

## MODERN POLITICAL THOUGHT

Instructor: Dr. Neil Roberts  
Williams College  
Tu/Thurs, 11:20-12:35 PM  
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Fall 2010  
PSCI232.01/PHIL232.01  
Office hours: Tu, 1:30-3:30 PM  
Hollander Hall 213, x4772

### **Course description:**

This course invites you to think about some of the core questions taken up by major figures in early modern, modern, and late modern political thought. We will focus in particular on the concepts of freedom, equality, order, and the state. Beginning with a brief glimpse of the revival of classical republicanism during the Renaissance and early modern period, we will proceed to key texts in the liberal and contractarian traditions, Renaissance, Enlightenment and counter-Enlightenment republican thought, liberal Utilitarian perspectives, classical Marxism, and finally to late modern creolizations of the aforementioned political tendencies. The thinkers we will read in this course include Niccolò Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, Baruch Spinoza, John Locke, David Hume, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, Publius, Mary Wollstonecraft, John Stuart Mill, G.W.F. Hegel, Karl Marx, Emma Goldman, Rosa Luxemburg, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Mohandas Gandhi. We will often look at the contexts in which these thinkers wrote, and the political problems and events to which their writings are, in part, a response. We will also attend to the ways in which the theories apply to today's world.

### **Course requirements:**

Participants are expected to attend class regularly and complete readings for class listed on the syllabus. You must bring to every session the required reading for the day. I will generally begin each class summarizing briefly the previous session's main points, and shall proceed to lecture for a portion of time about the current day's topic. As this is a lecture and discussion course, you should be prepared to engage in class discourse and group activities.

The following requirements serve as the basis for course evaluation:

- (1) Attendance and Class participation (**15%**)
- (2) Two 5-7 -page essays (**40%**)
- (3) Six short E-response papers (**15%**)
- (4) One 10-12 page Final Paper (**30%**)

### **Required readings available for purchase:**

- David Wootton, ed., *Modern Political Thought: Readings from Machiavelli to Nietzsche* (Hackett 2008, \* Second Edition\*) = [R]
- Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Dover 1996)
- W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Bedford/St. Martin's 1997)
- *Course Reading Packet* (available from campus printing services) = [CP]

**Recommended readings available for purchase:**

- Mohandas Gandhi, *'Hind Swaraj' and Other Writings* (Cambridge 2009, Centenary Second Edition)

All other readings are available via Glow and/or through JSTOR. Additionally, the required and recommended books are also obtainable on the Sawyer Library course reserves.

**Films and TV Sitcom Screenings:**

- *Lost* (Season One)
- John Ford (Director): *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*

**Course policies:****Attendance:**

It is paramount for you to attend the sessions in order for all of us to best be able to discuss and decipher the course materials and lectures. Attendance will be taken each class period and you will be required to attend the entire class session to receive full credit. In case of sickness or other legitimate reason for absence, it is your responsibility to inform Prof. Roberts in advance or as soon as possible after the class. Every absence after two instructor excused absences will result in the reduction of your overall grade by a third of a letter grade (e.g. an A becomes an A-, a B+ becomes a B, etc.). To earn full attendance credit, you must come to class prepared to discuss the readings assigned for that session and with the necessary materials, required books, articles, paper, and writing utensil.

**Reading Responses:**

Students are required to submit a reading response to at least one reading per designated week on the course Glow site. I shall provide questions to which you may base your reply. This response is intended both to help prepare you for class discussion and to process your opinions on the readings in relation to the feedback of your peers. ***All responses are due by 10:00am the morning of class on either Tuesday or Thursday.*** Only responses posted by this time will count for the week's reading and participation. *Reading responses cannot be made up.* The response should be between at least 200-250 words and should analyze or evaluate the readings. I will monitor the discussion regularly, but not participate. In addition to answering the guidepost questions, feel free to use the online space to respond to comments posted by your peers. No reading responses shall be due in weeks that you submit the final version of a larger writing requirement.

**How to Post Reading Responses to Glow:**

- 1) Go to <http://glow.williams.edu> and log in with your username and password.

- 2) Click on this course and then the specific Discussion Forum listed by the Week for which you will be posting a response.
- 3) Click on Add a New Discussion Topic and enter your response, making sure to include a Subject heading for your post.
- 4) Click Post to Forum.

*Schedule of readings by week:*

**PART I: MODERNITY, REPUBLICANISM, AND THE  
MACHIAVELLIAN MOMENT**

**Week 1:**

Session 1: September 8

Jane Bennett, "Modernity and Its Critics" [CP]

**Week 2:**

Session 2: September 14

Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* (entire) [R]

Session 3: September 16

Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy* (selections) [R]

Philip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government*, Ch. 1 [CP]

- Reading response paper due via Glow

**PART II: THE SOCIAL CONTRACT TRADITION AND ITS CRITICS**

**Week 3:**

Session 4: September 21

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* [R]

Session 5: September 23

Hobbes, *Leviathan* [R]

- Reading response paper due via Glow

**Week 4:**

Session 6: September 28

Hobbes, *Leviathan* [R]

Session 7: September 30

John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* [R]

**Week 5:**

- **This week: screening of episodes from *Lost***

Session 8: October 5

Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* [R]

Session 9: October 7

Baruch Spinoza, *Theologico-Political Treatise* (selections) [CP]

David Hume, "Of the Original Contract" [R]

- **\*PAPER 1 (BENNETT THROUGH LOCKE/LOST) DUE FRI. OCT. 8, 5:00PM**

**Week 6:**

October 12: **Reading Day, No Class**

Session 10: October 14

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men* [R]

**Week 7:**

- **This week: screening of *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance***

Session 11: October 19

Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality* [R]

Rousseau, *Of the Social Contract* [R]

Session 12: October 21

Rousseau, *Of the Social Contract* [R]

- Reading response paper due via Glow

**Week 8:**

Session 13: October 26

Immanuel Kant, “An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?” [R]  
Kant, “On the Proverb: That May be True in Theory, But Is of No Practical Use” [CP]

Session 14: October 28

Kant, *To Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch* [CP]

**PART III: NEGOTIATING FREEDOM, EQUALITY, ORDER, AND THE STATE**

**Week 9:**

Session 15: November 2

John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* [R]

Session 16: November 4

Mill, *On Liberty* [R]  
Publius, *The Federalist*, No. 10 & No. 51” [R]

- Reading response paper due via Glow

**Week 10:**

Session 17: November 9

Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*

Session 18: November 11

- **Dr. Robin D.G. Kelley Public Lecture (8:00pm/location & title TBA)**

Karl Marx, *On the Jewish Question* [R]  
Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach* [R]

- Reading response paper due via Glow

**Week 11:**

Session 19: November 16

G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, ¶s 178-196 [CP]

Marx, "Alienated Labor," in *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* [R]

Session 20: November 18

Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (entire) [R]

Marx, *Capital (Vol. I)*, Ch. 1, sec. 4

- **\*PAPER 2 (ROUSSEAU THROUGH HEGEL/MARX SESSION 19) DUE FRI. NOV. 19, 5:00PM**

### **Week 12:**

Session 21: November 23

- In-class film screening and discussion (TBA)
- *No reading for today*

November 25: **\*Thanksgiving, No class\***

## **PART IV: LATE MODERN CREOLIZATIONS OF POLITICAL THOUGHT**

### **Week 13:**

- **Final paper questions distributed**

Session 22: November 30

Emma Goldman, "Victims of Morality" [CP]

Rosa Luxemburg, *Mass Strike, Party and Trade Unions* [selections in CP & available also at: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1906/mass-strike/index.htm>].

Session 23: December 2

W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Conservation of Races"

Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*

- Last reading response paper due via Glow

### **Week 14:**

Session 24: December 7

Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*

Mohandas Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj* [CP & in recommended text]

Enrique Dussel, “The ‘World System’: Europe as ‘Center’ and Its ‘Periphery’ beyond Eurocentrism” [CP]

Session 25: December 9

Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*

- Reading Period: December 11-14; Final Exam Period: December 15-20
- **\*Final Paper (Marx Session 20 through Gandhi) due to Prof. Roberts: Friday December 17 by 12:00noon\* (Hardcopy, Hollander Hall Room 213 & E-version)**