

## Politics 122A: Modern Political Theory

Whitman College, Spring 2010  
Mon/Weds 2:30-3:50  
Maxey Hall 207

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### Course Description

This course explores European political thought from the sixteenth through the early nineteenth centuries: an era traditionally known as the 'modern' period of political thought and characterized by the intellectual attempt to come to terms with the political implications of the rise of capitalism, the emergence of the nation-state and the decline of the epistemological and political authority of religion. Modern political theorists sought to make sense of a rapidly changing political world by developing new ideas about individualism, rights, liberty, private property, and the legitimacy and limits of government. Over the course of the semester we will consider the historical underpinnings, continued relevance, and recurring problems of the modern political tradition through careful reading and discussion of several of its most important thinkers.

### Required Books

The following books are available for purchase from the Whitman College Bookstore or from a variety of online vendors. If you choose to buy your books online rather than from the bookstore, please be certain to purchase the editions listed below. Use of these editions is mandatory.

Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Penguin Classics, 1982  
Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*, Hackett, 1980  
Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Oxford, 2009  
Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, Hackett November 1, 1992  
Rousseau, *Social Contract*, Penguin June 30, 1968  
Marx, *Selected Writings*, Hackett Publishing Company, March 1994  
Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Oxford University Press, USA, January 15, 2009

### Course Requirements

Your grade for this course will be the product of several different assessment projects. You will be required to attend class each day, participate productively in class discussion, keep a reading journal, write several analytic essays and to take an oral final exam. Satisfactory completion of all requirements is necessary for a passing grade for the course.

#### Attendance & Participation 15%

It is essential that all students come to class having read the assigned reading and prepared to participate in class discussions. Your participation grade will be based on your attendance and your participation in class discussions and in-class activities. Your discussion grade will take into account your attendance, your comments during class discussion, the questions you ask, your responses to other students' questions and comments, and your performance on any in-class oral assignments. I expect students to respond thoughtfully to the assigned readings and to questions posed in class, to be willing to play with ideas (i.e.,

take interpretive risks) and be actively engaged in class discussion; therefore, the quality of your contributions to class discussions will be as important as the sheer quantity of your participation.

### **Weekly Journal 20%**

You are required to keep an intellectual journal for this course. You will write one journal entry per week for a total of 10 entries. Journal entries should be somewhere between 250 and 500 words. Please purchase a special folder in which to keep your writing journal. I would like you to bring the journal to class each day and I will collect the journals regularly throughout the semester.

Journal entries are to be your attempt to work through one of the ideas and problems you find in the reading. You might choose a really difficult and complex passage and subject it to close scrutiny; you might choose a theme and grapple with it (i.e., you might delve into Locke's theory of revolution, or Hobbes's idea of language). I might occasionally be directive about the theme or focus of your journaling, but it will ultimately be up to you to find something interesting, troubling and important in the readings.

The goal of the journal entries is to make sure that you are working with the reading in a sustained and active way—that is, thinking about what you are reading and attempting to sort out its meanings and complexities for yourselves. It is very important that these journals reflect *your* thinking about the reading and the ideas in the readings. I want you to discuss the texts, but I want to hear *your* voice and ideas in the entries.

Finding something to write about each week is an important element of the challenge and goal of journaling: learning to identify a problem or theme or question in a text and then begin to address it is a crucial goal for this course.

Because of the importance of the journal to your work in this class, I will have a Zero Tolerance policy for academic dishonesty. Anyone caught plagiarizing a journal entry will be reported to the Dean and will receive an F for the course. This means that you are not allowed to copy words, ideas or sentences from online sources such as Spark Notes or Wikipedia. It also means that you cannot go to another source and 'change the words' for your journal entry. The work in these journals must be entirely your own.

### *Criteria for grading:*

I want to see that you have carefully done the assigned reading and have taken a serious stab at working through your ideas and the author's ideas. A successful journal entry will grapple seriously with a complicated passage or idea and come to some kind of resolution or position. There would be a strong authorial voice along with respect for and fidelity to the text. Unsuccessful entries will be those which reflect only superficial engagement with the ideas in the texts, or which merely summarize the readings, or which reveal a fatal misreading of the text. I would much rather see you tackle a difficult idea and struggle to work it through (unsuccessfully) than for you to give a simplistic or fatuous reading of the text. I want to see evidence of serious intellectual engagement and alertness to complexity and nuance.

I will grade your reading journal entries with a check-plus, check, or check-minus (corresponding to excellent, satisfactory, or unsatisfactory). An entry that receives a check grade shows a solid grasp of the assigned reading, ties to grapple with complex ideas, problems or language within the readings and indicates a willingness to take intellectual risks with the material. An entry that receives a check plus grade will do these things exceptionally well and will show a significantly deeper level of engagement with the readings. Check minuses will be given to those journals which appear haphazard, unengaged or uncritical of the readings.

If you receive 10 consecutive checks or check pluses on your journals, you will receive an A on the assignment. Anyone who earns three or more check-minuses will, in addition to rewriting the failing entries, receive a C or C+ for their final journal grade.

I always prefer to read polished, well-written prose over messy, grammatically challenged prose. That said, these journals are intended for you to explore complicated ideas and sometimes messy ideas lead to messy writing. I would rather have complicated messiness than polished banalities *however*, I always expect you to proofread and edit your work for grammar and style.

Some ideas to get you started:

- Write about what you found particularly interesting or problematic in the reading and why.
- Apply an idea or concept from the reading to another text we have read, to one of the course themes, or to an example from your personal experience.
- Choose a quote that stands out to you and explain what you think it means and why it is important—either to the subject of the course or to the author's argument or project.
- Write out what you would like to say to or ask the author in person, and how he might respond to you.
- Identify an idea or theme in the week's reading that you would like to explore in more detail, and explain how you might do so.

#### Essays 65%

You will write three formal, 4-6 page essays for this course. These essays will be critical and interpretive and will require you to make an argument about the texts. I will distribute essay questions in class before each paper is due and you will be expected to respond thoughtfully and critically to the writing question and to draw heavily on the assigned readings in your responses. These are *not* research papers and I do not want or expect you to consult outside sources. I will give more specific instructions for your written work when I distribute the questions for the first essay assignment.

The first two essays will each be worth 20% of your final grade; the final essay will be worth 25%.

Late papers will be penalized one half grade for each day the paper is late. If you anticipate that you will not be able to submit your paper by the due date, I urge you to speak to me before the paper is due. Failure to discuss an extension with me prior to the due date will result in the abovementioned grade deductions.

#### Office Hours

I will hold office hours in Maxey 120A during the following times:

Monday 4-5  
Tuesday 3-4  
Wednesday 10-11  
Friday 10-11

If you cannot make it to my regularly scheduled office hours, I will be happy to schedule an appointment with you at another time.

## Academic Integrity

Students are expected to familiarize themselves with the Whitman College Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism policy. The policy can be found online at [http://www.whitman.edu/content/academic\\_resources/rights-and-responsibilities/academic-dishonesty-and-plagiarism](http://www.whitman.edu/content/academic_resources/rights-and-responsibilities/academic-dishonesty-and-plagiarism). Plagiarism is a very serious matter and I take academic honesty very seriously. I will report all suspected cases of plagiarism to the Dean of Students and any student found to have plagiarized will automatically fail the course. If you are uncertain as to what constitutes plagiarism, please come and discuss the matter with me.

## Reading Schedule

Weds 1/20	Introduction
Mon 1/25	Luther, "Secular Authority: To What Extent it should be Obeyed", excerpts, "The Freedom of a Christian" (cleo)
Weds 1/27	Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> pp. 81-134
Mon 2/1	<i>Leviathan</i> pp. 150-222
Weds 2/3	<i>Leviathan</i> pp. 223-274
Mon 2/8	<i>Leviathan</i> , 294-302, 335-353, 363-367, 717-729
Weds 2/10	Locke, <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> , pp. 3-30 (Preface; chaps 1-5)
Mon 2/15	President's Day – No Classes
Weds 2/17	<i>Second Treatise of Government</i> , pp. 30-83 (Chaps 6-13)
Mon 2/22	<i>Second Treatise of Government</i> , pp. 83-124 (Chaps 14-19)
	<u>First Essay Due</u>
Weds 2/24	Rousseau, <i>Discourse on the Origins of Inequality</i> pp. 1-44
Mon 3/1	<i>Discourse on the Origins of Inequality</i> pp. 44-71
Weds 3/3	Rousseau, <i>The Social Contract</i> , pp. 49-68 (Book I)
Mon 3/8	<i>The Social Contract</i> , pp. 69-100 (Book II)
Weds 3/10	<i>The Social Contract</i> , pp. 101-188 (Books III and IV)
Spring Break 3/12 – 3/29	
Mon 3/29	Burke, <i>Reflections on the Revolution in France</i> I (selections TBA) <u>Second Essay Due</u>

- Weds 3/31      *Reflections on the Revolution in France* II (selections TBA)
- Mon 4/5        *No Class today – I will be away at a conference*
- Weds 4/7        Kant, “Idea For a Universal History With a Cosmopolitan Purpose” (cleo)  
Kant, “What is Enlightenment?” (cleo)
- Mon 4/12        Kant, “Perpetual Peace” (cleo)
- Weds 4/14        Marx, “On the Jewish Question” pp. 1-21
- Fri 4/15        Second Paper Due
- Mon 4/19        Marx, “German Ideology” selections: pp. 104-112, 115-124
- Weds 4/21        Marx, *Communist Manifesto* pp. 157-186
- Mon 4/26        *Communist Manifesto* cont’d

\*\*Wound up having to change this. I had thought that JQ + GI would make CM comprehensible. It did not. I’m assigning “Alienated Labor” and “Private Property and Capitalism” from 1844 for the 4<sup>th</sup> day’s reading. Next time: JQ, 1844, GI, CM. It would probably work much better that way.

- Weds 4/28        Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, pp. 15-56 (First Essay)
- Mon 5/3        Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, pp. 57-96 (Second Essay)
- Weds 5/5        Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, pp. 97-163 (Third Essay)
- Mon 5/10:        Last Class: Festivities and Conclusions
- Fri 5/14        Final Essay Due, noon