

Course POLT 1070/50 Introduction to Political Theory

Syllabus updated: 6 October 2011

Term Spring Semester 2012

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Course Description The objective of this course is to introduce students to a selection of the most important political texts and theories by going through the development of political thought over the ages. The course offers an introduction into political theory applying a chronological approach but ensuring thematic coverage. Topics like freedom, democracy, representation, nationalism, liberalism etc. will be discussed with the aim to understand the logic of argument of their main proponents. Students will be required to read some original material and participate actively in class.

Prerequisites None

Learning Outcomes Students will familiarize themselves with the fundamental concepts in political theory which form the basis of day-to-day politics and of political science. By having acquired first-hand knowledge of the most important political texts from classical antiquity until today, students will get a sense of the continuity (and occasional disruption) in the development of political thought.

Textbook and other Materials *Essential:*
M. Curtis, 2008, *The Great Political Theories*. New York: Harper Collins, volume 1 and volume 2.

Supplementary:

D. Boucher and P. Kelly (eds.), 2003, *Political Thinkers: From Socrates to the Present*. Oxford University Press.

Aristotle (transl. by H. Rackham), 1944, *Politics*, Harvard University Press.

Plato (transl. by D. Lee), 1987, *The Republic*, Penguin.

Additional reading material will be made available online.

Grading Class presentation: 30%
Midterm exam: 30%
Final exam: 40%

University Policies

Cheating

Any student found cheating on any part of the course work (homework assignment, term paper, quiz, exam, etc.) will automatically be given an "F" for the course. Any student found to be helping another student to cheat will likewise be given an "F" for the course. In each case, the student will also be put on disciplinary probation for the remainder of her or his stay at Webster. If the student is found to have engaged in cheating a second time, s/he will be automatically expelled from the University.

Attendance

Class attendance is obligatory. Instructors will take attendance at each class session and reduce a student's course grade by one-third of a letter grade for each full week of class missed. Any student who misses four or more full weeks of class will automatically be given an "F" for the course.

Course Policies

Students will be required to do the main readings, participate actively in class, and sit the midterm and final exams. In addition, students will have to give an oral presentation in front of the class on a topic based on the weekly thematic area coverage –topics will be distributed in the first week.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1

Introduction, Course Structure, and Requirements

Week 2

The Greek Political World: the Sophists, Plato and Socrates

Readings

- Curtis pp. 34-64.
- Boucher and Kelly ch. 1, ch. 2 and ch.3
- Plato's Republic

Week 3

Aristotle: the ethics of politics and the classification of constitutions

Readings

- Curtis pp. 64-101
- Boucher and Kelly ch. 5
- J.S. McClelland, ch. 4
- Aristotle pp.201-231

Week 4

From godly power (St. Augustine and St. Aquinas, Byzantium)...

Readings

- Boucher and Kelly ch. 6, ch 7
- Nicol (1988) "Byzantine political thought" in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 51-82.

Week 5

...to worldly power (Marsilius and Machiavelli)

Readings

- Curtis, pp.143-156; pp. 164-166; pp. 219-229.
- Boucher and Kelly ch 8, ch 9
- N. Machiavelli, The Prince (available on the Internet: <http://books.mirror.org/gb.machiavelli.html>)
- Vieira and Runciman, 2008, Representation, Polity Press, pp. 1-28

Week 6

The Theory of the Social Contract: Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau

Readings

- Curtis, pp.329-349; pp. 372-389; vol 2: 19-34
- Boucher and Kelly chs. 10, 11, 14

Week 7

Enlightenment: the European and the American Version

Readings

- Boucher and Kelly chs. 13, 15

Week 8

Midterm Exam

Week 9

Liberalism and its Critics: Bentham, Mill, Spencer

Readings

- Curtis, vol 2: pp. 117-129; 186-204
- Boucher and Kelly chs. 18, 19, 20

Week 10

Hegel's Ideas about the State

Readings

- Curtis, vol 2: pp. 94-104
- Boucher and Kelly ch 22

Week 11

Marx and Marxism, Anarchism

Readings

- Curtis, vol 2: pp. 133-140; 158-180; 352-358; 366-379
- Boucher and Kelly chs. 23, 24
- Dahl R., Democracy and its Critics, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989, pp.37-51

Week 12

Nations, Nationalism and Fascism

Readings

- Curtis, vol 2: pp. 248-253
- Renan E., Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?, in: Hutchinson/Smith (eds.), *Nationalism*, Oxford: OUP 1994, 15-17
- Anderson B., *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev ed., London: Verso, 1991, selected chapters (Reader)
- Hobsbawm E., *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, selected chapters (Reader)
- Gellner E., *Nations and nationalism*, London: Blackwell 1983, selected chapters (Reader)
- Seton-Watson, *Old and New Nations*, in: Hutchinson/Smith (eds.), *Nationalism*, Oxford: OUP 1994, 132-137
- Smith A., *The Origins of Nations*, in: Hutchinson/Smith (eds.), *Nationalism*, Oxford: OUP 1994, 147-154
- Kohn H., *Western and Eastern Nationalism*, in: Hutchinson/Smith (eds.), *Nationalism*, Oxford: OUP 1994, 160-165

Week 13

Modern and Representative Democracy

Readings

- Curtis, vol 2: pp. 341-347; 426-436; 440-443
- Dahl R., *Democracy and its Critics*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989, pp.135-212
- Weale (1999) *Democracy*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan
- Vieira and Runciman (2008), *Representation*, Cambridge: Polity
- Pitkin (1972), *The Concept of Representation*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Mansbridge (2003), "Rethinking Representation", *American Political Science Review* 97(4): 515-528.

Week 14

Postnational Democracy

Readings

- Habermas (2001), "Why Europe Needs a Constitution", *New Left Review*, vol. 11, pp. 5-26.
- McCormick (2008), *Understanding the EU*, Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan.
- Deutsch et al. (1968), *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Haas (2004) *The Uniting of Europe*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Haas (2008) *Beyond the Nation State*, Colchester: ECPR Press.
- Beetham and Lord (1998) *Legitimacy and the EU*, London: Longman.
- Moravcsik (2002) "In Defense of the 'Democratic Deficit': Reassessing legitimacy in the EU", *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40(2): 603-624.

Week 15

Final Exam

