

Political Science 362
4 credits, no pre- or co-requisites
Winter 2009
Tues. & Thurs., 8-9:50am
STAG 412

Professor Valls
315 Gilkey Hall
Office Hours: Tues. & Thurs., 10-12
andrew.valls@oregonstate.edu

Modern Political Thought

In this course we cover the development of Western political thought from the aftermath of the Protestant Reformation to the Industrial Revolution, focusing on the most essential works of political theory of this period. We begin with what is arguably the founding document of modern political thought, Hobbes's *Leviathan*, written in the midst of the English Civil War. We then move to Locke's *Second Treatise*, the classic statement of modern liberalism that reflects the ideas behind the Glorious Revolution. Turning to the eighteenth century, we discuss Rousseau as both a product of the Enlightenment and a critic of the Enlightenment. From the nineteenth century we discuss Mill's reformulation of liberalism and his (qualified) defense of democracy. Finally, we close the course with a consideration of Marx's critique of liberal ideals and of the capitalist economic system.

Throughout the course we will use these historical works to think about some of the perennial issues of political theory: the basis of political obligation; the relation between the individual and the community; the nature of justice; the relation between morality and self-interest; human nature; and the best political regime, among others. The format of the course includes both lectures and discussion, and students are expected to read the assigned material before it is scheduled to be discussed in class. We will read primary texts, not secondary treatments, with an eye to understanding the philosophical arguments as well as their historical significance.

The aims of the course are essentially two. First, the student should become familiar with the material covered in the course. S/He should be able to discuss the material, both verbally and in writing, in an informed way. Second, the course will also emphasize the development of skills in critical reading, thinking, and effective communication. These are skills that are essential to liberal arts education, and will be essential to the student's future success, whatever her or his chosen profession or field.

Requirements:

Students will write three short papers and take a final exam. A paper on unit one of the course is required, but after that students may choose on which two of the following four units s/he will write a paper. The lowest paper grade will be dropped, and the remaining two paper grades and the grade on the final exam will be weighted equally in calculating the final course grade. The final exam will consist of quote identification and writing short paragraphs. The papers will be about 1000 words each, and will not require any research beyond the class readings. The papers should follow the Paper Guidelines, below. Papers are due in the political science department office, 307 Gilkey Hall, by 4pm on the dates indicated on the schedule, below. (The exception is the last paper, which is due in class on the last day that class meets.) Late papers will not be accepted.

Statement Regarding Students with Disabilities

Accommodations are collaborative efforts between students, faculty and Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). Students with accommodations approved through SSD are responsible for contacting the faculty member in charge of the course prior to or during the first week of the term to discuss accommodations. Students who believe they are eligible for accommodations but who have not yet obtained approval through SSD should contact SSD immediately at 737-4098.

Academic Integrity and Student Conduct:

Students are expected to abide by all OSU regulations regarding student conduct, especially those pertaining to academic honesty. You must properly cite any sources used in writing your papers (including internet sources) and work alone and without notes on the examination. Violations of academic honesty will result in failing the course, and will be reported to the proper university authorities for further action. For a description of Oregon State's policies on student conduct and academic honesty, see the website at: <http://oregonstate.edu/admin/stucon/index.htm>.

Electronic Devices in the Classroom:

All electronic devices are prohibited from the class. During class students are expected to turn off and put away all electronic devices including computers, cellphones, ipods, pagers, etc. The only exception that will be made is in cases where students provide documentation from the SSD office that s/he requires the use of a computer for note-taking.

Readings:

All books have been ordered through the bookstore. If you already own a copy of one or more of these texts you may use it instead, though it is preferable if everyone is using the same translation and edition.

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Penguin)

John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* (Hackett)

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Basic Political Writings* (Hackett)

John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays* (Oxford)

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Marx-Engels Reader* (Norton)

Paper Guidelines

All papers should be argumentative in nature. That is, they should present an issue, and then a thesis that is a position on that issue. The thesis then requires an argument to support it, and the body of the paper should present this argument. Papers should not merely summarize part of a text. Papers should follow the traditional structure of introduction, body, and conclusion.

Introduction:

The introduction for short papers should be a brief paragraph that establishes the context of the paper, states the topic of the paper, and states the thesis. The topic statement should be *italicized*, and the thesis should be in **bold**.

The topic statement should be a neutral statement of the issue or question that you will address in the paper. It does not state the position on the issue that you will defend, but merely states the issue itself. The topic statement should not merely be the first sentence of the paper, or a general descriptive statement that fails to specify a definite issue.

The thesis is a statement of the position on the issue that you will seek to defend. It is essentially the conclusion of the paper, stated at the outset. It should be non-obvious enough to require an argument, yet sufficiently narrow and modest so that it can be supported in a brief (though well crafted) argument.

Body:

The body of the paper should contain the argument and evidence that supports the thesis. The whole body of the paper should be devoted to advancing the argument of the paper. This is, the argument should not be left to the end of the body, with most of the paper being devoted to merely summarizing or describing. Any summary that takes place should be in the service of the argument being presented. The body should be composed of several paragraphs that flow naturally and that relate to the thesis of the paper. Appropriate evidence and citations should be provided. Any generally accepted method of citation may be used, as long as it is used consistently.

Conclusion:

The concluding paragraph should briefly summarize the argument and state the conclusion. The conclusion should be the same as the thesis presented at the outset of the paper.

Style:

The writing in the paper should be somewhat formal, as is appropriate for academic work. The following should, in general, be avoided: excessive first-person references; contractions; and colloquial expressions. Also, at the university level students should no longer be making many grammatical errors, such as: sentence fragments; run-on sentences; misusing apostrophes or failing to use them when required; and confusing "then" and "than", "their" and "there," etc. The paper

should be carefully proofread for any grammatical or spelling errors, as well as for style and clarity.

Format:

Papers should be typed and double-spaced, using normal fonts and margins. A word count should appear at the end of the paper.

Note: Any paper that does not indicate a topic and thesis statement, is not double-spaced, or that contains excessive grammatical errors will be returned to the student without being graded. A revised paper that satisfies these requirements will be due one week after the original paper due date, and a penalty of one-half of a letter grade will be assessed.

Evaluation of Papers

Reflecting the two objectives of the course, papers will be evaluated for both writing skills and substantive content. The following criteria constitute the rubric that will be used in grading the papers:

1. Follows the formal requirements of the assignment as stated in the Paper Guidelines
2. Appropriate topic and thesis statements
3. Organization/Development of Argument
4. Style/Grammar/Spelling
5. Effective use of textual (or other relevant) evidence
6. Understands issue and the argument of the author
7. Overall Assessment

Paper Grades

Grades will be assigned to papers in accordance with the following assessments:

A: very well-written; shows sophisticated understanding of the issue; makes a well developed argument that engages, and does not merely summarize the argument(s) in the text; excellent use of textual evidence

B: well-written; shows a good understanding of the material, but argument is not as strong as it could be; good use of textual evidence

C: a few writing errors or awkward or unclear phrases; reflects some misunderstanding of the issue or the position of the author; mostly summarizes rather than argues; use of textual evidence could be substantially improved

D: poorly written; shows poor understanding of the material; no use of textual evidence

F: fails to satisfy the minimum requirements of the assignment; very poorly written, and either

ignores or shows a lack of understanding of the text and the issues it raises

Schedule:

This schedule is tentative, and subject to change. Changes will be announced in class, and it is the student's responsibility to keep abreast of any such changes.

1. March 31: Course Introduction.

I. Hobbes

2. April 2: The State of Nature. Read *Leviathan*, chapter 13.

3. April 7: Getting Out of the State of Nature. Read *Leviathan*, chapters 14-16.

4. April 9: The Sovereign. Read *Leviathan*, chapters 17-19.

5. April 14: The Subjects. Read *Leviathan*, chapters 20-21.

April 15: Hobbes paper due (required).

II. Locke

6. April 16: The State of Nature. Read *Second Treatise*, Preface and chapters 1-5.

7. April 21: Leaving the State of Nature. Read *Second Treatise*, chapters 6-10.

8. April 23: The Commonwealth. Read *Second Treatise*, chapters 11-15.

9. April 28: The Right of Revolution. *Second Treatise*, chapters 16-19.

April 29: Locke paper due.

III. Rousseau

10. April 30: The State of Nature. Read *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, thru end of Part I (pp. 25-60).

11. May 5: The Descent into Modernity. Read *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, Part II.

12. May 7: The General Will. Read *Social Contract*, Books I-II.

13. May 12: The Institutions of Government. Read *Social Contract*, Books III-IV.

May 13: Rousseau paper due.

IV. Mill

14. May 14: The Argument for Democracy. Read *Considerations on Representative Government*, chapters 1-3.

15. May 19: Limitations on Democracy. Read *Considerations on Representative Government*, chapters 4-6.

16. May 21: Problems with Democracy. Read *Considerations on Representative Government*, chapters 7-8.

May 22: Mill paper due.

V. Marx

17. May 26: The Early Critique of Capitalist Society. Read *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, pp. 70-81 and 93-105.

18. May 28: The Materialist Theory of History. Read *The Germany Ideology: Part I*.

19. June 2: Scientific Socialism and the Revolutionary Program. Read *Manifesto of the Communist Party* and *Critique of the Gotha Program*.

20. June 4: Final Exam. Marx paper due at the beginning of class.