POLITICAL SCIENCE 201Honors
WESTERN P0LITICAL HERITAGE, PART I – Winter 2009 (Block 1)

Instructor:

Ralph C. Hancock MTWTh, 793 SWKT, 9:30-10:45am
750 SWKT 422-3302
ralph_hancock@byu.edu
Office hours: Monday& Thursday, 11-12am, or by appointment.

What is "politics"? Today the word immediately suggests competition for elective office, and the organizing of material interests or the mobilization of words and images associated with such competition – "spin" and "spin-control," back-room bargaining and grass-roots organization. More abstractly, we think that politics has to do with the pursuit and the organization of "power," especially the power of the state – that is, ultimately, the power to inflict death. "Politics" thus seems to be about vain competition and about power – not very edifying themes.

Those of us not inclined to get involved in such competition for political office may well disdain the activity we call politics, considering it hardly more dignified or significant than the scrambling of adolescents to be class president or prom queen. Or, even if we recognize the inescapable significance of the stakes of political contests, we may regard politics as a purely external necessity, a set of concerns that must be attended to in order to protect our interests and, ultimately, our lives. We might admit politics so understood to be part of our fallen nature, but we are unlikely to consider the subject essential to the education of our souls.

The global challenge of radicalized Islam ought to remind us, though, that politics is more than the competition of vanities, and more, even, than a matter of life and death. To defend a political community, a form of government, is at the deepest level to defend a *way of life*. Here our familiar rhetoric may confuse us, because the way of life we say we are defending is the way of "freedom," which we think means the freedom of every individual to practice whatever … way of life he or she prefers. But political philosophers since ancient times have argued that every political community, every authoritative regime of laws and institutions, even the freest, implies some common, most often unspoken opinion about right and wrong, good and evil.

Individual freedom always presupposes some authoritative institutions, and, behind these, some authoritative understanding of morality. Moreover, every moral understanding is associated with a view of reality, of the way things are, a sense of what the Greeks called "the cosmos." A person's views of what is worthy of praise or of blame are tied to his understanding of what a human being is and therefore to an understanding of the place of humanity in the whole of things.

Here is how Alexis Tocqueville, in his great *Democracy in America*, explained this connection between politics and fundamental beliefs:

At different periods dogmatic belief is more or less common. It arises in different ways, and it may change its object and its form; but under no circumstances will dogmatic belief cease to exist, or, in other words, men will never cease to entertain some opinions on trust and without discussion. If everyone undertook to form all his own opinions and to seek for truth by isolated paths struck out by himself alone, it would follow that no considerable number of men would ever unite in any common belief.

But obviously without such common belief no society can prosper; say, rather, no society can exist; for without ideas held in common there is no common action, and without common action there may still be men, but there is no social body. In order that society should exist and, a fortiori, that a society should prosper, it is necessary that the minds of all the citizens should be rallied and held together by certain predominant ideas; and this cannot be the case unless each of them sometimes draws his opinions from the common source and consents to accept certain matters of belief already formed.

If I now consider man in his isolated capacity, I find that dogmatic belief is not less indispensable to him in order to live alone than it is to enable him to co-operate with his fellows. If man were forced to demonstrate for himself all the truths of which he makes daily use, his task would never end. He would exhaust his strength in preparatory demonstrations without ever advancing beyond them. As, from the shortness of his life, he has not the time, nor, from the limits of his intelligence, the capacity, to act in this way, he is reduced to take on trust a host of facts and opinions which he has not had either the time or the power to verify for himself, but which men of greater ability have found out, or which the crowd adopts. On this groundwork he raises for himself the structure of his own thoughts; he is not led to proceed in this manner by choice, but is constrained by the inflexible law of his condition. There is no philosopher in the world so great but that he believes a million things on the faith of other people and accepts a great many more truths than he demonstrates.

This is not only necessary but desirable. A man who should undertake to inquire into everything for himself could devote to each thing but little time and attention. His task would keep his mind in perpetual unrest, which would prevent him from penetrating to the depth of any truth or of making his mind adhere firmly to any conviction. His intellect would be at once independent and powerless. He must therefore make his choice from among the various objects of human belief and adopt many opinions without discussion in order to search the better into that smaller number which he sets apart for investigation. It is true that whoever receives an opinion on the word of another does so far enslave his mind, but it is a salutary servitude, which allows him to make a good use of freedom.

A principle of authority must then always occur, under all circumstances, in some part or other of the moral and intellectual world. Its place is variable, but a place it necessarily has. The independence of individual minds may be greater or it may be less; it cannot be unbounded. Thus the question is, not to know whether any intellectual authority exists in an age of democracy, but simply where it resides and by what standard it is to be measured.

A little further on Tocqueville says more about the nature of this "intellectual authority" or "dogmatic belief:"

There is hardly any human action, however particular it may be, that does not originate in some very general idea men have conceived of the Deity, of his relation to mankind, of the nature of their own souls, and of their duties to their fellow creatures. Nor can anything prevent these ideas from being the common spring from which all the rest emanates.

"Dogmatic beliefs" shaped by political necessities tend powerfully to condition our views of human meaning and of ultimate reality. Political questions are thus bound up with the deepest religious and philosophical questions.

Politics is no doubt less important and less noble as an activity or field of study than those endeavors that confine themselves to the higher concerns of the spirit or soul. But we cannot simply assume this distinction between "lower" and "higher," for this very distinction arises in the political realm. To think beyond politics one must first come to terms with the political as essential to the human condition. As the greatest political philosopher of the twentieth century said, "the only way *beyond* the city (polis) is *through* the city."

Guiding Questions and Purposes:

This class is not, then, immediately about "politics" in the familiar sense evoked above. Rather, it explores connections between ultimate political questions (Who should rule? For what purpose? What is the best institutional form of government?) and the deepest moral, philosophical, and religious questions concerning the best way of life and the nature of things. These questions will be explored in connection with close readings of some of the great, formative texts of the Western tradition of political philosophy.

This tradition derives from the Greek beginnings of political philosophy (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle) and from the Bible. Are these two traditions friends, or rivals, or somehow both? This will be a central question of the class.

You see that this class is more about questions than about answers. Some questions we will explore are: How do questions of political freedom and order relate to fundamental ethical and religious beliefs? Do our Western ideals of democracy and human rights have a foundation in reason? What are their implications for our understanding of higher

education, particularly in a Latter-day Saint university? Should reason rule in politics, or must we rely on an authority beyond reason? Can we be loyal to the kingdom of God and at the same time good citizens of our earthly city?

If you think there are obvious or simple answers to such questions, or if you believe that politics can be understood "scientifically," without becoming entangled in ethical or religious concerns -- or if you would just rather go through life without thinking about such things -- then you should either consider another class or prepare to be surprised, unsettled, stretched. This class offers no cut-and-dried, formulaic answers to such questions, but, to the student willing to make the effort necessary to begin to converse with the great authors of the Western Tradition, it does offer the possibility of becoming alert to their depth and scope and to how they are at work in our personal and public lives today. It aims to awaken the student's capacity for a kind of thinking about the most fundamental human concerns that is at once disciplined and imaginative, thinking that draws on the greatest works of ancient Greece and Rome and medieval Europe as well as upon truths revealed in Scripture.

Students are encouraged to take advantage of the unique opportunity afforded by Brigham Young University to draw upon and deepen their understanding of the Restored Gospel as they begin to engage the European intellectual tradition. Such disciplined engagement can be expected to develop skills in critical and orderly thinking relevant to future success in business or professional life. More importantly, though, it promises to further our development and fulfillment as citizens, human beings, sons and daughters of a Heavenly Father.

Most classes in the contemporary university aim to help you succeed in the contemporary world. It is hoped that this class might contribute to such success. But its primary purpose is more ambitious: to ask what "success" means and whether it is good. It aims to help the student begin to learn to think critically about this world *as a whole,* to consider our ruling "dogmatic beliefs" as it were from the outside, to ask what is good and what is not about this world and its definition of "success." For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

This course thus begins with a critical perspective provided by Philippe Bénéton (*Equality by Default)* on the deepest assumptions informing modern democratic and individualistic societies. Then, through careful reading of classic philosophical texts, this course traces the emergence in the writings of Plato and Aristotle of the question of **natural right**, that is: Is there a natural basis for standards of right and wrong, in ethics and politics? Is there a political order that is best by nature? It then surveys later attempts by Stoic, Epicurean, and Christian philosophers to address this question. It explores **the challenge of the Bible to the authority of philosophic reason** and examines profound and influential efforts to accommodate these two sources of authority. We will also lay some groundwork for understanding the modern break with the classical-medieval tradition (a key theme of the second semester of this sequence, Political Science 202), and try to shed some light on the question of the distinctive

character of Western or European civilization, in part by some preliminary comparisons with the status of philosophy in the Islamic world.

Careful reading of and writing about complex and challenging philosophical texts is required. Though our questions will remain open-ended, without complete and final answers, the diligent student may hope to achieve an enhanced understanding of the political and ethical condition of humanity.

Specific Learning Objectives

The various elements of this class (readings, lectures, discussions, assignments and exams) are intended to help the student learn to:

- recognize and intelligently employ a number of philosophical and political terms,
- understand the main ideas of each author considered, and be able to compare and contrast the various authors,
- recall the basic intellectual/cultural milieu and chronological sequence of each author,
- summarize and independently critique important philosophical arguments, and write about them in a clear and orderly fashion,
- be critically aware of conventional assumptions that limit much current thought,
- see the practical consequences of abstract philosophical ideas,
- think more deeply and coherently about their own moral and political commitments.

Required Texts

Philippe Beneton, *Equality by Default: an Essay on Modernity as Confinement*

G.K. Chesterton, *St. Thomas Aquinas: "The Dumb Ox"* (available at website below)
http://www.cse.dmu.ac.uk/~mward/gkc/books/aquinas.html

Deutsch & Fornieri, *An Invitation to Political Thought*

Harvey Mansfield, *A Student's Guide to Political Philosophy*

Primary sources available on Blackboard

Assignments/Final Grade

<u>Quizzes: (20-50 points)</u>

Unannounced quizzes worth 10 points or less may randomly administered throughout the semester. For excused university absences or certified medical or family emergencies, make-up quizzes may be scheduled late in the semester. In the case of university excused absences (trips for athletic teams, etc.), it is your responsibility to provide me, in advance, a formal letter noting your excused absences scheduled for this semester. Without such documentation submitted in advance, no make up will be given (this also applies for all other assignments and exams). Should you develop a more serious and chronic problem affecting your ability to attend class, you will need to bring in a letter from a doctor *and* the Office of University Accessibility (under Student Life) explaining your situation, and an arrangement fair to all will be negotiated.

The quizzes may be based on the readings assigned for class that day or on key points covered in a recent lecture/discussion. (Indications will be given at the end of class periods to confirm or revise the calendar of assignments.) Study questions on particular texts will also be made available, and will often serve as the basis of quizzes.

<u>Writing Assignment I</u> (30 points). Summarize Bénéton chs. 2,11

This is a 1.5-2.5 page (double-spaced, 12-pt. font, standard margins) summary. The first purpose of this first assignment is to help you learn to master an argument by reducing it to its essentials with great clarity, brevity, polish. To do so will require effective reading and writing skills. You will need to read the chapters over a number of times, outline them carefully, and make judgments concerning what are the most fundamental points. In this assignment, resist the urge to editorialize. You are not to argue for, or against, any claim the author makes. Instead, write as if you were the author, and you had been asked to distill your chapters into a concise synopsis. Your task is to distill each chapter into a paragraph or two. (This means there is no need to repeat, for example: “Bénéton says modern reason….” Just write: “Modern reason…”

The second purpose of this assignment (and of the other reading in Bénéton) is to help you to see certain basic assumptions that underlie the modern understanding of reason. You will have an opportunity to explore the contrast with Aristotle’s conception of reason further in your second paper.

Grading Guidelines: A (27-30): Reduces what is essential in Bénéton’s chapters to at least a page and a half, but not more than two and a half pages. Lays bare the essential structure of argument; does so without losing anything essential. Excellent writing mechanics; no spelling, punctuation, or usage errors; clear transitions between paragraphs; employs an appropriately formal tone (no slang or colloquial language).

B (24-26): Has most of what is critical to Bénéton’s chapters, but misses one or two things, or fails to characterize them in a way fully faithful to the original argument. Very few writing mistakes.

C (21-23): May grasp some important points, but misses, or misinterprets, several key parts of Bénéton’s argument. Repeated writing mistakes.

D (18-20): Some attempt was made, but the article was not read, and the paper was not written, carefully or with any substantial comprehension.

<u>Writing Assignment II</u> (70 points) Topic Area: Reason and Politics -- Aristotle and Modern Rationalism compared.

This is a 4-5 page (double-spaced, standard font and margins) essay on the above topic. Students are expected to build upon their summaries of Bénéton's chapters by comparing the meaning of reason and its application to politics as understood by Aristotle to the modern rationalistic approach described by Beneton.

Also remember that academic plagiarism (quoting or summarizing ideas you discover in commentaries found in books and articles, online, or in papers written by other students) is a form of dishonesty and is incompatible with your individually signed commitment to the honor code, and the fundamental standards of the Church. Severe sanctions will be imposed if you are found guilty of such behavior.

Ideas from lectures and class discussion may be used in the paper, however, you must cite or discuss appropriate passages from texts which support your thesis (not relying too heavily on: "as Professor Hancock says," or "as we discussed in class"). A paper that simply or mainly repeats things said in class is not likely to earn a very high grade.

The following breakdown of typical characteristics of papers in the various grade ranges should help give students an idea of the instructor's expectations:

A (63-70): Carefully lays out the question of the meaning of reason in modern political discourse with judicious use of Bénéton's book and other course materials. Demonstrates an general understanding of Aristotle's approach to reason as applied to the political realm, and integrates a brief, analytical summary of one or more primary texts. Claims are well substantiated by textual evidence. Impeccable in presentation: clearly worded thesis, paragraphs constructed around a focused idea, smooth and logical transitions between paragraphs, overall economy of words—spelled correctly, proper grammar, and usage appropriate for more formal writing.

B (56-62) A fairly straightforward summary of key points in Bénéton, and some pertinent discussion of a text from Aristotle. A mostly solid critique or analysis, but argument a bit obvious or somewhat lacking in persuasiveness or clarity. Shows little or no awareness of significant counterarguments. Slight problems, if any, with mechanics.

C (49-61) An underdeveloped or imperfect understanding of the essential issues at stake in the texts under consideration. Vaguely defined or completely obvious thesis. No imagination shown in discovering connections with between or among texts. Argument not well supported by the texts. Numerous problems with writing mechanics. Several paragraphs too long or short, or not cohesive.

D (42-48) Considerable misunderstanding of the topic. An attempt at original critique or analysis is barely recognizable. Presentation very unclear, disorderly, or incoherent.

E (0) Who do you think you're kidding? No points for you!

<u>Writing Assignment III (100 points).</u> Topic area: A Latter-Day Saint Perspective on Reason in Politics. (6-8 pages. Builds upon first two papers. Students are invited to bring LDS sources to bear on questions raised by Bénéton and developed in earlier papers. Grading criteria similar to above, with more emphasis on the student's careful development of his/her own views.)

NOTE: All writing assignments are due in class or in the political science office by 4:00 pm on their respective due dates. Short of being hospitalized or arrested the night before a paper is due, there are virtually no acceptable excuses to turn in a paper late without some penalty. Therefore, papers turned in after 4:00 pm on the due date, but before 4:00 pm the next day, will have their final score marked down an extra 5% of the total points possible on the assignment. Papers more than one day late (after 4:00 pm of the day after the due date) will have their final score marked down an *additional* 15% of the total points possible. Papers more than a week late will not be accepted. Papers should be submitted with a title page which includes the paper's title, the course number, and your name, all centered on the page. In the upper right hand corner you should write or type the name of the TA of your section, who will be helping to grade your paper.

Exams will include both short essays and "objective" questions. The Final Exam is comprehensive, but with more detailed emphasis on the latter part of class following the second midterm.

Your **final grade** will be based on your total points earned. The breakdown for final grading will be fairly standard: 93% and above is an A, 90-92% is an A-, 87-89% is a B+, 83-86% is a B, etc. Should the distribution of grades fall significantly out of line with political science department averages for a 100-200 level course, I may make discretionary adjustments to the curve.

Note: Thoughtful and informed **class participation** may boost a student in the final grading, especially if he or she is near a border between grades..

Writing Assignment I	**30 points**
Writing Assignment II	**70 points**
Writing Assignment III	**100 points**
<u>Midterm I</u>	**40 points**
<u>Midterm II</u>	**60 points**
<u>Final Exam</u>	**100 points**
Total	**400 points (+ quiz points)**

Conduct of the Class

This course honors the sponsoring support and direction BYU receives from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and openly recognizes that God is the source of all

true knowledge. Moses 6 describes the Spirit as "the truth of all things; that which quickeneth all things, which maketh alive all things."

Since the truths we as saints are ultimately seeking are indeed holy, and involve spiritual sanctification as well as intellectual discipline, every effort will be made to invite the Spirit to accompany us in our quest for learning. Each class period will begin with prayer. (Feel free to remind me; you will find I am often distracted "by the things of this world." I will ask for volunteers to pray, but no one should feel obligated to volunteer if they do not feel so inclined.) Insights from scripture and gospel-based comments are welcome, though such contributions must be thoughtful--avoiding oversimplification and dogmatism. All, students and professor alike, should treat one another with great respect and care, engaging in challenging and candid discussion, without a spirit of animosity or ridicule. Students are asked not to mistake the professor's readiness to engage students' opinions or occasionally to correct students' responses for animosity or disdain.

Provisional Reading/Assignment/Exam Schedule

COURSE INTRODUCTION.
1/5 (Students should carefully review syllabus.)
Holland, "A School in Zion". Holland - A School in Zion; Bénéton chs. 1-2

I. THE EXHAUSTION OF MODERN LIBERALISM?
1/6 Bénéton chs. 3-7, 11; Mansfield 1-9

II. OUR BEGINNINGS: THE GREEKS
1/7 Mansfield 9-54; Homer, selections. Thucydides, "Pericles' Funeral Oration,"

1/8 Sophocles, "Antigone"; Thucydides, "Melian Dialogue"
PAPER 1 DUE IN CLASS 1/8.

III. THE PROBLEM OF SOCRATES
1/12 Aristophanes, "Clouds," selections; Deutsch, p. 2; Plato, *Apology*

1/13 Plato, *Apology* (cont.)

IV. PLATO'S REPUBLIC: THE RULE OF REASON?
1/14 Deutsch pp. 1-20 & Primary Source 1.1, 1.3, 1.5

1/15 **MIDTERM 1 (in class)**

1/20 Plato, *Republic*, "The Highest Good and the Sun Compared;" *Doctrine & Covenants* 88:1-68; 93:1-40; & Primary Sources 1.2, 1.4, 1.6

1/21 Deutsch 20-32; Plato, *Republic*, "Democracy" & "Tyranny"; Deutsch, Case Study 1.1 (p. 30);

V. ARISTOTLE'S SCIENCE OF ETHICS AND POLITICS
1/22 Deutsch, pp. 36-38. Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics,* selections from Books I, II, & III,
1/26 Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, selections from Books IX & X.

1/27 Deutsch, pp. 38-50 & Primary Sources 2.1-2.3; Case Study 2.1 (p. 50)

1/28 Deutsch pp. 50-68, Primary Sources 2.4-2.7

VI. HELLENISTIC THOUGHT & ROME: THE ECLIPSE OF THE POLIS

1/29 Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things* (selections) & Seneca, "Letter CIV" (On Travel)

2/2 Cicero, *Republic* (selections)

2/3 MIDTERM II

VII. JERUSALEM & ATHENS (& MECCA)

2/4 Genesis chs. 1-3; Matthew 22; Acts 17; Romans 13; 2 Corinthians 3.
Noel Reynolds Forum Address
http://www.byui.edu/Presentations/Transcripts/Devotionals/2004_06_15_Reynolds.htm

2/5 Leon Kass, "Educating Father Abraham"; *Koran*, selections
www.firstthings.com/ftissues/ft9412/articles/kass.html
Doctrine & Covenants , sections 130-132.

VIII. AUGUSTINE & THE PROBLEM OF THE "TWO CITIES"

2/9 Deutsch, pp. 72-83; *Confessions* (selections),

2/10 *City of God*, selections 1,2,4

2/11 Deutsch, pp. 83-95 & Primary Sources 3.1 & 3.2 *City of God*, selection;
Bénéton, chs. 13-14
Writing Assignment II due

2/12 Deutsch 95-102 & 144-145 & Primary Sources 3.3-3.5;
Bénéton, chs. 16, Epilogue 1

IX. NATURE AND GRACE IN THOMAS AQUINAS

2/17 Deutsch, 106-107; Chesterton, *Thomas Aquinas: 'The Dumb Ox,'* chs. 2-5
http://www.cse.dmu.ac.uk/~mward/gkc/books/aquinas.html

2/18 Deutsch, 124-131 & Primary Sources 4.1-4.3.

2/19 Deutsch 131-141 & Primary Sources 4.4 & 4.5.

X. REASON, AGENCY, & ATONEMENT IN THE RESTORED GOSPEL

2/23 Beneton chs. 13-14, 16.

2/24 Beneton, Epilogue 1; 2 Nephi 2; Moses 5; Terryl Givens Forum Address (Nov. 2005)

http://byubroadcasting.org/devotionals/?selectedMonth=11&selectedYear=2005

2/25 (Open)

Writing Assignment III due

Final Exam:

Do not plan to leave school prior to the time of this final. Please tell relatives and friends that they will be doing you and themselves a great disservice to schedule weddings, flights home, or other conflicts with this time because permission to take this exam at another time will not given. If a true emergency develops, you will possibly be allowed to take an incomplete, and take the exam at a later time. You should check now to see if this schedule will present a conflict for you. If so, you should take another class.

Policy Statements

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.

Access:

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.