

Selected Problems in Government: The Political Thought of Mass Politics and Inequality

POLS 5380 (crn 16016)

Fall 2018
Hybrid and Benedict Hall 202
TBD, usually R, 3:00-4:30

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Office Hours

Monday 10:00-11:30
Thursday 2:00-3:00
And by appointment

Course Overview and Goals

This course is a seminar on political thought and theory. It includes coverage of modern political thought. The format of the course is hybrid with some work online and face-to-face meetings. The nature of the subject is important. We will cover normative political philosophy that prescribes certain types of social, economic, and political structures. However, we will also apply these normative theories to an understanding of our contemporary world. Past normative political thought still manifests in contemporary political and economic systems and forms the basis of debates about public policy. Political theories and philosophies will include Hobbes, Locke, Burke, Kant, Rousseau, JS Mill, Marx, Lenin, and Nietzsche. Upon the successful completion of this course students should possess the following:

1. Students will have a basic understanding of modern political thought from the western world.
2. Students will analyze political thought and apply it to our contemporary world.

Student Evaluation

Student performance will be evaluated based on various assignments and class participation:

- In-Class Participation 10%
- On-line Participation 15%
- Midterm exam 10%
- Final Exam 20%
- Class Presentation/Discussion Leader Twice for 20 total%
- Critique Papers 25%

In-Class Participation: A graduate seminar requires active dialogue and participation among students and faculty. While it will be necessary for the instructor to provide overview, background, and reinforce main points, it is incumbent upon the students to seek an understanding and application of the subject matter. This requires active discussion. Attendance is mandatory unless the instructor approves absence ahead of time or with a valid excuse ex post. The Graduate School's policies dictate mandatory attendance.

On-Line Participation: Given the hybrid nature of our course and the flexibility provided with such a format, students will participate in online discussion sections. Whereas our face-to-face class meetings will be organized with a specific structure, the on-line environment allows students the freedom to ask questions about the subject matter and to make other points. An excellent use of this environment will include active discussion of the subject matter. Debate is desirable but should remain courteous (it is important to note this given that tone and inflexion are difficult to discern in electronic environments).

Exams: The exams are take-home and will be posted on Blackboard or otherwise emailed. These exams will consist of questions that will require thought and synthesis of the course material. It is important that student's answers to the questions posed reflect the readings during the semester. The purpose of the exams is to evaluate student comprehension of the subject matter and the ability to synthesize the material and apply it to our contemporary world.

Class Presentations and Discussion Leading: Each student will be responsible for leading two class discussion topics at the end of the semester. This requires a professional presentation outlining the major points of the readings, providing questions for discussion, and providing your own insights and opinions. Presenters should critique the readings for that week. The presentation of each week's material should take roughly 30 minutes, but no more. The student presenter will then provide questions to help lead class discussion.

Critique Papers: Papers are due the day of the subject matter coverage on the syllabus. All students will need to write four papers throughout the semester (that count for credit – you can write more than four and take the four highest grades). The purpose of these papers is to foster a deeper understanding and synthesis of the readings, with the purpose of both comprehension and the application of the subject matter to our contemporary world. The style of these papers will be such that students will need to be clear and succinct. It is my advice that students especially write papers at the earliest opportunities so that they will more quickly learn the subject matter and the instructor's expectations. See the last section at the end of the syllabus for details about how these critique papers should be written.

Plagiarism and Cheating

I have often caught students plagiarizing (but usually at the undergraduate level), which entails the use of other people's words, ideas, or images without documentation or their consent. For the papers in this class, students must provide parenthetical citations for passages in the text that are borrowed or inspired by other person's works. It is not hard to avoid plagiarizing -- if you use a quote from an author, acknowledge it in a footnote; if you paraphrase or summarize an argument, cite the source from where you obtained the idea. For example, one might write "One compelling reason why governments do what they do is that all people have goals, and they work to achieve those goals through political behavior. (Lowi, Ginsberg, and Shepsle 2002, 14)", and then cite the work again in a bibliography or reference section at the end of your paper. Notice how quotations require the citation of page numbers.

If you use facts or figures from some source and they are not common knowledge, note the source of the information. Copying and pasting in text from websites or other electronic documents is completely unacceptable. If you directly borrow sentences, or even clauses or sentence fragments, these should be set-off in quotation marks and include a reference to the original source, including page numbers. If you are inspired to borrow the style, organization, or ideas of other person's work, you will still need to provide references to specific passages and bibliographical information. Another strategy that is acceptable is to paraphrase another person's work, which is fine again as long as the source is noted in the text.

It is unacceptable to include multiple paragraphs or long passages not set off as block quotes and then provide a single reference of the original source at the end. The goal of writing is to use your own words and ideas first and foremost, and use other people's words as examples or evidence. Moreover, when students plagiarize it is often obvious to the instructor. Also, UTEP takes steps through the web and in University classes to inform students about plagiarism. Thus, it is your responsibility to avoid this behavior. I join the University in taking plagiarism very seriously. If caught plagiarizing, I will report you for college review and discipline. Similarly, all other forms of cheating are also dishonest and will not be acceptable.

Expectations and Penalties

Graduate education often requires a higher level of organization and commitment. I expect that assignments will be turned in on time. The penalty for late work will be twenty points a day. And as mentioned herein, students should be prepared for class, and nonattendance without some valid excuse constitutes a large reduction in participation points. Additionally, all papers and assignments need to be professional, meaning word-processed with standard citation and writing styles (one can review the APSA guidelines), including page numbers, the use of headings/subheadings, etc.

Special Circumstances

The University of Texas, El Paso encourages qualified persons with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please tell the instructor as soon as possible. I will do my best to make special arrangements for students with any required special needs or conflicts as far as course lectures or test-taking circumstances. However, if you anticipate a particular requirement, let me know **as soon as possible**. I will always try to accommodate legitimate needs, but I am unlikely to accommodate last minute requests. Special circumstances include disabilities and any scheduled activities that you have that conflict with this class. If you do not notify me of conflicts early on, I am under no obligation to allow you a make-up exam or assignment extension. **Emergencies such as deaths in the family or illness must be documented.**

Readings

I expect you to read everything listed on the syllabus for a particular date before class. Some classes, especially those in the first few weeks, will contain lecture, although most classes will be conducted in a seminar format requiring participation. The texts for this course are:

- ❖ The Broadview Anthology of Social and Political Thought. Essential Readings, Ancient, Modern, and Contemporary Texts. Edited by Andrew Bailey, Samantha Brennan, Will Kymlicka, et al. Broadview Press. 2012.

Course Schedule (face to face meetings)

- 8/30 Hello, let's discuss the course**
- 9/06 Thomas Hobbes**
- Broadview, Introduction and Part I of Hobbes *Leviathan*.
- 9/13 Thomas Hobbes**
- Broadview, Part II of Hobbes *Leviathan*.
 - (Critique paper possible on Hobbes)
- 9/20 John Locke**
- Broadview, All of Locke content.
 - (Critique paper possible on Locke)
- 9/27 Jean-Jacques Rousseau Part I**
- Broadview, Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men*
- 10/04 Jean-Jacques Rousseau Part II**
- Broadview, Rousseau's *On the Social Contract or Principles of Political Right*
 - (Critique paper possible on Rousseau)
- 10/11 Midterm Exam (see Blackboard or email)**
- 10/18 John Stuart Mill**
- Broadview, *On Liberty*
- 10/25 John Stuart Mill**
- Broadview, Rest of Mill content
 - (Critique paper possible on Mill)
- 11/01 Karl Marx (and Friedrich Engels) Part I**
- Broadview, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, The German Ideology in Particular, Thesis on Feurbach*
- 11/08 Karl Marx (and Friedrich Engels) Part II**
- Broadview, *The Communist Manifesto, Critique of the Gotha Program*
 - (Critique paper possible on Marx)
- 11/15 Customizable week: content to be provided by the students, if not use V.I. Lenin (other suggestions include Kant, Bentham/James Mill, Burke, and others):**
- Broadview, *What is to Be Done?* And Lenin's theory of imperialism (will be provided)
 - (Critique paper possible on Lenin)
- 11/29 Customizable week: content to be provided by the students, if not use Friedrich Nietzsche**
- Broadview, *On the Genealogy of Morals*
 - (Critique paper possible on Nietzsche)

12/06 Customizable week, open to student content and presentations

12/14 Take-Home Final Exam due date (11:59 am)

Appendix on Critique Papers and Presentations:

The critique papers should typically follow a format such as the following:

- Description of the work(s)
- Critique of strengths and weaknesses, primarily through a synthesis of the readings (one may compare to other thinkers)
- Application to our contemporary world

The above format order of discussion is not essential, but all papers should include these components. Some writers may find it more useful to synthesize the three components together. The key is to make an interesting argument and application of the subject matter to our contemporary world. In doing so, the writer should critique the political thinker. To what extent do certain ideas and concepts apply to our world? How so or not? For example, if I were writing on the utilitarian theory/calculus of Jeremy Bentham, I might apply this to how anti-regulation minded US Congressional representatives attempted to apply a formula to the EPA or how insurance companies (or other entities) attempt to place a dollar figure on human life. Such a paper would include a summary of Bentham's theory, the application, and whether it works well or not. I would discuss the pros and cons, positives and negatives into an argument with the aim of being logical and persuasive. Use passages from our thinkers' readings as evidence for the points you are making.

Be sure to provide enough summary of the theory and concepts on which you are writing. This is essential to understand your application and critique. However, your goal is not to thoroughly explain a thinker's political thought; that would not be feasible in a short paper. Hence, you need to provide succinct summary and stay on point, which takes good writing skills. You also need to make sure you fully develop your points of critique and application of the material without going on too long. If you are not used to writing in this fashion, then this will be good practice.

Class presentations should follow the same typical format as the papers. Provide an overview of the political thought and then critique and application. You should aim to be interesting and stimulate class discussion with the latter part. You should also provide questions (handout) to the rest of the class with questions to stimulate discussion. As mentioned above, your presentation should be formal in nature and professional.