

Politics 203 -- Themes in Political Theory

Smullin 216, MWF 10:20-11:20

Prof. David Gutterman

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Office Hours: T 2-3:30, F 1-2:00, Smullin 318, x6716

Course Description

This course considers critical themes in the history of Western political philosophy. We will examine such topics as the creation of social and political orders, justice and citizenship, truth and the performance of politics, and obligation, order and political crisis. One theme we will be addressing throughout the semester is the manner in which political theorists and other writers have addressed concerns about human limitations. Throughout, we will explore the interplay between such themes and contemporary political issues.

Course Readings

The following texts are required and can be purchased at the Willamette Bookstore. (If you would like to purchase the texts elsewhere, please be sure to acquire the editions I have selected for this class.)

1. Sophocles, The Theban Plays. (Penguin Classics, 2000).
2. Plato, The Last Days of Socrates. (Penguin Classics, 1979).
3. Machiavelli, The Prince. (Norton, 1992).
4. Plato, Symposium. (Hackett, 1989).
5. Rousseau, On the Social Contract, (St. Martin's, 1978).
6. Marx and Engels, The Communist Manifesto. (Norton, 1988).
7. Kurt Vonnegut, Cat's Cradle. (Penguin, 1963).

There will also be readings available online and on reserve.

Course Requirements

Success in this course will require commitment and dedication on your part. If you are not able to make this commitment, I strongly urge you to reconsider taking this course at this time.

The reading assignments for this course are rigorous and challenging. You are required to *thoughtfully* read every assignment. When I say that you are required to read, I do not mean that you should mechanically scan every page, but that you should *grapple with the ideas*. Mark up your text, read with a pen and paper, and write down ideas, questions, quotations, and points of confusion or contention. *Read for comprehension rather than completion, pondering every idea rather than looking at every word*. This means that you may need to read a section, think about it, read it again, write about it, discuss it, and then read it again. So, "do the reading" means "engage yourself with the ideas of the texts."

The reading load will be quite heavy at times. To stay afloat, plan for a sufficient amount of time to complete the assignment, and read aggressively. Remember to make use of your resources. Come to my office hours and form reading groups with your classmates.

Reading in this way will assist you in the second requirement: Your regular attendance, careful preparation, and active participation are essential. Unexcused absences from class will have serious and significant detrimental effects on your final grade. **Come**

prepared to participate by doing the reading, reflecting upon the course material, and bringing to class issues, questions, and passages for discussion. Moreover, class participation does not simply entail speaking, but also listening in an engaged and respectful manner to the thoughts of your classmates.

In addition to class participation there will be four exams covering the four major themes we will be exploring in this course.

Grading

Exam #1, 25%.

Exam #2, 25%.

Exam #3, 30%

Class Participation, 20%

** Note: A penalty of 1/3 grade per day will be imposed on assignments submitted late (one day's lateness would reduce a B+ to a B). I generally do not grant extensions, but if *extraordinary* circumstances arise, please consult with me as soon as possible -- and certainly prior to the due date of the paper.

*** Of Special Note: I take plagiarism very seriously. Plagiarism takes many forms, but the common denominator is presenting someone else's words or ideas as your own. Students found guilty of plagiarism will receive a zero for the assignment AND WILL BE REPORTED TO THE DEAN.

Statement Concerning Disabilities

Students with documented disabilities who may need accommodations, who have any emergency medical information the instructor should know of, or who need special arrangements in the event of evacuation, should make an appointment with the instructor as early as possible, no later than the first week of the term.

Schedule of Events

(Note: The schedule is subject to change.)

- 1) M1/19: Syllabus
- 2) W 1/21: Isaiah Berlin, "The Purpose of Philosophy" (on reserve).

Theme 1: Creating a Polity

- 3) F 1/23: Kurt Vonnegut, Cat's Cradle.
- 4) M 1/26: Kurt Vonnegut, Cat's Cradle.
- 5) W 1/28: Kurt Vonnegut, Cat's Cradle.
- 6) F 1/30: Exodus 19-24; 31-33.
- 7) M 2/2: Exodus 19-24; 31-33.
- 8) W 2/4: Aristotle, Politics, Book 7, <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/politics.7.seven.html>.
- 9) F 2/6: Aristotle, Politics, Book 1, <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/politics.1.one.html>.

- 10) M 2/9: Aristotle, Politics, Book 2, <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/politics.2.two.html>.
- 11) W 2/11: Aristotle, Politics, Book 3, <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/politics.3.three.html>.
- 12) F 2/13: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, On the Social Contract, Book 1.
- 13) M 2/16: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, On the Social Contract, Book 1.
- 14) W 2/18: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, On the Social Contract, Book 2.
- 15) F 2/20: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, On the Social Contract, Book 4.
- 16) M 2/23: **EXAM #1, Part 1**
- 17) W 2/25: **EXAM #1, Part 2**

Theme 2. On Justice and Citizenship

- 18) F2/27: Sophocles, *Antigone*.
- 19) M 3/2: Sophocles, *Antigone*.
- 20) W 3/4: Plato, *Apology of Socrates*.
- 21) F 3/6: Plato, *Apology of Socrates*.
- 22) M 3/9: Plato, *Crito*.
- 23) W 3/11: Judith Sargent Stevens Murray (Constantia), "On the Equality of the Sexes" (on reserve).
 Angelina Grimke, "Letter to Catherine E. Beecher" (on reserve).
 Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *The Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions*, <http://www.pinn.net/~sunshine/book-sum/seneca3.html>.
- 24) F 3/13: Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*.
- 25) M 3/16: Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*.
- 26) W 3/18: Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*.
- 27) F 3/20: **No Class, Conference in Vancouver, BC.**
- 28) M 3/23: **Spring Break**
- 29) W 3/25: **Spring Break**
- 30) F 3/27: **Spring Break**
- 31) M 3/30: Carey McWilliams, "Values and Politics" (on reserve).
 Wendell Berry, "Faustian Economics: Hell Hath No Limits," *Harper's Magazine*, May 2008, <http://harpers.org/archive/2008/05/0082022>.
- 32) W 4/1: **EXAM 2, Part 1**
- 33) F 4/3: **Exam 2, Part 2.**

Theme 3. Love, Passion, and Politics

- 34) M 4/6: Plato, Symposium.
- 35) W 4/8: Plato, Symposium.
- 36) F 4/10: Plato, Symposium.
- 37) M 4/13: The Gospel According to Matthew, 4-7, 22:34-40.
- 38) W 4/15: SSRD
- 39) F 4/17: The Gospel According to Matthew, 4-7, 22:34-40.
- 40) M 4/20: Niccolo Machiavelli, The Prince.
- 41) W 4/22: Niccolo Machiavelli, The Prince.
- 42) F 4/24: Niccolo Machiavelli, The Prince.
- 43) M 4/27: Niccolo Machiavelli, The Prince.

- 44) W 4/29: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. "Letter from Birmingham City Jail."
http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/popular_requests/frequentdocs/birmingham.pdf

- 45) F 5/1: Martha Nussbaum, "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism." For Love of Country
(on reserve).

- 46) M 5/4: Gertrude Himmelfarb, "The Illusions of Cosmopolitanism" (on reserve).
Robert Pinsky, "Eros Against Esperanto" (on reserve).
Elaine Scarry, "The Difficulty of Imagining Other People" (on reserve).

FINAL EXAM: Saturday, May 9th, 8-11:00 AM.