are not formal essays and may be personal in style. They should nevertheless demonstrate careful, critical thinking about the week's readings. You may choose to respond to the entire week's material or pick a specific topic to analyze in greater detail. They will be graded on the check, check plus system. Together with your *classroom participation*, you will receive up to 50 points in this section.

Term Paper: There will be a *maximum* seven-paged term paper due at the end of the semester, by 5:00 pm on August 12th. Submit your paper by email to both my address and Cristina's. You must choose a topic by July 30th. Your topic should consist of one thinker on the syllabus and one specific subject (for example: Marx on ideology, or Locke on property, etc.). This should also be submitted by email, to Cristina and me. In your paper, you should critically explicate the thinker's position on your topic, consider his position in relation to other thinkers we discussed during the semester, and come to a conclusion about the merits and weaknesses of his position. Your paper should be written as an argument, in which you introduce the position you will defend in the opening sections, develop your position in the body of the paper, and come to a conclusion in which the points you have made and the reasons you hold them are clear. You are not required to do any research for the term paper outside of the texts we read in class. However, you may find that some additional reading is helpful. I recommend the introductory sections in the Hackett reader and their suggested reading lists. Feel free to ask me for other suggestions if you would like them. You must cite all your sources. (So, please include a "Works Cited" list as well as a "Works Consulted" list at the end of your paper.) The term paper is worth 100 points.

Midterm: You will take a short essay midterm on July 18th. The midterm will be distributed by email at 10:00 am on that date. You will email Cristina and me your

exams by 12:00 pm. You may use your notes or your text, but your responses to the exam questions must be your own. The midterm is worth 100 points.

Final: The final exam will also be short essay, administered in the same fashion as the midterm during the University-scheduled examination period, Wednesday August 13th from 1:00-2:50 pm. The Final will be cumulative and is worth 100 points.

Grading: You will receive comments on your term paper and exams that justify the grade you receive, which will be a letter grade only. These comments, however, may not be strictly quantifiable (this is political theory, after all). However, as a rule of thumb, you can consider an “A” to be worth 95 points, an “A-” 92, a “B+” 88, a “B” 85, a “B-” 82, etc. You will then have four 100-point letter grades at the end of the semester (one for each of the exams and the paper, and one for the combined quiz, response paper, and participation grade). I will assign your final grade based on the combination of these four grades. If the grade spread of the class is lower than typical for 200 level political science courses, I will curve *the final grades* up accordingly.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Course Introduction, Machiavelli

Monday June 23: Introduction to the Course

Wednesday June 25: Constant, “Liberty of Ancients compared with that of Moderns” (Bb), Machiavelli, “Letter to Francesco Vettori,” *The Prince*, dedication and chapters 1-10.

Friday June 27: *The Prince*, chapters 11-26.

Week 2: Hobbes

Monday June 30: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Introduction and chapters 1-7, 11-15

Wednesday July 2: *Leviathan*, chapters 17-22, 26 (through the 2nd ¶ on pg. 231), 29-31, Review and Conclusion

Friday 4 July: **No Class**, Independence Day

Week 3: Locke, Rousseau

Monday July 7: Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, Chapters 1-9

Wednesday July 9: *Second Treatise of Government*, Chapters 10-19

Friday July 11: Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men*, Title Page, skip the dedication to Geneva, Preface, Part One and Part Two (skip Rousseau’s notes *if necessary*)

Week 4: Rousseau

Monday July 14: *On the Social Contract*, Foreword, Books 1 and 2.

Wednesday July 16: *On the Social Contract*, Books 3 and 4 (chapters 4-6 of Book 4 are less important. *Do not skip chapter 7!*)

Optional Midterm Review Sessions: 3:00 pm, 7:00 pm (location TBA)

Friday July 18: **Midterm Exam**

Week 5: Hume, Burke, Kant

Monday July 21: Hume, *Of the Original Contract* (in the Hackett), “That Politics may be Reduced to a Science,” “Of the First Principles of Government” “Of the Origin of Government” “Of Civil Liberty” “Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth” [E-R]

Wednesday July 23: Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (in the Hackett), “Speech at Mr. Burke’s Arrival at Bristol,” “Speech on a Committee to Inquire into the State of the Representation of the Commons in Parliament,” “Speech on Mr. Fox’s East India Bill,” “Speeches on the Impeachment of Warren Hastings” [E-R]

Friday July 25: Kant, *What is Enlightenment* (in the Hackett Reader), *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*.

Week 6: Mill, Marx

Monday July 28: Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapters 1, 2

Wednesday July 30: *On Liberty*, Chapters 3, 4, 5; **Term Paper topic due**

Friday August 1: Marx, *On the Jewish Question, Alienated Labor, Theses on Feuerbach, The German Ideology*

Week 7: Marx, Nietzsche

Monday August 4: Marx, *The Communist Manifesto, Capital, Critique of the Gotha Program*

Wednesday August 6: Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Preface, Part 1

Friday August 8: *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Part 2; Foucault, “What is Enlightenment” [E-R]

Week 8: Review and Exam

Monday August 11 (Last Day of Class): Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty” [E-R]
Optional Review Session: 3:00 pm (location TBA)

Tuesday, August 12 (Reading Day): **Term Paper due by 5:00 pm.**

Optional Review Session: 7:00 pm (location TBA)

Wednesday, August 13 (**Final Exam**): administered 1:00-2:50 pm.

University Policies

Learning Outcomes: This course will contribute to the BYU and the Political Science Department’s specified learning outcomes. Namely, it will assist students to 1) be spiritually strengthened, 2) be intellectually enlarged, 3) develop a strong character, and 4) develop a lifelong desire to learn and serve. Please see https://learningoutcomes.byu.edu/wiki/index.php/Political_Science_BA for more information.

Plagiarism: While all students sign the honor code, there are still specific skills most students need to master over time in order to correctly cite sources, especially in this new age of the internet; as well as deal with the stress and strain of college life without resorting to cheating. Please know that as your professor I will notice instances of cheating on exams or plagiarizing on papers. General information about the honor code

can be found at honorcode.byu.edu. Details about Academic Honesty at the Honor Code site can be found by moving your mouse over "Honor Code" in the second grey bar and then move down then right and click on "Other Clarifications", then move your mouse down and click on "Academic Honesty."

Writing submitted for credit at BYU must consist of the student's own ideas presented in sentences and paragraphs of his or her own construction. The work of other writers or speakers may be included when appropriate (as in a research paper or book review), but such material must support the student's own work (not substitute for it) and must be clearly identified by appropriate introduction and punctuation and by footnoting or other standard referencing.

The substitution of another person's work for the student's own or the inclusion of another person's work without adequate acknowledgment (whether done intentionally or not) is known as plagiarism. It is a violation of academic, ethical, and legal standards and can result in a failing grade not only for the paper but also for the course in which the paper is written. In extreme cases, it can justify expulsion from the University. Because of the seriousness of the possible consequences, students who wonder if their papers are within these guidelines should visit the Writing Lab or consult a faculty member who specializes in the teaching of writing or who specializes in the subject discussed in the paper. Useful books to consult on the topic include the current Harbrace College Handbook, the MLA Handbook, and James D. Lester's Writing Research Papers.

Discrimination: Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination against any participant in an educational program or activity that receives federal funds. The act is intended to eliminate sex discrimination in education. Title IX covers discrimination in programs, admissions, activities, and student-to-student sexual harassment. BYU's policy against sexual harassment extends not only to employees of the university but to students as well. If you encounter unlawful sexual harassment or gender based discrimination, please talk to your professor; contact the Equal Employment Office at 422-5895 or 367-5689 (24-hours); or contact the Honor Code Office at 422-2847.

Disabilities: Brigham Young University is committed to providing a working and learning atmosphere which reasonably accommodates qualified persons with disabilities. If you have any disability which may impair your ability to complete this course successfully, please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities Office (422-2767). Reasonable academic accommodations are reviewed for all students who have qualified documented disabilities. Services are coordinated with the student and instructor by the SSD office. If you need assistance or if you feel you have been unlawfully discriminated against on the basis of disability, you may seek resolution through established grievance policy and procedures. You should contact the Equal Employment Office at 422-5895, D-282 ASB.