
POLITICAL THEORY II: Key Topics in Modern Political Theory

PROFESSOR: **TIMOTHY SYME**

ACADEMIC YEAR: 1st

DEGREE COURSE YEAR:

1° SEMESTER 2° SEMESTER

CATEGORY: BASIC

COMPULSORY

OPTIONAL

NO. OF CREDITS (ECTS): 6

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

TUTORIALS:

FORMAT: LECTURE & SEMINAR

PREREQUISITES: POLITICAL THEORY I

1. SUBJECT DESCRIPTION

This course is the second half of the year-long series on Western Political Theory and continues the subject into the modern period, from the 18th Century to the present. It explores key themes in modern political theory by combining classic texts with the work of contemporary thinkers. The aim of this course is to introduce students to the central topics and controversies in modern political thought. This class emphasizes the normative perspective, which involves the interpretation, evaluation and critique of past and present social arrangements and the suggestion of more desirable arrangements that could and should be implemented instead.

2. CONTENT

SEMINAR 1: Introduction

We shall discuss the plan for the class as a whole and discuss in general terms the approach of normative theory.

SEMINARS 2 & 3

Society, state and the individual

This unit introduces some of the key themes of the course. Reading Rousseau, we encounter the idea that societies are the creation of human choices constrained by historical circumstances; the way in which individuals' sense of self is significantly shaped by their social relations; an early, critical account of the development of private property, law and social inequality; and an outline of an ideal of freedom. Mill provides a canonical defence of the value of individual liberty against the will of the majority, whether acting through the state or informal social pressure.

Reading

SEMINAR 2: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*: Excerpts from Part 1: 134-139, 149-160; and all of Part 2: 161-188.

SEMINAR 3: John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapters I and IV.

SEMINAR 4 & 5

Marxism

Marx's materialist theory of history builds upon the work of Rousseau while his conception of people as essentially social, labouring beings underlies his powerful critique of capitalist exploitation and of the liberal individualism expounded by Mill, which he condemns as ideological and alienating.

Reading

SEMINAR 4: Marx: On the Jewish Question.

SEMINAR 5: Estranged Labour, from the 1844 Manuscripts (Tucker, pp 70-81) and The Communist Manifesto.

SEMINAR 6

Anarchism

Anarchists reject the authority of the state and argue for the desirability and possibility of non-hierarchical social arrangements. We first read Kropotkin, who provides an optimistic account of human nature and sociability, which contrasts with that of Rousseau, and aims to open up alternative possibilities for social organization. Bakunin offers a classic, polemical critique of the state while Sylvan (our first contemporary author) provides an important overview of the anarchist critique of the state and positive proposals for alternatives to the state system.

SEMINAR 6: Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid*: Chapter 2: final paragraph (beginning 'Happily enough...') and chapter 3.

Mikhail Bakunin, *The Immorality of the State*.

Richard Sylvan, 1993 'Anarchism', chapter 10 in Goodin and Pettit (eds.) *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy*, Oxford: Blackwell.

SEMINARS 7, 8 & 9

Justice: Freedom, Equality and Distribution

We shift from considering the structure and justification of social and political authority to the question of what values a society should pursue and how the fruits of social life should be distributed among the members of a society. We begin with Mill's influential argument that justice requires maximizing overall well-being before turning to the contemporary work of John Rawls and Robert Nozick. Rawls is the foremost contemporary theorist of liberal egalitarianism and a critic of entrenched social privilege. Nozick rejects distributive justice as incompatible with human freedom, defending instead a libertarian minimal state that does little more than protect property rights. Nozick's view is attacked in somewhat humorous review by Brian Barry. Nozick and Rawls represent the normative theories endorsed by the dominant opposing political forces in the world today, those of free-market capitalism and democratic socialism.

Reading

SEMINAR 6: J.S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*: Chapters 1,2 and 5.

SEMINAR 7: Rawls: *Theory of Justice*, 1999, p3-28, 47-81 and *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, 2001, Part IV, p135-179.

SEMINAR 8: Robert Nozick, *Anarchy State and Utopia*: Chapter 2 and Chapter 7, section 1, p149-182

Brian Barry, 1975, 'Review of Robert Nozick's *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*', *Political Theory*, Vol. 3, No. 3, pp. 331-336.

SEMINARS 10 & 11

Gender

Gender inequality is one of the deepest and most longstanding injustices in virtually all human societies. John Stuart Mill's classic work, likely co-authored with his wife and possibly also their daughter, provides an important early formulation of feminism - highlighting both the legal domination of women and the insidious cultural disdain for traditionally feminine attributes and virtues. Nancy Fraser provides a historical overview and critique of contemporary feminism, highlighting problems arising at the intersection of gender and class as well as the risk of social movements being co-opted by prevailing power structures and ideologies. Judith Butler formulates a provocative and radical account of gender as performance that questions whether feminism even needs the categories of 'man' and 'woman' at all.

Reading

SEMINAR 9: John Stuart Mill, *Subjection of Women*, Chapter 1.

Nancy Fraser, 'Feminism, Capitalism and the Cunning of History', *New Left Review*, 56, 2009.

SEMINAR 10: Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (excerpt)

SEMINARS 12 & 13

Democracy: Elitism vs. Participation; Deliberation vs. Contestation

What is democracy? And what should it be? We will survey a range of classic texts in contemporary democratic theory, focusing on two central debates. We first take up the question of whether democracy can only be a way for the people to select their rulers, as Joseph Schumpeter argues, or whether it could and should allow people to take part in governing themselves as much as possible, as argued by Carol Pateman. We also consider Habermas' ideal of a maximally open 'public sphere' of debate and opinion-formation that mediates between people and their government. We then consider the character of democratic politics. Should it emphasize calmly rational deliberation and the pursuit of consensus, as Joshua Cohen contends, or should it be a passionate struggle for political power between opposing social forces, as argued by Chantal Mouffe?

Reading

SEMINAR 12: Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, Chapters 21 and 22.

Carol Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory*, Chapters 1 and 2.

Jürgen Habermas, 1964, 'The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article', *New German Critique*, No. 3. (Autumn, 1974), pp. 49-55. Plus additional reading TBD.

SEMINAR 13: Joshua Cohen, 'Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy'.

Chantal Mouffe, 1999, 'Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?', *Social Research*, Vol. 66, No. 3, pp. 745-758

SEMINAR 14: Review
SEMINAR 15: Final Exam

3. EVALUATION SYSTEM

3.1. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Students must fulfil the following requirements as part of the course:

1. Complete over the course of the semester all the required written assignments (see below) and write the final exam.
2. Engage and be prepared to discuss in class the core ideas and readings of the course. This requires that students complete all reading ahead of class and be attentive to the vocabulary, critical concepts and other ideas that are contained in all the course material. Students should also ensure that they bring the readings to class.

3.2. EVALUATION AND WEIGHTING CRITERIA

The breakdown of the final grade is as follows.

Short Reading Reports	20%
Extended Reading Responses	30%
Take-home Midterm	15%
Final	35%

Short Reading Reports

A reading report of no more than one page on each reading is due by the beginning of class each week. Most weeks have more than one and these should be separate reports. These are meant to be fairly minimal and I will usually only skim to check that they are for real. They should at least contain a summary of what you take to be the central thrust of the reading but can also include any comments you have about ideas or claims you find particular powerful, implausible etc. You will be permitted to skip these reports in the weeks when you write an extended reading response.

Extended Reading Responses

You are required to provide over the course of the semester three extended reading responses, based on core concepts or ideas derived from those readings on which you choose to write. In these weeks you do not need to submit short reading reports. These responses will be due before the start of the class with the corresponding readings. Further details regarding these responses will be provided at the beginning of the course.

Each reading response should be between 900-1100 words and show a clear effort to engage the core ideas of the text or texts. These will be graded on 4 points. Evaluation of the reading responses will be based on the following criteria:

- Clarity and coherence of the thesis.
- Engagement with the text.
- Clarity of writing.
- Structure and support of the argument.

Responses submitted after the start of the class will not be accepted.

Midterm and Final

The Midterm will provide you the opportunity to display your mastery of basic concepts and to show me the extent to which you have worked through and engaged with lecture and the readings. It will be a fairly short exercise. The Final is a different matter. You will be informed well in advance about the content of the Final and the means of adequately preparing for it. The last session of the course has been set aside to review the requirements for this exam.

3.3. EXAMINATION POLICY

1. Students have up to 4 examination sessions per course over two consecutive academic years.
2. IE University has a mandatory Class Attendance Policy that calls for students to attend a minimum of 70% of class sessions in a course. An absence, for any reason, counts towards the maximum of 30% allowed absences. Failure to comply with any of these requirements will result in students being ineligible to sit for the exam in both the 1st and 2nd examination sessions. These students will be required to sit for the exam in the 3rd session.
3. Grading for make-up exams will be subject to the following rules:
 - ✓ Students who failed the course in the first round of exams will be eligible to re-sit in the 2nd examination session. *Warning:* students who do not comply with the attendance policy requirements will be required to sit for the exam in the 3rd examination session.
 - ✓ The highest grade that a student may earn in the 2nd examination session is 8.

3.4. EXTRAORDINARY EVALUATION

In the event that you do not satisfy the requirements to pass the class, you will have the option to take an extraordinary supplemental exam.

This extraordinary exam may be complemented and/or replaced by additional supplemental assignments as part of your overall evaluation.

Dispensation for the inclusion of additional evaluation criteria in the event of an unsatisfactory grade will be made solely at the discretion of your professor. In accordance with university policy, extraordinary exams must without exception be taken in Segovia during the extraordinary exam period.

4. USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES IN CLASS

This subject does not require the use of a laptop in class. Barring exceptional circumstances, such as physical disabilities requiring the use of a laptop, they are not permitted in the classroom. There will be serious repercussions, grade-wise, for those students who choose to disregard this policy.

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Below are the compulsory texts. Additional readings will be contained in the digital course pack.

5.1. COMPULSORY

- Rousseau, *The Discourses and other early political writings*, ed. Gourevitch (Cambridge, 1997)

- Karl Marx, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Tucker (New York, 1978).
- J. S. Mill, *Utilitarianism and On Liberty* (Blackwell, 2003).
- Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*,
- Carol Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory* (Cambridge, 1976)

6. YOUR PROFESSOR

TIMOTHY SYME

7. OTHER INFORMATION OF INTEREST:

Office Hours: By appointment and as specified.

E-mail: