Course Description and Philosophy

The objective of this course is to provide students with an introduction to the political right. In popular discourse political right is an ambiguous and fascinating end of the political spectrum, including everything from staunch traditionalists to defenders of classical liberal freedoms, bigots and libertarians. Variously described as conservative, reactionary, or simply right wing the political right is currently dominant in many parts of the world and therefore understanding it is vital to grasping contemporary politics more generally. Our analysis will be both exegetical and critical. We will be examining primary texts from different perspectives on the political right and examining their commonalities and discrepancies. This class will also be critical, so we will be assessing the strengths and weaknesses of these respective positions from alternate political standpoints. By the end of this course students will be able to:

- Critically discuss and evaluate a number of prominent perspectives on the political right
- Distinguish between competing right wing positions
- Offer defenses and critiques of the political right
- Apply their understanding to events in the contemporary world

This course is interdisciplinary and dialogical. While everyone—including myself!—has their own convictions on these topics we should be open minded about changing our perspective where warranted. It is also expected that students will be highly involved in raising questions and points of interest to propel the classes’ conversation forward.

Course Schedule

This class will be held on Monday and Wednesday from 2:30-3:50 PM for the 2020 FA semester. Due to the unprecedented nature of the COVID 19 crisis we will be increasingly flexible with regard to meeting in person, using a variety of different media as necessary. None the less we will endeavor to maintain as much regularity as possible given the circumstances.
Email and Meeting Policy

Due to the unprecedented nature of the COVID Crisis we are going to endeavor to keep face to face contact to a minimum while still maintaining rigorous academic standards and availability. Consequently you may email me anytime at mattmcmanus300@gmail.com or mcmannusm@whitman.edu. I will endeavor to respond to all queries within 24 hours. In the event that you do not receive a response please feel free to resend a message. I will also be available for consultations via Zoom or Skype during a time period we will schedule.

Disability Policy

If you have disability and will require accommodations in this course, please email or call Antonia Keithahn, Assistant Director of Academic Resources: Disability Support (Memorial 326, 509.527.5767, keithaam@whitman.edu) for assistance in developing a plan to address your specific needs. All information about disabilities is private; if I receive notification from Ms. Keithahn that you are eligible to receive accommodations they will be provided in a discrete manner.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

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Assignments

Classroom Participation: This class is intended to be dialogical, in the sense that we will all be discussing the nature of the political right to try and assess the strengths and weaknesses of different perspectives. Consequently students will be expected to attend class regularly and contribute their informed opinions. Overall participation will be assessed at the end of the semester. Students will be evaluated based on both the quantity and quality of their contributions. Saying something insightful and well thought out is worth more than simply saying a great deal to fill time.

Essay Outline and Final Essay: Students will prepare a short 2-3 page essay outline discussing a topic in human rights theory they intend to write on. The subject will be at the discretion of the student so long as it is related to course material. The outline will highlight the main arguments being presented in the paper, while including an early bibliography with 8 academic sources that
will be referenced in the final essay. The essay outline will be submitted on Wednesday, October 14th and returned with feedback. The Final Essay will be submitted on Wednesday, November the 18th and will be between 10-12 pages long. It will include a title page and bibliography, and should fulfill the promise of the outline while addressing earlier criticisms. Students are permitted to change their topic between writing the Essay Outline and the Final Essay so long as they consult the Professor first. The Final Essay will be graded based on meeting the assignment requirements, the overall quality of the arguments, and the level of polish applied.

Presentations: At the conclusion of the semester each student will present a 10-15 minute long analysis of a chosen issue on the political right. Presentations can either be analytical or argumentative: they can analyze a given case study through one of the theoretical lenses we studied earlier in the class, or present an argument for or against one of these lenses. Students may use digital media to augment their presentation if they wish. They will be graded on meeting the assignment requirements, the overall quality of the presentation, and the level of engagement generated from the audience. In the event that social distancing requires us to avoid close contact, presentations will be conducted online.

Exams: The two exams will take place on Wednesday, September 16th and during the final exam period. Both exams will consist of multiple choice questions, several short answer questions, and a long answer question. Students will be evaluated on their understanding of the course material and the capacity to apply it in a rigorous and creative manner.

Assignment Submission and Late Penalties: Assignments are to be handed in at the beginning of class the week they are due. Late assignments may be submitted in the Course Director's drop box in the Maxey building. They will be penalized per day for lateness. Exceptions to the lateness penalty require submitting a Doctor’s note or other relevant evidence that the assignment could not reasonably be completed on time. Assessing this will be subject to Professor’s discretion but might involve: unexpected tragedies, important personal events, and, in very rare cases, work related disruptions.

**Course Readings by Week**

We will be reading two primary texts for this course. The first is a largely admiring interpretation of the political right from Roger Scruton *Conservatism: An Invitation to the Great Tradition* which offers summaries and appraisal of a variety of right wing figures and perspectives. The second is Corey Robin’s *The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism From Edmund Burke to Donald Trump* which is far more critical and even damning of the political right’s elitism and authoritarianism. There will also be supplementary and shorter readings assigned.
Week One: Introduction (August 24th-28th)

Read Preface and Chapter One of *Conservatism: An Invitation to the Great Tradition* by Roger Scruton
Read “Ten Conservative Principles” by Russell Kirk

Week Two: Ancient Origins (August 31st-September 4th)

Read Books II-III of *The Nichomachean Ethics* by Aristotle
Read “The Confucian Tradition and Politics” by Youngmin Kim, Ha-Kyoung Lee, and Seongun Park

Week Three: Early Modern Origins (September 7th-11th)

Read Book I of *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Politie* by Richard Hooker
Read Section I-IV of *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* by David Hume
Read Chapter Two of *Conservatism: An Invitation to the Great Tradition* by Roger Scruton

Week Four: Edmund Burke (September 14th-18th)

Read *Reflections on the Revolution in France* by Edmund Burke

Week Five: Reacting to Liberalism and Jacobinism (September 21st-25th)

Continue reading *Reflection on the Revolution in France* by Edmund Burke
Read “Joseph de Maistre and the Origins of Fascism” by Isaiah Berlin

Week Six: Hegel and Making Peace with Liberalism (September 28th-October 2nd)

Read Third Part, Second Section *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* by Georg Hegel
Read Chapter Three of *Conservatism: An Invitation to the Great Tradition* by Roger Scruton

Week Seven: Conservatism and Capitalism (October 5th-9th)

Read “Freedom, Tradition, Conservatism” by Frank Meyer
Read “Unsustainable Liberalism” by Patrick Deneen
Read Chapter Four and Five of *Conservatism: An Invitation to the Great Tradition* by Roger Scruton

**Week Eight: Conservatism and the Political Left (October 12th-16th)**

Read Chapter One and Chapter Eleven of *12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos* by Jordan Peterson
Read “The United 93 Election” by Michael Anton
Read Chapter Six of *Conservatism: An Invitation to the Great Tradition* by Roger Scruton

**Week Nine: Critiques of Conservatism from Liberals I (October 19th-23rd)**

Read “An Answer to the Question ‘What is Enlightenment’” by Immanuel Kant
Read “Conservative Democracy” by Yoram Hazony
Read Section I of *The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism from Edmund Burke to Donald Trump* by Corey Robin

**Week Ten: Critiques of Conservatism from Liberals II (October 26th-30th)**

Read “Social Solidarity and the Enforcement of Morality” by H.L.A Hart
Read “The Enforcement of Morals” by Lord Patrick Devlin
Read Section II of *The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism from Edmund Burke to Donald Trump* by Corey Robin

**Week Eleven: Critiques of Conservatism and Capitalism from the Economic Left (November 2nd-6th)**

Read Excerpts from *Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right* by Karl Marx
Read “John Rawls, Socialist?” by Ed Quish
Read “Why I am Not a Conservative” by F.A Hayek
Read Section III of *The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism from Edmund Burke to Donald Trump* by Corey Robin

**Week Twelve: Post-Modern Conservatism? (November 9th-13th)**

Read Excerpts from *The Rise of Post-Modern Conservatism* by Matthew McManus
Read “A Process of Denial: Bork and Post-Modern Conservatism” by James Boyle
Week Thirteen: Concluding Remarks and Review (November 16th-19th)
No Readings