

University of Montana
Department of Political Science

PSC 250E
Spring 2017
MWF 9-9:50am

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Corbin 345

Introduction to Political Theory

Course Description:

Introduction to Political Theory (PSC 250E) familiarizes students with the basic concepts and issues that preoccupy the political theorist, including the origins of government and society, the nature of justice, and the meaning of political legitimacy. We will begin by considering the tension between politics and philosophy and continue with an examination of the major political thinkers from Plato to Marx, who have influenced the way we think about human nature, justice, the good life, government, freedom, citizenship, etc. We will conclude with the "end of political theory" debate.

At the outset, let us consider some basic questions about the relationship between political philosophy and ideology. First, is there a political theory that is not an ideology, or a theorist that is not an ideologue? If ideology is not the same as political philosophy or as good (as Plato suggests), then how does one avoid being labeled an ideologue? Lastly, what does it mean to you when someone says: "today it is no longer possible to construct a genuine political philosophy"?

Course Objectives: upon successfully completing the course work, the student should be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the political and ethical standards associated with classical and modern thinkers, including Plato, Aristotle, Locke, Burke and Marx.
2. Identify major themes and ideas associated with the ideologies of liberalism, classical and reform liberalism, utilitarianism, conservatism, feminism, Marxism, as well as contemporary variations such as neo-Marxism.
3. Provide an interpretative, critical essay on a dystopian novel, examining how the ethical ideals of Plato are embraced, perverted and/or negated. (See attached Paper Guideline.)

Texts:

R. Grey (editor) **POLITICAL THEORY & THE HUMAN PREDICAMENT: AN INTRODUCTION TO MAJOR POLITICAL THINKERS**, San Diego: Cognella Publishing, 2013 (ISBN 978-1-62131-525-4); can be purchased on-line at: <https://students.universityreaders.com/store/>.

George Orwell, **1984** (any edition)

Grading:

The work of the course consists of reading all assignments, participating by raising questions and attending lectures —students who ask questions usually have good lecture notes, completing the scheduled *two-part midterm* (30% of course grade), and the *final* (35% of course grade.) In addition, each student must complete on time **an analytical essay** of Orwell, *1984* (35% of course grade.)* Please see attached for instructions on the *1984* paper. Late papers will receive a grade reduction for every day it's late.

Academic Misconduct

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or disciplinary sanction by the University of Montana. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code, which is available for review online at: <http://life.umt.edu/VPSA/name/StudentConductCode>.

Accessibility and Students with Disabilities

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction by supporting collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students. If you have a disability that requires accommodation, please present the instructor with a letter from Disability Services for Students (DDS), Lommasson Center 154 (243-2243), indicating the existence of a disability and suggested accommodations.

The instructor has attempted to make all course materials accessible. If you find course material that has barriers to accessibility, please notify the instructor as soon as possible so the oversight can be corrected as quickly as possible.

Tentative Course Schedule:

- 1/23- Introduction to the Course & Political Theory
1/25 Read: *Political Theory & the Human Predicament*: Introduction & Chapter I, Plato, *The Apology*
- 1/27- Plato's Socrates: Who is the just individual?
1/30 Read: Chapter II: Plato, *The Republic*, Books I- II
- 2/1- Plato's Organic Theory of the State
2/3 Read: Chapter 2: Plato, *The Republic*, Books II-IV
- 2/6- Utopianism: Plato's Ideal State & Perfect Justice: Community of Wives
2/8 Children, and Property
Read: Chapter 2: Plato, *The Republic*, Book III, V, VII
Recommend: Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*
- 2/10- Possibility of the Ideal State: the Ship & Cave Allegories
2/13 Read: Chapter II, Plato, *The Republic*, Book VI, VII
- 2/15 Decline of the Ideal State
Read: Chapter 2, Plato, *The Republic*, Books VIII (pp. 96-104)
- 2/17 Plato v. Aristotle
Read: Chapter 3: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book II (pp. 123-130)
- ***** *Monday February 20th, President's Day Holiday. . .no class* *****
- 2/22 Review & Discussion of Plato
- ***** **Friday, February 24th Midterm Part I: Plato's Republic** *****

- 2/27 Aristotle: Politics As Science
Read: Chapter 3: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book I (pp. 113-123)
- 3/1 Aristotle's Biological Analysis: Family, Village, Polis
Read: Chapter 3: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book II; Book III (pp. 130-135)
- 3/3-3/6 Aristotle's Classification of Constitutions & the Best Practical State
Read: Chapter 3: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book III (pp. 135-155)
- 3/8-3/10 Aristotle on Revolution
Read: Chapter 3: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book V (pp. 155-166)
- 3/13 Review & Discuss Aristotle

******* Monday March 15th Midterm Part II: Aristotle's Politics *******

- 3/17 Machiavelli: Political Realist or Idealist?
Read: Chapter 4: Machiavelli, *The Prince*

******* March 18th to March 26th ***** Spring Break *****
 ++Reading Orwell, 1984**

- 3/27-3/29 Hobbes, Locke: the State of Nature & Social Contract Theory
Read: Chapter 5: Hobbes, *Leviathan*; Chapter 6: Locke, *Two Treatises on Government* (pp. 229-235; pp. 240-251)
- 3/31 Classical Liberalism: Locke & Revolution
Read: Chapter 6: Locke, *Two Treatises*, (pp. 252-263)
- 4/3 Locke & Property Rights (pp. 235-240)
Read: Chapter 6: Locke, *Two Treatises*
- 4/5 Classical Liberalism: Hume, Smith & "the Automatic Social Mechanism" of the Free Market
Read: Chapter 7: Hume & Smith; Chapter 8
- 4/7 Discussion of 1985 analytical essay
- 4/10 Utilitarianism: Bentham, James Mill & John Stuart Mill
Read: Chapter 11: Bentham, *Principles of Morals*

***** 1984 Essay Due Monday, April 10th *** See last page of syllabus *******

- 4/12 John Stuart Mill & Reform Liberalism
Read: Chapter 12 J.S. Mill, *On Liberty* (pp. 453-482)
- 4/14-4/17 Edmund Burke & the Critique of Political Idealism
Read: Chapter 9: Burke, *Reflections*
- 4/19-4/21 Anti-Feminist Thought v Feminist Political Theory: Mary Wollstonecraft & J.S. Mill

Read: Chapter 3: Aristotle, *History of Animals*, Book IX (pp. 164-165); Chapter 10: Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men & A Vindication of the Rights of Women*; Chapter 12: J.S. Mill, *The Subjection of Women* (pp. 482-498)

- 4/21- Marx's Critique of Liberalism & Conservatism
4/26 Read: Chapter 13: Marx, *Economic & Philosophical Manuscript* (pp. 509-515)
- 4/28 Marx & the "Earthquake Theory" of Revolution
Read: Chapter 13: Marx, *The Communist Manifesto* (pp. 515-544)
- 5/1 Neo-Marxism: the Orthodox School vs. Revisionists
Recommend: Bernstein's *Evolutionary Socialism* (1899); Karl Kautsky, *The Class Struggle* (1899); Rosa Luxemburg, selections from *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks* (1970); Lenin's *Imperialism* (1917)
- 5/3 End of Political Theory?
Recommend: Bell, *The End of Ideology* (1962) & Fukuyama, *End of History* (1992)
- 5/5 Review for Comprehensive Final
Read: Lecture notes & review selected readings.

- **** **Final is Friday May 12th at 10:10 am-12:10pm in LA11** *****

Guidelines for Essay

"1984: Politics & Society in the Year 2020?"
(35% of course grade)

I. Purpose

Objective: Provide an **analytical essay** comparing and contrasting the ideas/themes found in *1984* with the political theories we have covered in the course. An interpretive essay is not a book review or an editorial. A critical essay supports its analysis with direct references to the novel, showing the extent Orwell borrows, satirizes, and/or negates the ideas of other western political thinkers.

II. Content

Description & Thesis (10% of essay value)
We do not want more than a cursory attempt at describing the content of Orwell's *1984*. Assume that the reader is familiar with the plot of the book. (No more than one paragraph.)

III. Analysis (70% of essay value)

This part of the paper should constitute the major portion of your work. Look for the ideas that Orwell draws upon in terms of the ideologies covered in the class. Can you, for instance, identify radical, conservative, and/or liberal ideas in his model community? (i.e. what extend does Orwell borrow from Plato's notion of justice?)

Or you *might* examine his underlying assumptions about human nature, "male" & "female" natures. Is there a class, caste, or elites in this society? What is the role of their political leaders (what legitimizes their authority). Explain. What is the character of the economic system and the nature of social relationships in Orwell's dystopia? What is the value system of the "Oceania" society? Consider, for instance,

the political socialization process of the inhabitants: what they are taught, if anything, regarding gender roles, history, community etc.

IV. *Conclusion*: (20% essay value)

Finally, does Orwell's vision of a dystopia state offer us a unique contribution to political philosophy or is it merely a hybrid of political theories we have studied in class? Explain

V. *Format*

a. **Quotations**

All quotations or paraphrasing in your work from any material must be enclosed in quotation marks and properly cited as to their origin. See a writing manual for consistent format. **Plagiarism:** *Representing another person's words, ideas, data, or materials as one's own* is a violation of the university code of conduct and will result in a grade of F on the paper, please see:

<http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/documents/StudentConductCode>

c. **Bibliography**

You should include a complete bibliography for all outside books used for this paper. Chicago style preferred.

d. **Editing:**

Be sure to edit and proof your final copy! Points will be deducted for grammatical and spelling errors.

Please attach grading sheet (next page)

Please Attach To Your Paper
PSC250E: Introduction to Political Theory
Spring 2016

Description & Thesis – 10% (3.5 points) _____

- Clear and coherent thesis statement
- Relevant to materials presented in lectures and throughout course materials

Analysis – 55% (20 points) _____

- Strong supporting evidence of the thesis
- Relevant information is clearly presented
- Fully developed arguments
- Credit is given to outside sources, where appropriate

Conclusion - 30% (7.5 points) _____

- Conclusion: a clear restatement of the answer to the central question

Format, Mechanics & Bibliography - 5% (4 pts) _____

- Format: 5-6 typed, double-spaced pages, 10-12 point font
- Grammar: Neatness, spelling, grammar, punctuation, and organization
- Bibliography: Follows Chicago/Turabian citation style guidelines

TOTAL: (35 points) _____

Additional Comments:
