

V53.0100 Political Theory Core

Professor Dimitri Landa

Lectures: T, TH 12:30-1:45, Silver Center, Rm. 408

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This course is a comprehensive introduction to political theory through the analysis of seminal historical and contemporary texts. Because the subject matter is vast, we will, of necessity, restrict our attention to a handful of critical issues: the distinct nature of public morality, the structure and defense of liberty, equality, and justice, and the different models of democratic politics. Although these issues are, arguably, foundational, our analysis will not directly address many other important issues, including those of power, feminism, moral pluralism, etc., which students are encouraged to pursue in their further coursework in political theory.

Our exploration of political theory in this course is structured both conceptually and, almost always, chronologically. Maintaining this structure both in class lectures and discussions and in thinking through the reading and writing assignments will allow our analysis to remain analytically focused and, at the same time, cognizant of the historic complexity and of the stylized conversation among the historically positioned works. Despite the advanced age of some of the texts we will consider, the issues of interest to us they address are “contemporary,” even if the positions they take are sometimes not. Even where our disagreements with these positions may have a distinctly historic dimension, however, our interest in them will not be antiquarian. To understand both the appeal and the limits of contemporary arguments, we often need to appreciate their historical lineage and the reasons for rejecting the alternatives to them.

Course Requirements

All components of the grade will draw on lecture material, whether or not it is included in the assigned texts, and on material from the assigned texts, whether or not it is covered in the lectures. Successful performance in the course will, therefore, require both the regular attendance of lectures and the timely completion of reading assignments.

The purpose of recitations will be further elucidation of lectures and assigned readings through small-group guided discussions of specific questions central to the covered material. These questions – typically 2-3 for each recitation – will be distributed in advance to allow students the opportunity to think them through *before* the corresponding recitation meetings. In order to make possible the careful tracking of students’ performance through the

semester, and to maintain the small group discussion dynamic, students are required to attend *all and only* the recitations for which they are registered. To encourage this, students will not be given attendance credit for coming to meetings of other recitation sections.

Students will be expected to complete two short (4 to 5-page) papers addressing a question of their choice from the list of recitation discussion questions. The papers will be due at the beginning of the lecture on Tuesdays in the weeks reserved for the corresponding discussion questions. Each paper will count for 15% of the final grade. In the interests of fairness to other students, papers that are submitted late will not be accepted. The mid-term and the final will count for 25% and 35%, respectively. No late exams will be given without a documented reason for the inability to attend and the prior consent of the professor. The last component of the grade will be based on the participation (including, but not limited to attendance) in the recitation discussions. It will count for 10% of the grade.

Academic Integrity

All the graded assignments for this course must be products of your own work. Words and ideas of other authors used in your work must be properly referenced in accordance with the standard reference manuals (APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.). All instances of plagiarism (whereby the work of other authors is presented as your own) and cheating will be handled in accordance with university policy and forwarded to the University Committee on Academic Misconduct.

Texts

The following texts *and* editions are required for this course:

Classics in the History of Political Thought, Volume I. Dome Academic Publishers, 2007

Classics in the History of Political Thought, Volume II. Dome Academic Publishers, 2007

John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: a Restatement.* Harvard University Press, 2001.

Reading packet (RP) available for purchase at New University Copies on Waverly Place.

Schedule of Classes and Readings

I. Political Theory: the Why and the How

September 4

Introduction

September 6

John Rawls, "Four Roles of Political Philosophy," in RP

Gerald F. Gaus, "Conceptual Disputes," in RP

THERE IS NO RECITATION MEETING THIS WEEK

II. Public Morality and the State

September 11

Aristotle, *Politics*, pp. 1-8; 46-56; 8-15 in CHPT I

September 13

Aristotle, *Politics*, pp. 15-46 in CHPT I

September 18

Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, pp. 56-89 in CHPT I

September 20

Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, pp. 89-121 in CHPT I

September 25

Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, pp. 181-203
in CHPT II

III. Liberty and the Social Contract

September 27

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pp. 129-156 in CHPT I

October 2

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pp. 156-198 in CHPT I

October 4

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pp. 198-217 in CHPT I

October 9

John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government*, pp. 266-275; 286-303 in CHPT I

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, pp. 91-96 in CHPT II

October 11

John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government*, pp. 275-286; 303-323 in CHPT I

October 16

John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government*, pp. 323-350 in CHPT I

October 18

BEGINNING OF LECTURE IS LAST OPPORTUNITY TO TURN IN THE
FIRST ESSAY

James Madison, *Federalist Papers* pp. 221-241 in CHPT II

October 23

THERE IS NO RECITATION MEETING THIS WEEK

MIDTERM EXAM

October 25

James Madison, *Federalist Papers* pp. 205-215 in CHPT II

October 30

John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, pp. 290-331 in CHPT II

November 1

John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, pp. 331-361 in CHPT II

IV. Equality and Justice

November 6

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, pp. 22-58 in CHPT II

November 8

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, pp. 58-89 in CHPT II

Karl Marx, "The Estranged Labor," in RP

November 13

Karl Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Program," pp. 243-259 in CHPT II

November 15

John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Re-statement*, Part 1, Sections 2-11

November 20

John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Re-statement*, Part 2, Sections 12-18; Part 3, Sections
23-26, 28, 30, 32

V. Democracy

November 27

Jean Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, pp. 97-121 in CHPT II
November 29

Jean Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, pp. 145-174 in CHPT II
December 4

BEGINNING OF LECTURE IS LAST OPPORTUNITY TO TURN IN THE
SECOND ESSAY

Joshua Cohen, "Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy," in RP
December 6

James Fishkin, "Deliberative Democracy," in RP
December 11

GENERAL RECITATION & REVIEW SESSION

FINAL EXAM: Thursday, December 20, 12:00PM-1:50PM