

## POT 4053: Great Political Thinkers II

Spring 2012  
Section: 087D  
Meeting times: Tuesday, period 4 / Thursday, periods 4-5  
Classroom: Matherly 018

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Office: 305 Anderson  
Office hours: T 12:00-1:30

"Your question is: why am I so interested in politics? But if I were to answer you very simply, I would say this: why shouldn't I be interested? That is to say, what blindness, what deafness, what density of ideology would have to weigh me down to prevent me from being interested in what is probably the most crucial subject to... the society in which we live, the economic relations within which it functions, and the system of power which defines the regular forms and the regular permissions and prohibitions of our conduct? The essence of our life consists, after all, of the political functioning of the society in which we find ourselves."

- Michel Foucault

"The political scientist who ignores the biases in everyday classifications ends up practicing politics surreptitiously and unconsciously—and therefore confusedly—rather than analyzing it."

- Allan Janik

### Course description:

This class is designed to familiarize students with a number of thinkers generally recognized as fundamental for the development of political modernity. It resembles a sort of "greatest hits" album, and a short one at that. But while the course is in no way meant to be exhaustive in its scope, the authors we read have all been central to the articulation of a number of traditions that continue to exert a profound impact on contemporary Western political theory and practice. In this vein, ideologies to be discussed include (but will not be limited to): republicanism, absolutism, liberalism, democracy, socialism, and Marxism. Topically, we will discuss the idea of the "social contract," political obligation versus political obedience, political resistance and revolution, natural rights, sovereignty, liberty, private property, history, and human nature. We will also address such problems as the relationship between ethics and politics, the relationship between commercial and political life, and the consequences of economic inequality. These arguments constitute, in part, the political, cultural, economic, and social situations that we exist within right now—that is, they help determine how we experience and understand our everyday lives. Thus, our broader goal in this course is to come to grips, at least in some small measure, with how we in the modern West have become what we are, and to think critically about the ways in which knowledge derived from reflection upon old texts might inform our approach to political life in the present.

### Required texts:

- The Portable Machiavelli*, (eds. Peter Bondanella & Mark Musa). Penguin Publishers. ISBN: 0140150927
- John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, (ed. Peter Laslett). Cambridge Univ. Press. ISBN: 0521357306
- Adam Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, (eds. D. Raphael & A. Macfie). Liberty Fund. ISBN: 0865970122
- Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, (ed. S. Tomaselli). Cambridge Univ. Press. ISBN: 0521436338
- The Marx-Engels Reader*, (ed. Robert C. Tucker). Norton Publishers. ISBN: 039309040X

*Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, (ed. Walter Kaufmann). Modern Library.

ISBN: 0679783393

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, (trans. Richard Polt). Hackett Publishing.

ISBN: 0872203549

Note: Please try to obtain these versions. I have done my best to assign versions that are easy to find, economically-priced, and yet responsibly edited. Having uniform translations/edits is more practical for following the readings (including assigned passages from the editors' introductions), and having classroom discussions. Websites like amazon.com or half.com should have plenty of inexpensive copies. To make it easier, QR codes for these versions are located at the end of the syllabus. That said, doing so might prove difficult; plus different translations allow for different perspectives and, oftentimes, more colorful discussions.

### **Grading:**

Four components will comprise your final grade: two 6-8 page papers (25% each), a final paper (35%), and attendance and participation (15%). Due dates can be found in the schedule below.

*Participation:* Since a crucial component of understanding philosophy is engaging in agonal debate over texts, you will be held accountable for attending and partaking in classroom discussions. In fact, a large portion of our in-class activities will be comprised of discussion. Consequently, you cannot earn an "A" without coming to class.

*Papers:* The highest grade a late paper can receive in the absence of a legitimate excuse is a "C+." Please be aware: a "C+" is not the lowest grade a late paper can receive; it is the highest (i.e., it is the ceiling, not the floor).

### **Academic Integrity:**

All students are required to abide by the University of Florida's Academic Honesty Guidelines. Among other things, this means that cheating on essays and exams is totally unacceptable, as is plagiarism. Plagiarism is the act of portraying as your own the words or ideas of other people. If you are unsure what comprises plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty, you should consult with me (sooner rather than later), and/or visit

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/procedures/honestybrochure.php>

### **Accommodations:**

Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation. Please come see me as soon as possible regarding this matter.

### **Readings:**

There's no getting around it: this course is a motorcycle ride through the Louvre. We will cover some of the most important arguments made during Western political philosophy's modern period in less than 4 months. This course should be considered a challenge, but one that you are fully capable of meeting if you give a committed effort. It is assumed that you are here because you want to understand these arguments. That said, I do not apologize for reading loads. They reflect the best balance I can find between the demands of time and the demands of content. In other words, we are going to read the essential stuff and get to the point, but that still means we have to work to get there. My goal is to get you reading and get you thinking. My expectations are simple: come to class prepared and willing to participate in meaningful discussion. This means having done the readings *in advance* of the class for which they have been assigned. It is

essential that you keep up with the readings. Falling behind will make it difficult for you to participate in class discussions, follow the lectures, write papers, and develop intellectually.

## **Schedule of readings:**

### **Introduction/Logistics**

**January 10 (Tu)** Introduction to course, syllabus perusal (no readings)

**January 12 (Th)** From the ancient to the modern: Contextualizing the Machiavellian moment (reading: “The Liberty of the Ancients Compared with that of the Moderns,” located here: <http://mises.org/daily/2524>).

**January 17 (Tu)** NO CLASS

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### **Machiavelli, republicanism, and the science of politics**

**January 19 (Th)** *The Portable Machiavelli*, pp 17-26 (Introduction), pp 77-95 (*The Prince*)

**January 24 (Tu)** *The Portable Machiavelli*, pp 96-166 (*The Prince*)

**January 26 (Th)** *The Portable Machiavelli*, pp 168-228, 252-253, 281-287 (*The Discourses*)

**January 31 (Tu)** *The Portable Machiavelli*, pp 287-301, 314-316, 319-325, 326-338, 342-345, 351-356, 386-388, 400-402, 416-418 (*The Discourses*)

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### **Modernity’s “Noble Lie”: John Locke, natural law, and the social contract**

**February 02 (Th)** *Two Treatises of Government*, pp 93-110 (Introduction), 267-302

**February 07 (Tu)** *Two Treatises of Government*, pp 303-330

**February 09 (Th)** *Two Treatises of Government*, pp 330-374

**February 14 (Tu)** *Two Treatises of Government*, pp 374-406

**FIRST PAPER TOPIC HANDED OUT**

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### **Adam Smith and the Scottish Enlightenment**

**February 16 (Th)** *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, pp 308-314, 9-26

**February 21 (Tu)** *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, pp 27-43

**February 23 (Th)** *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, pp 43-67

**February 28 (Tu)** *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, pp 67-108

**FIRST PAPER DUE**

**March 01 (Th)** Catch-up day

**March 03-10 (SPRING BREAK – NO CLASSES)**

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### **Wollstonecraft’s “modest” critique of liberalism**

**March 13 (Tu)** *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, pp ix-xi, xxii-xxix (Introduction), 74-108

**March 15 (Th)** *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, pp 109-155

**March 20 (Tu)** *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, pp 207-230

**SECOND PAPER TOPIC HANDED OUT**

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**The Marxist critique of liberalism**

**March 22 (Th)** *The Marx-Engels Reader* pp 3-6, 26-52, 53-65, 299-302

**March 27 (Tu)** *The Marx-Engels Reader* pp 70-105, 143-145, 148-163

**March 29 (Th)** *The Marx-Engels Reader* pp 203-217, 305-306, 336-339

**April 03 (Tu)** *The Marx-Engels Reader* pp 469-491, 594-617

**SECOND PAPER DUE**

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**Towards a post-modern politics**

**April 05 (Th)** *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, pp 394-398, 446-448, 472-492 (*Genealogy of Morals*, Essay One, start at section 10)

**April 10 (Tu)** *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, pp 493-532 (*Genealogy of Morals*, Essay Two)

**April 12 (Th)** *Twilight of the Idols*, pp (3-42)

**April 17 (Tu)** *Twilight of the Idols*, pp (43-92)

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**April 19 (Th)** Catch-up day

**April 24 (Tu)** Exam Review

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**May 02 (Wed)** 3:00-5:00pm Final Exam Date



*The Portable  
Machiavelli*



*Two Treatises of  
Government*



*Theory of Moral  
Sentiments*



*A Vindication of  
the Rights of  
Woman*



*The Marx-Engels  
Reader*



*Basic Writings of  
Nietzsche*



*Twilight of the  
Idols*