

Modern Political Thought
POLI 271
Spring 2017

Objectives

This course aims to enable you to:

- 1) understand the main concerns and concepts in modern political thought,
- 2) become a better critical and analytical thinker, speaker, and writer, and
- 3) be able to apply political theoretical thinking to issues and questions in the world around you.

To these ends, time spent in class will focus on delving deeper into the texts, focusing on close readings of specific passages, and on answering questions you may have in response to the week's lectures. My job is making sure that you understand the difficult texts we will be reading and helping you to apply the questions these texts raise to other texts, our contemporary political world, and issues you care about. In every class session, we will spend time interpreting the difficult readings and spend time analyzing them, applying them to contemporary politics, and critiquing them.

Requirements and Grading

- 10% of your overall course grade is earned through participation. The entirety of your participation grade is earned in recitation section, not lecture.
 - Half of this is attendance. Attendance is mandatory and will be taken every week on Sakai. Sakai will automatically drop one unexcused absence. After that, except for a legitimate excuse caused by a personal, medical, or family emergency (for which I reserve the right to ask for documentation), your participation grade will be lowered. Please arrive a few minutes early so that you are ready to participate fully in class on time. I reserve the right to count latecomers as absent.
 - The other half of this is participation. Participation can be earned by speaking up in class, answering questions by volunteering or when called upon, participating in small group or paired discussions, and turning in occasional in-class notes or worksheets. If you are comfortable speaking up in class, please help others participate by engaging in dialogue and being mindful about letting others speak. If you are uncomfortable speaking up in class, please consider this section an opportunity to grow and push yourself to contribute to the discussion. I will give you a midterm participation grade (which I will replace with your final grade at the end of the semester) to let you know how you are doing on participation halfway through the course.
 - I expect civil discourse and mutual respect for all participants in this course. This is a class about big ideas and political thought, which are sometimes contentious. Please assume that your classmates have good intent when you are engaging in discussion.
- 40% of your overall course grade is earned through two five double-spaced page papers, each worth 20% of your overall course grade.
 - Please email me each paper by the date and time due.
 - Papers should focus on answering the prompt using the resources of the text, your notes from lecture and recitation, and our discussions. You will not need to do any

outside research. They will be graded for both the quality of your critical analysis and technique. I will distribute grading rubrics along with the paper prompts.

- I strongly suggest reviewing drafts of papers with the UNC Writing Center (<http://writingcenter.unc.edu/>).
- 50% of your course grade is earned through three exams (dates below). They will consist of both multiple choice and short-answer questions.

Communication

I am reachable at lcbritt@unc.edu. I am generally responsive to email, but am slower on weekends and do not check email during the times I am attending graduate classes myself. If you have a longer question or many different questions, please visit my office hours or email me to meet outside of them. I enjoy talking about political theory, so visit me if you have questions about the lecture, our discussion, the text, or an assignment. I may not be able to answer last-minute questions about exams or papers, so take this as an incentive to study and write well in advance of due dates!

Electronics Policy

- *Laptops* will not be needed for this recitation, and I ask that you put them away. Studies show both that laptops and electronics detract from learning and participation and that the brain processes handwritten notes more easily.
- *Tablets and e-readers* will be allowed for reading PDFs of class readings, but not for answering emails or using the internet. Otherwise, please bring readings to class printed out or in book form.
- *Cell phones* should be silenced and out of reach for the entirety of class.

Required Texts

Hobbes, *The Essential Leviathan (A Modernized Version)* (Hackett)

Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* (Hackett)

Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (Broadview)

Montesquieu, *Persian Letters* (Oxford)

Rousseau, *The Basic Political Writings*, 2nd edition, (Hackett)

Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, 2nd edition (Oxford)

Marx, *Marx-Engels Reader* (Norton)

Jan 11	Introduction (Film)
Jan 16	MLK Day
Jan 18	Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , Hobbes's introduction, chs. 1, 7, 11-13
Jan 23	Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , chs. 14-16
Jan 25	Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , chs. 17-18, 20-21
Jan 30	Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , chs. 29-31
Feb 1	Locke, <i>Second Treatise</i> , chs. 1-5
Feb 6	Locke, <i>Second Treatise</i> , chs. 6-9
Feb 8	Locke, <i>Second Treatise</i> , chs. 11-19
Feb 13	Locke, <i>A Letter Concerning Toleration</i> (entire) and Appendix A
Feb 15	Locke, <i>A Letter Concerning Toleration</i> , Appendix C
Feb 20	First Midterm

- Feb 22 Montesquieu, *Persian Letters*, Preface, letters # 1-14, 18-24, 26-28, 30, 36, 48-52, 60, 62-9, 77-78
- Feb 27 Montesquieu, *Persian Letters*, letters # 81, 83, 90-2, 96, 99-103, 112-20, 135-150
- March 1 Rousseau, *Basic Political Writings*, (Discourse on Inequality), pp. 39-69 (read Rousseau's footnotes)
- March 6 Rousseau, *Basic Political Writings* (Discourse on Inequality), pp. 69-92 (and the footnotes)
- March 8 **First Paper Due**
- March 13 spring break
- March 15 spring break
- March 20 Rousseau, *Basic Political Writings* (Social Contract), pp. 156-191
- March 22 Rousseau, *Basic Political Writings* (Social Contract), pp. 192-228, 241-252
- March 27 Benjamin Constant, "The Liberty of the Ancients Compared with that of the Moderns" (sakai)
- David Hume, "Of the Original Contract" (sakai)
- March 29 **Second Midterm**
- April 3 Mill, *On Liberty*, chs. 1-3
- April 5 Mill, *On Liberty*, chs. 4-5
- April 10 Mill, *On the Subjection of Women*, chs. 1-2
- April 12 Film: *Modern Times*; **Second paper due** (at the beginning of lecture)
- April 17 Marx, *Marx-Engels Reader*, pp. 473-500, 367-376
- April 19 Marx, *Marx-Engels Reader*, 70-105
- April 24 Marx, *Marx-Engels Reader*, 147-175, 186-188
- April 26 Review and Conclusion
- May 4 **Final exam**, 12noon to 1:30pm