EUROPEAN POLITICAL THEORY: ROUSSEAU AND AFTER

How did political thought develop from the 18th to the mid-20th century? Does it still matter today? We will pay particular attention both to Enlightenment thought and to critiques of Enlightenment that emerge in this period; to questions about the meaning of politics and its relationship to history; to questions of freedom and political economy, among others.

We will start with the decline of absolutist theories of government and the development of liberalism as the dominant European political doctrine. We will trace this evolution through a close study of original writings of some major political theorists. The conservative reaction against liberalism and the later development of socialism (notably Marxism) as an alternative will also be examined. Then we will focus on how theorists saw Europe completing a transition towards a recognizably modern world: the growth of industrial capitalism with its class relations, technological developments, increased urbanization and secularism; the development of democratic government; and the crisis of reason and the rise of social sciences as a way to study the new social problems spawned by modern society.

Works to be studied include those of Rousseau, Burke, J.S. Mill, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, de Beauvoir, Arendt, and Foucault.

The following books are required reading and are available from the Bookstore.


It is important that you buy your own copies of these works, preferably the editions stated. Additional required readings will be available on Blackboard. You must make your own copies of required readings, as these will form the basis for class discussion and we will frequently be examining passages in detail. Readings must always be completed prior to each class, and you must bring your copy to class.
REQUIREMENTS

Written assignments

Written work for this class will consist of A SHORT PAPER, for which questions will be provided, a take-home mid-term exam, and a longer final paper on a topic of your own choice.

1) The short paper will be 4-5 pages in length, and will count for 10% of the final grade. It must be handed in on:

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 18, BY NOON

2) The mid-term take-home exam will count for 25% of the final grade. It will be distributed on 18 MARCH, in class. It will be due on 20 MARCH, at start of class period.

3) The final paper will be 10-12 pages in length, and will count for 30% of the final grade. A title and a one-page proposal are to be handed in on APRIL 7 IN CLASS (Note: this is a required assignment. The completed paper is to be handed in on the exam date for the class).

ATTENDANCE, PREPARATION, AND PARTICIPATION

20% of the grade will be determined by class attendance, preparation, and participation. Full and punctual attendance is required, and any necessary absence (e.g. for medical reasons) must be excused ahead of the class you will miss. (You can contact me in person, by phone, or by campus mail). NOTE: TWO OR MORE UNEXCUSED ABSENCES, OR LATE ARRIVALS, WILL RESULT IN A SIGNIFICANT LOWERING OF YOUR FINAL GRADE, possibly by more than 20%. You are also expected to remain in the classroom for the entire class period: it is highly disruptive for everyone when students come and go from the room during class.

15% of the grade will be allotted for responses. You will be required to write one-paragraph responses to each of these questions, and to POST YOUR RESPONSES ON BLACKBOARD AT LEAST TWO HOURS PRIOR TO CLASS. You will also be expected to use your responses as a basis for introducing the discussion when called upon, and to participate actively in class debate. Late postings will not be accepted unless you have an excused absence.

It is essential that you do the day's reading assignment before each class. Questions will frequently be provided for you to think about as you do the readings. The quality of your oral contributions to the class will also count toward the grade. Good oral participation involves quality as well as quantity. Quality includes your ability to listen to others and thoughtfully to respond to what they say, your ability to develop logical arguments, and to engage in reasoned debate.
WHAT I EXPECT OF YOU:

1. First, I would like to see you talking to each other and responding to different claims that are made in class. Sometimes I want you to challenge your peers and other times to build on an idea or insight that was articulated in class.
2. Second, I would like you to experience the novelty of your ideas when you bring them to class. I want to see you that you discover things in class and not only re-iterate what you already know. For that, you need to let yourself talk and even make mistakes.
3. You should treat these texts as invitations to discussions. I will lecture when I feel that would be appropriate but I would like you to grapple with the texts.

WHAT YOU SHOULD EXPECT OF ME:

1. You should expect me to give you lectures when concepts are difficult to understand. Also, you should expect me to offer guidance about the topics of the class and how to interpret texts
2. Regular office hours; I provide feedback on assignments, but I may be a bit slower than you want me to be.

GRADING:

Short Paper 10%
Responses 15%
Mid-term Exam 25%
Participation 20%
Final Essay 30%, or else a COURSE REFLECTION: Did this course change your ideas about a particular political question? If so, how? How has your response changed during the course of the semester?

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND REQUIRED READING ASSIGNMENTS

3 Feb General Introduction
5 Feb Early Social Contract Theory (Hobbes and Locke); Hobbes, ”Leviathan” (selections); Locke, Second Treatise, Chapter VII (“Of Political or Civil Society”) (on Blackboard).
10 Feb Rousseau, A Discourse on Inequality. Author’s Preface and whole Discourse. (On Blackboard)
12 Feb Rousseau, The Social Contract (Book I and II)
17 Feb Rousseau, The Social Contract (Book III and IV)
19 Feb The French Revolution and Burke. Selections from Burke, Reflections on the Revolution
in France (6-35; 185-195). (On Blackboard)

24 Feb. Joseph de Maistre from Considerations on France (on Blackboard)

FIRST PAPER DUE

26 Feb Introduction to J.S. Mill. Mill, On Liberty, Chapter 1

3 March Mill, On Liberty, Chapters II and III

5 March Mill, On Liberty, Chapters IV and V

10 March Overview of the emergence of socialism and Marxism. The Communist Manifesto (sections I and II, in Tucker)

12 March Marx, The German Ideology (selections in Tucker, 147-163; 172-175)

18 March REVIEW SESSION.

MID-TERM TAKE-HOME EXAM DISTRIBUTED AT END OF CLASS. MID TERM EXAM DUE AT BEGINNING OF CLASS PERIOD - NO LATE EXAMS!

20 March Marx, The Civil War in France, selections from Part III, in Tucker (629-637)

RECESS

March 31 Nietzsche; On the Genealogy of Morals, Nietzsche’s Preface; First Essay;

April 2 Nietzsche: Genealogy, Second Essay, pp. 57-96

April 7 Anarchism: Emma Goldman. Anarchism and Other Essays (selections on Blackboard).

ONE PAGE PAPER PROPOSAL

April 9 Freud: Civilization and Its Discontents, whole work

April 14 Freud. Civilization continued

April 16 Beauvoir: Feminism I; Introduction to The Second Sex (selections on Blackboard)
April 21  Beauvoir: Feminism II; The Second Sex (continued; selections on Blackboard)

April 23  Selections from Arendt, The Human Condition, pp. 7-17; 22-28; 38-49; 175-181; 320-325 (On Blackboard)


May 5     Discussion of papers

May 7     Final Review and Discussion

Final Paper DUE!