

Contemporary Political Thought

POLS 3100H
Spring 2004
University of Georgia

T/Th 11-12:15
Moore College, Rm 309

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Course Description:

What is politics? What is justice? How should our social and political institutions be arranged? Who should rule and what should they do? What sort of arguments are proper to political debates? Should we think of ourselves as individuals or part of constitutive communities? What does feminism mean? Should the state define and enforce private and public virtue?

These are just a few of the questions that we will explore over the course of the semester as we survey the main currents of contemporary political thought. Our survey is not meant to be comprehensive and we will necessarily only touch on a number of important issues. But it should be enough to make you familiar with many of the arguments and views expressed both within the academy and in the public at large.

Course Requirements:

This will be, I expect, a challenging class for most of you. The readings are not particularly easy and some weeks they're quite long as well. I'll mostly lecture as a way of explicating the readings, but you should come to class having read the day's assignment and ready to ask questions. You will be assigned two papers to write during the course of the semester, each about five to seven pages in length and each worth 30% of your final grade. You will have one week to write the papers. The final exam will be an in-class exam that covers the entire semester and will be worth 40% of your final grade.

Readings

The following texts are available for purchase at the UGA Bookstore, though you can find them cheaper at a number of on-line bookstores. (Try amazon.com, abebooks.com, alibris.com, and half.com for some good deals).

Smart, J.J.C and Bernard Williams, *Utilitarianism; for and against* (Cambridge, 1973).
Rawls, John, *Political Liberalism* (Columbia, 1996).
McIntyre, Alasdair, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame 1981).
Nietzsche, Friedrich, *On the Genealogy of Morals*

In addition, there will be two course-packs you may purchase at Bel-Jean copies. The readings for before Spring Break are available now and are marked in the schedule below with an asterisk (*). The readings for after Spring Break will be available later and are marked with a double asterisk (**). All of these texts are on reserve at the main library as well.

Though certainly not required for the class, you might find Will Kymlicka's *Contemporary Political Philosophy: an Introduction* useful as a reference guide. There are lots of resources on the web as well. Take a look at www.political-theory.org, www.politicaltheory.info, or Stanford's Encyclopedia on the Web for starters.

Course Schedule

Jan. 8: Introduction

Section I: Liberalism

Jan 13/15: Utilitarianism

Smart and Williams, *Utilitarianism*, pp. 3-57, 62-73, 77-150

Jan 20/22: Comprehensive Liberalism

* Rawls, John, *A Theory of Justice*, ch. 1, sections 1-4; ch. 2, sections 10-11; ch. 3, sections 24 and 26.

* Sandel, Michael, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge, 1982), chapter 1 (pp. 15-65).

Jan 27/29/ Feb 3: Political Liberalism

Larmore, Charles, "Political Liberalism" *Political Theory*, 1990, 18 (3):361-91. (Available via GALILEO)

Rawls, John, *Political Liberalism* (Columbia, 1996), Introduction to the paperback edition; Lecture I, sections 1, 2, 3, and 6; Lecture II, sections 1-3; Lecture IV, sections 1-7; Lecture VI (all).

NO CLASS FEB 5

Feb 10/12: Libertarianism

* Nozick, Robert, *Anarchy, State, Utopia*, pp. 10-53, 149-164, 183-205

First paper assignments handed out Feb 12.

Section II: the Challenge from Community

Feb 17/19: Civic Republicanism

* Sandel, Michael, *Democracy's Discontent* (Harvard, 1996), chs. 1 and 2.

First papers due on Feb 19.

Feb 24/26: Communitarianism

McIntyre, *After Virtue*, chs. 1, 4-6, 9, 12, 14-18.

Mar 2/4: Radical Democratic

* Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy* (California, 1987), pp. 3-25, 117-138.

* Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice* (Basic, 1983), chs. 1, 12.

Mar 9/11: No Class (Spring Break)

Section III: Critique

Mar 16/18/23: Feminism

** Okin, Susan Moller, *Justice, Gender and the Family*, pp. 3-24, 41-73, 89-109, 170-186.

** MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*, pp. 157-170, 195-214, 237-249.

** Elshtain, TBD or Fox-Genovese

Mar 25: NO CLASS

Mar 30/Apr 1: Postmodernism

Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* (all)

Apr 6/8: Multiculturalism

** Taylor, Charles, "The Politics of Recognition" in *Multiculturalism*, ed. Amy Gutmann

** Kymlicka, William, *Multicultural Citizenship*, pp. 75-106, 152-172
Paper #2 assignment handed out Apr 8.

Section IV: Conservative Political Thought

Apr 13/15: Conservatism

** Kekes, John, *The Case for Conservatism* (Cornell, 1998), pp. 5-47
** George, Robert F., *Making Men Moral* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 48-82, 189-229.
Paper #2 due on Apr 15.

Apr 20/22: Neo-Conservatism

** Neuhaus, Richard John and Peter Berger, "To Empower People: the Role of Mediating Structures in Public Policy"
** Kristol, Irving, "Pornography, Obscenity, and the Case for Censorship"
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Apr 27: Political Responsibility

** Vaclav Havel, "The Power of the Powerless"

May 4 (12:00 – 3:00 pm): FINAL EXAM