

POT 4601/5602 MASTERS OF POLITICAL THOUGHT
Fall 2009, Thursdays, 5:30-8:25 p.m., 51/152

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Office Hours:

(It is best if you make an appointment ahead of time by calling 474-2337.)

M & W, 12:30-2:30 p.m, 4:00-5:30 p.m.

F 1:30-5:30 p.m.

At the heart of political science is the study of the what, the how, and the why of government. *What* is government? What are its distinctive characteristics? What does it do that is different from what other institutions or organizations do? What is its “business,” its *raison d’être*? Are there things that only government can or should do, and are there other things that government cannot or should not do? Note the difference in meaning between the two parts of these questions, between the “can” and the “should.” The former has to do with a *fact*, it is descriptive; the latter has to do with *value*, it is prescriptive. One is the subject of social science, the other of morality or philosophy. Although our discipline goes by the name of political *science*, and we aim to live up to the expectation of the noun, striving to study government and politics objectively, with scrupulous attention to logic and evidence, we cannot avoid philosophical questions. For example, *should* government do *only* those things that *only* it *can* do? Or should it go further, and undertake activities that other organizations or institutions can do, too, alongside with them or replacing them altogether? (Think of the current debate over health care.)

To answer these questions, of course, we need to know what, at least, if there is anything that only government can do. This goes to the *why* we have government at all. Is government, like death, ultimately unavoidable, or can there be a society without government? What if there were no government? Would there be a society? If so, would people voluntarily cooperate to maintain the peace and security of that society?

Next, we might ask, *how* did government originate and how does it operate? How do different regimes differ in how they go about making and implementing decisions, i.e., in their politics? Does it make any significant difference for most people whether we live under a democracy or a dictatorship, in a monarchy, oligarchy, or democracy? Is there any one form of government that is clearly superior to all others in all times and places? Or does it depend on the condition of the people, their history, culture, and the geography of the land where they live? Is the regime simply a matter of historical, geographical or cultural accident or fate? Or do we have at least some choice in the matter?

Inquiring into these questions forces us to think about human nature. Is there such a thing as human nature, which implies a set of fixed attributes, including needs

and proclivities characteristic of human beings, which may lead us inexorably into establishing or imposing government? Are we “hard-wired” for government? What human needs might government fulfill? Or, returning to our original question, is government something that can be done without?

This course surveys what several masters of political thought have written about these questions over the last four centuries. The objectives of this course are that you think hard about the same topics they did, comparing and contrasting their ideas and observations, and using them as a foil against which to formulate your own thoughts and reflect on your own observations, contemporary or historical, about government and politics. Please note, though, that political science is an empirical (or practical) science. That is, the answers that we give to these questions must, at least in principle, be subject to the evidence. In other words, they have to conform to known facts, to direct or indirect observations, or to experience. All imaginary solutions to the problem of government that lack a historical approximation are suspect.

The format of the course is a mixture of lecture and discussion. *You are expected to come to class having read the assignment (and, if a graduate student, summarized it beforehand), and prepared to ask and answer questions and deliberate about it.*

Requirements

This course is dual-listed, admitting both undergraduate and graduate students. All will be graded according to two categories of work. One includes essays and the other encompasses Preparation and Contribution, or P&C.

Preparation & Contribution (P&C).

As noted earlier, you are expected to come to class having read the assignment. For every day you are in class you will earn 75 points, unless in response to my questions it is evident that you did not read the assignment (in which case you will earn only 60 points). You can earn additional points so as to bring the total up to 100, depending on the *quality* of your contributions. Talking a lot without saying anything meaningful won't earn you any points. (In fact, in such cases I would have to admonish you to restrain yourself.) By *quality*, I mean thoughtful questions or comments that go to the heart of the matter at hand, particularly those that give insight into one or another theory or identify parallels or contrasts among two or more theories. These contributions can be made in class or in the discussion forum available for the week.

The tests.

There will be an on-line test for every one of the first three theorists we take up—one each on Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau. See Schedule, below. This is a requirement of the undergraduate students only.

The essays.

The other graded category consists of essays. If you are an **undergraduate**, you will write two essays of 7-8 pages of text (typed double-spaced, in Georgia or Times New Roman #12 font, exclusive of title page, tables, figures, and bibliography), done according to the APSA Style Manual, a copy of which is available under the FOUNDATIONS module on the e-learning page for this course. The first essay will *compare* and *evaluate* key ideas in Hobbes' *Leviathan*, Locke's *Second Treatise* and **either** Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* **or** Rousseau's *Social Contract*. The second essay will compare and evaluate Marx & Engel's *Communist Manifesto* with Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom*, and offer some tentative thoughts of your own on the questions about government discussed in the first two pages of this Syllabus.

On the e-learning page for this course I will post a format for the essays. Be sure to abide by it. Again, all essays must follow the APSA Style Manual. Also, all summaries and essays are to be uploaded in the dropbox by the deadline specified in the syllabus. The dropbox will close at that time; there will be no late work accepted nor excuses allowed.

A note to graduate students. Please plan on staying in class until at least 8:45 p.m. I intend to dismiss the undergraduate students about 8:00 p.m. and devote about 45 minutes to you. I do this because during the first two hours of the class I will give preference to UG students when it comes to asking or answering questions. Also, we will meet separately on most days when the undergraduate students are taking tests, from which you are exempt. Also, you will write the same two essays as the undergraduates, only they will run 10-11 pages of text each, and you will write a third essay, due at the same time as the third. It goes without saying that not only the quantity of your work but its quality should be superior to that of an undergraduate student.

Writing

No one should graduate from UWF (or from any College, for that matter) who does not write well. That's one of the skills you come here to acquire or perfect, and it is part of my job to require that you work toward that goal. Accordingly, if you know that your writing is not up to par, you need to take drafts of your essays to the Writing Lab well before they are due. (If you're an undergraduate, an adequate rule of thumb for judging the quality of your writing is the grades you earned in Comp I and II. If it was less than a solid B in either course, you probably need to improve it. If you're a graduate student, an equivalent rule would be having earned less than 550 in the Verbal section of the GRE.) To make sure that you do, if I encounter a badly written essay I will assign a provisional grade of 0 and set a deadline by which you need to return it, having sought help from the Writing Lab. Moreover, I will check your Comp I and II grades (or the GRE score if you're a graduate student), and if you earned less than a B in either of them I will then take 10 points off what you actually earn in the second draft for not having taken it to the Writing Lab in the first place. Needless to say, you need to start

scheduling your appointments with the Writing Lab *right now*, and you need to start working on your essays at least a week in advance. If you wait until the last day, you probably won't be able to get an appointment and you will suffer the consequences.

Course Grade

Undergraduates. Each of the three tests is worth 10% of the grade. The two essays are weighted 25% each, and P&C counts 20%.

Graduate students. Each essay is worth 25% of the grade, as is P&C.

Texts

The following texts are available for purchase at the bookstore.

Thomas Hobbes, *The Leviathan*

John Locke, *The Second Treatise on Government*

J. J. Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*

J. J. Rousseau, *The Social Contract*

F. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*

Additionally, I will assign an on-line, freely downloadable edition of *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*, by K. Marx and F. Engels.

Although the volume of reading required in this course is not great, much of the material is difficult. It is *not* bedtime reading. You need to read it at a time of day when you are alert, and you will need to read it more than once.

Integrity

It goes without saying, but it bears repeating anyway, that anyone enrolled in this course makes a commitment to act with integrity. As the home page of the Department of Government puts it, this means “conducting ourselves honorably, conspicuously refraining from lying or cheating about our work. There can be no phony excuses for failing to complete an assignment, no turning in another’s work as one’s own, no plagiarism.” Anyone found to have plagiarized is subject to being assessed a penalty up to and including being assigned an F in the course and reported to university authorities for additional measures.

Regarding the last-named offense, here is UWF’s plagiarism policy: “The UWF Student Handbook, Code of Student Conduct, Academic Misconduct, states: ‘Plagiarism. The act of representing the ideas, words, creations or work of another as one’s own.’ Plagiarism combines theft with fraud, and the penalty is correspondingly severe: failure for the assignment and, in some cases, for the entire course. At the instructor’s discretion, she/he may recommend that the student be suspended from the university. Ignorance of the rules about plagiarism is no excuse for it, and carelessness is just as bad as purposeful violation. Students who have plagiarized have cheated themselves out of the experience of being responsible members of the academic community and have cheated their classmates by pretending to contribute original ideas.” (For additional information on plagiarism, go the UWF’s home page, click on keyword search, and enter “plagiarism policy” (in quotation marks), which allows you to download a word document several pages long.)

Just to be sure there remains no doubt in anyone’s mind what plagiarism is, I require *everyone*, undergraduate and graduate students alike, to take the Library’s Tutorial on Plagiarism, *and* to pass a test, missing no more than 1 question. You will need to e-mail me the results no

later than Thursday, September 3rd, at 11:45 p.m. The module and test are available at

http://library.uwf.edu/eli2/new_tutorials/module_plagiarism/outcomes.shtml

Student Conduct

It is the students' responsibility to read the Student Code of Conduct, available at <http://www.uwf.edu/judicialaffairs>. Please know that anyone violating its provisions may be penalized by expulsion from a course or the university.

Disability Services

Students with special needs who require specific examination-related or other course-related accommodations should contact Barbara Fitzpatrick, Director of Disabled Student Services (DSS), dss@uwf.edu, (850) 474-2387. DSS will provide the student with a letter for the instructor that will specify any recommended accommodations.

SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS
(subject to change with notice)

- Week 1 (August 27) Introduction to the course. Along with discussing the subject matter and the requirements of the course, we will watch the first of several lectures by Professor Steven Smith of Yale University that we will access this semester. You will be tested on the content of the lectures. We will also comment and evaluate it in class or in the forums. They are available at:
- <http://academicearth.org/courses/introduction-to-political-philosophy>
- Week 2 (September 3) Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chs. 10, 11, and 13-19.
- Week 3 (September 10) Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chs. 20, 21, 23-26, 29-30.
- Week 4 (September 17) NO CLASS. Any time during the week leading up to this day, click on Professor Smith's link and listen to his lectures on Hobbes (numbers 12, 13, and 14). Then, at 6:00 p.m. on September 17th, take the on-line test on Hobbes. The test will be timed. You will have 15 minutes in which to answer 20 questions. No excuses or exceptions allowed (except for the special case of a UWF-certified disability).
- Week 5 (September 24) Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chapters I–III, V–VIII
- Week 6 (October 1) Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chapters IX–XIX
- Week 7 (October 8) NO CLASS. Any time during the week leading up to this day, click on click on Professor Smith's link and listen to his lectures on Locke (numbers 15, 16, and 17). Then, at 6:00 p.m. on October 8th, take the on-line test on Locke. The test will be timed. You will have 15 minutes in which to answer 20 questions. No excuses or exceptions allowed (except for the special case of a UWF-certified disability).
- Week 8 (October 15) Rousseau, *Discourse*, pp. 1 – end
- Week 9 (October 22) Rousseau, *Social Contract*, Books I and II
- Week 10 (October 29) NO CLASS. Any time during the week leading up to this day, click on click on Professor Smith's link and listen to his lectures on Rousseau (numbers 18, 19, and 20). Then, at 6:00 p.m. on October 29th, take the on-line test on Rousseau.

The test will be timed. You will have 15 minutes in which to answer 20 questions. No excuses or exceptions allowed (except for the special case of a UWF-certified disability).

- Week 11 (November 5) NO CLASS. Essay 1 due in Drop Box no later than 11:45 p.m. No late essays accepted, no excuses allowed.
- Week 12 (November 12) Marx & Engels, *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* Edition TBA
- Week 13 (November 19) Hayek, F. A. Hayek, *Road to Serfdom*, Introduction and Chs. 1-5.
- Week 14 (November 26) NO CLASS. Thanksgiving
- Week 15 (December 3) *Road to Serfdom*, Chs. 6-11, and 14 (230-235 only).
- Week 16 (December 10) NO CLASS. Essay #2 due in drop box no later than 11:45 p.m. No late essays accepted, no excuses allowed.