

Political Science 155
Roots of Political Theory
Spring Semester 2012
Clark University

Tuesday and Friday, 12:00-1:15
Jefferson 218
Professor Robert Boatright
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In *The Human Condition*, the philosopher Hannah Arendt argues that human beings can never be defined solely by their life circumstances. That is, all of us have the ability to rise above the world we are born into through our actions in that world. Political action is the foremost way in which we can shape our lives. Throughout history, human beings have sought to fashion institutions that will govern their societies, and they have confronted recurring issues in doing so – issues pertaining to the nature of community, equality, rights, and justice. In this course we will survey ancient and modern theories of the way in which society should be organized, the mechanisms of change in society, and the place of contemplation and philosophy within society. The goals of this course are to give you the skills to read and analyze philosophical arguments, to provide you with an understanding of the dominant philosophical paradigms for thinking about what is “right” or “just” in politics, to understand the development of political thought throughout history, and to give you the tools to apply these ideas to today’s world.

The course covers two eras in political thought. We shall first consider the “ancient” era of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, which is characterized by a search for an underlying logic in governing institutions. We shall then turn to the beginnings of what is called the “modern” era, which begins with the theories of social contract inherent in the writings of Hobbes, Locke, Montesquieu, and Rousseau. During each section, we shall consider how these theories might apply to contemporary problems and how they relate to the more empirical issues studied in other areas of political science. During each section we will also compare the different logics these philosophers use to reach conclusions about what the “best” political regime is.

Although we will cover a lot of ground in this course, the course is not meant to be an exhaustive survey of all of the most important political thinkers or even of all the interesting concepts introduced by the theorists we do consider. I strongly encourage each of you will let me know which aspects of the readings you find interesting; your comments and participation will play a role in guiding our consideration of these works in class. I also encourage you to think about parallels to these works in history, contemporary politics, and even in art and literature, and to offer your thoughts on these connections in class as well.

This course fulfills the political theory requirement for political science majors, and it fulfills the Values Perspective requirement for the Program of Liberal Studies.

Readings

The following books are required for the course and are available at the college bookstore:

Plato. *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Phaedrus*. H. N. Fowler translation. Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, 1955.

Plato. *The Republic*. Allan Bloom translation. Basic Books, 1991.

Aristotle, *The Politics*. Carnes Lord Translation. University of Chicago Press, 1984.

Hobbes, John. *Leviathan*. Edited by Edwin Curley. Hackett Publishing Co., 1994.

Locke, John. *Two Treatises of Government*. Student edition, edited by Peter Laslett. Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Montesquieu, Charles de Secondat. *The Spirit of the Laws*. Anne Cohler, Basia Miller, and Harold Stone translation. Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Basic Political Writings*. Donald Cress translation. Hackett Publishing Co., 1987.

Note: There are multiple editions of each of these books out there. The editions I have ordered are ones that I believe are characterized by accurate translation of the works (most of which were originally written in languages other than English) and have good introductory or explanatory essays. It is fine with me if you use other editions, although for all of the readings from Hobbes on, you *must* consult the editions listed above when writing papers – all citations should refer to the page numbers in the editions I have ordered. All of these books will also be available at the library. If you do have a good reading knowledge of Greek or French, I encourage you to seek out editions of these books in those languages, because it may actually be more rewarding to read these works in their original language. Whatever you decide, you *must* have a copy of each book that you bring to class with you!

In addition to the books for the course, I have also placed several works on reserve as the course goes on that interpret some of the theories we consider here. There are also many books in the library that I won't put on reserve but that would nonetheless be helpful to you. Many of the writers we look at in the class are quite tricky to understand, and in some cases, the excerpts we consider are best understood in the context of other works by these philosophers that we will not be considering here. Don't be bashful about looking

for secondary material to help you out in the course. Do be careful, however, that in your coursework you discuss the books we are reading. Here's what's on reserve if you need some extra help:

Nichols, Mary. 1987. *Socrates and the Political Community: An Ancient Debate*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Keyt, David, and Fred D. Miller, eds. 1991. *A Companion to Aristotle's Politics*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

McNeilly, F.S. 1968. *The Anatomy of Leviathan*. New York: St. Martin's.

Tully, James. 1993. *An Approach to Political Philosophy: Locke in Contexts*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Simmons, Alan John. 1992. *The Lockean Theory of Rights*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Pangle, Thomas. 1973. *Montesquieu's Philosophy of Liberalism: A Commentary on the Spirit of the Laws*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Durkheim, Emile. [1960]. *Montesquieu and Rousseau: Forerunners of Sociology*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Shklar, Judith N. 1969. *Men and Citizens: A Study of Rousseau's Social Theory*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Requirements and Grading

Attendance and Participation. The most important requirement for this class is your attendance and participation. In order to succeed in this course, you must attend class and you must come prepared to discuss the readings. For most class sessions, I will ask you to submit answers to brief questions on the readings, and your attendance will be measured by your completion of these questions. *If you don't show up for class, you may not submit answers to these questions, and if you don't submit answers to these questions, your attendance in class will not be counted.* These answers will not be graded, but I will make note of students who have submitted particularly thoughtful responses. Class attendance will count for ten percent of your grade, and participation will account for an additional ten percent of your grade.

In-Class Exercises. There will be two exams during the semester. These exams will serve two purposes: First, they will assess your knowledge of the philosophers we are considering. Second, they will serve as the seeds for class discussions that will follow

the exams. The exams will include a mixture of identification questions and brief, open-ended essays. Each of these exams will account for fifteen percent of your grade.

Written Work. You will write three essays during the course. These essays are intended to measure your knowledge of the readings, to provide you with an opportunity to reflect upon the relevance of the readings to contemporary political and social life, and to allow you to offer your thoughts on how compelling each of these philosophers' writings are. The first of these essays will be reviewed by one of your colleagues, and you will then be given three days to revise the essay based on your colleague's feedback. The first two essays will each be approximately three to five pages in length, and each will be worth fifteen percent of your grade. The third essay will be longer, approximately six to eight pages, and will be worth twenty percent of your grade. In the case of all essays, you are welcome to discuss the essay with me and to have me read drafts prior to the due date. We will take a variety of different approaches in the essays: some will ask you to reflect on how your readings speak to contemporary issues, while others may ask you to compare different theorists. The goal of these essays is to accommodate different types of perspectives on the readings, different ways of thinking about the readings, and different ways of writing.

Attached to this syllabus is a sample essay grading rubric and a style sheet for your essays, which includes both requirements and suggestions. Following the guidelines here will result in a better grade for the course. Also, keep the following in mind when writing your papers:

- Papers are due in class on the due date.
- You may turn in a paper late for one grade fraction per day (not including weekends) reduction. That is, an A drops to an A- when it is one day late, then to a B+ on the second day, and so on.
- Papers with inadequate citation of the readings will be returned to you and will be subject to a one grade fraction per day reduction until I receive them back with proper citation.
- Unless you have authorization from me to do so, you may not email your papers to me. Emailed papers will be returned to you and will be subject to the one grade fraction per day reduction until I receive the printed copy from you.

Summary: Class Requirements and Percent Contribution to Final Grade:

Requirement	Contribution to Grade	Objective
Class participation	10%	Ability to analyze and apply concepts
Class attendance	10%	
In-class Exams	30% (15% each)	Understanding of material
Essays 1 and 2	30% (15% each)	Ability to analyze and apply concepts
Essay 3	20%	Understanding historical development of political thought

A Note on Web Resources: In writing your papers, and in preparing for your exams, you may be tempted to avail yourself of online “Cliff’s Notes”-type resources. I cannot, of course, prevent you from doing this, and I did note above that I do encourage you to draw upon secondary sources if you are having trouble understanding the readings. None of the secondary sources you might find – especially online summaries such as Wikipedia or the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy – will serve as adequate substitutes for doing the reading. These summaries tend not to contain enough detail to help you with your exams, they generally do not provide the textual citations you will need in your essays, and they often do not clearly distinguish between the content of works we are reading in class and other writings by these authors. *You will not be able to write good papers for the course if you rely on outside sources instead of the class readings.*

Academic Honesty: Finally, as you should be aware by now, the work you do in this course must be entirely your own. To be sure we all have the same understanding of academic integrity as it pertains to this course, here is what the Academic Advising *Blue Book* (p. 22) has to say on the subject:

Academic integrity is highly valued at Clark. Research, scholarship and teaching are possible only in an environment characterized by honesty and mutual trust. Academic integrity requires that your work be your own. Because of the damage that violations of academic integrity do to the intellectual climate of the University, they must be treated with the utmost seriousness and appropriate sanctions must be imposed. The maintenance of high standards of academic integrity is the concern of every member of the University community.

Plagiarism refers to the presentation of someone else’s work as one’s own, without proper citation of references and sources, whether or not the work has been previously published. Submitting work obtained from a professional term paper writer or company is plagiarism. Claims of ignorance about the rules of attribution, or of unintentional error are not a defense against a finding of plagiarism.

Suspected plagiarism cases will be referred to the Dean’s office. Every year I have the misfortune of having to do this at least once, and it is one of the worst things about teaching. If you are in doubt about whether you have provided adequate citation or used others’ work properly, please talk with me before handing your paper in! If you are up against a paper due date and are tempted to just pluck something from the web and hand it in, *don’t do it!* I will catch you, and it won’t be worth it. In a case like this, it’s better to turn the paper in late.

Schedule

Tuesday, January 17: Introduction to the Course

I. Ancient Political Philosophy

Friday, January 20:
Plato, *The Apology*

Tuesday, January 24:
Plato, *The Crito*

Friday, January 27:
Plato, *The Republic*, Book I
Discussion: Who is the real Socrates? What does Socrates' trial suggest about the role of the philosopher in politics?
Thesis statement for Short Essay #1 due at the start of class

Tuesday, January 31:
Plato, *The Republic*, Book II; Book III, secs. 412-417 only; Book IV

Friday, February 3:
Plato, *The Republic*, Books V and VI

Tuesday, February 7:
First draft of Short Essay #1 due at the start of class
Plato, *The Republic* – Book VII-VIII

Friday, February 10:
Plato, *The Republic* – Books IX-X

Tuesday, February 14 and Friday, February 17:
Aristotle, *The Politics*, Books 1 and 2
Revised Version of Essay #1 due February 14 at the start of class

Tuesday, February 21:
Aristotle, *The Politics*, Books 3-4 and other (brief) selections TBA

Friday, February 24: Flex Day
(Exam Prep or read more Aristotle)

Tuesday, February 28: Short Exam: Plato and Aristotle

II. Modern Political Philosophy

Friday, March 2

Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Part I, Ch. 13-16

March 5 - 9: Spring Break

Tuesday, March 13:

Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Part II

Friday, March 16:

Review and wrap up on Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Part II

Tuesday, March 20 and Friday, March 23:

Locke, *Second Discourse*, Chapters 1-9

Tuesday, March 27:

Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, Part 1

Friday, March 30 and Tuesday, April 3:

Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, Part 2; Part 3, Book 19 only
Essay #2 Due Friday, November 12

Friday, April 6 and Tuesday, April 10:

Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men*

Friday, April 13:

Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Book 1

Tuesday, April 17 and Friday, April 20:

Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Books 2 and 3

Tuesday, April 24:

Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Book 4

Discussion: What does Rousseau take from the Greeks?

Friday, April 27:

Short exam: Hobbes, Locke, Montesquieu, and Rousseau

May 8: Essay #3 Due

A Few Tips on Writing
Professor Boatright
Political Science 155

1. Spelling counts. Punctuation counts. Grammar counts. I don't want to spend time in this course on the mechanics of writing, in part because I assume that all of you are good writers. Most of the errors that I notice in students' papers are not made because students do not know how to write well. They are made because students did not proofread their papers carefully. If you take a few minutes to review your paper before turning it in, you will not only catch grammatical errors, but you will also have an opportunity to reconsider the clarity of your argument and the merit of your ideas. Plan your work so that you have time to complete your paper long enough before it is due that you can print it out and set it aside for a few hours, before giving it a final review.
2. The most important part of your paper is the thesis statement. Your thesis statement should appear in the first paragraph or two of your paper. It should succinctly present your original argument and let the reader know what the main point of your paper will be. A thesis statement is not, however, merely an explanation of how the paper is organized.
3. When discussing points in the readings, be sure to cite the book and the page number to which you are referring. For most of the papers in this class, I do not expect you to draw upon material other than the books assigned, so you do not need to supply full bibliographic information. Putting the author and page number in parentheses after the sentence in which you discuss their work is sufficient. For example, you might write
Smith argued that the division of labor encouraged workers to attempt to perform their jobs as quickly and efficiently as possible (Smith, p. 11).
Be sure not to confuse your own ideas with those in the texts; only cite the text where you are referring to a specific point made by the author.
4. *Do not use lengthy quotes.* The papers we will write in this class are too short for you to take up space reciting passages from the books we are reading. Quotes may be appropriate in instances where the author has used a particularly noteworthy or original term. If you were discussing Marx's views on the relations of the Communist Party to the working class, for example, you might write
Marx claimed that the Communists must be aligned with the proletariat because they "have no interests separate and apart from the proletariat as a whole" (Marx, p. 483).
5. Be careful about referring to yourself in your papers. It is sometimes appropriate to write in the first person, but doing so is often a way of being tentative in your writing. You should not qualify your arguments by saying "I think that ..." It should be obvious what you think; the task of an expository essay is to convince the reader that you are right.
6. As you will certainly notice in the coming weeks, there is a distinctive "jargon" in political philosophy and in political science. This is not a good thing. I am hopeful that none of you will feel compelled to adopt this jargon as your own. You should be careful, though, when using words that have a very precise meaning in the works we have read and another, less precise meaning outside the discipline. Always be sure that it is clear to the reader whether you are using these words in the discipline-specific context or not. And make sure you know what all the words you use mean!
7. *Do not be afraid to ask for help with your papers.* I have assumed in writing these comments that all of you are familiar with the basic principles of writing style. If you are not satisfied with your writing, ask a friend to look your papers over, ask a college writing tutor for help, or talk to me during office hours or by email. I also highly recommend purchasing the following books on writing style and mechanics:

Strunk, William, and E. B. White. 1979. *The Elements of Style*. Third Edition. New York: Macmillan.
Williams, Joseph. 1989. *Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace*. New York: HarperCollins.
Weston, Anthony. 1987. *A Rulebook for Arguments*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett.

Political Science 155 – Roots of Political Theory
 Sample Grading Rubric for Short Essays

Student name:

Grader:

Date:

Dimension	A	B	C	D/F
Ideas and Content (30%)	Clear, bold thesis statement; directly addresses essay question and answers it convincingly.	Argument addresses some elements of assignment but not all.	Argument is interesting but not coherent, or argument does not address essay assignment.	Essay does not address assignment.
Textual Support and Accuracy (30%)	Uses relevant examples from readings to support thesis and cites these properly.	Uses examples from readings and references them properly, but link between examples and thesis is not always clear or examples are misinterpreted.	Does not sufficiently support thesis with examples from readings; does not explain relevance of examples used; does not provide proper references, <i>or</i> does not show understanding of examples used.	Does not draw upon text to support argument.
Clarity and Organization (20%)	Paper is clearly organized; body of paper supports thesis statement.	Paper contains a clear thesis statement but body is not always organized so that it supports thesis.	No clear thesis statement, but does have some principles of organization.	No clear thesis statement or method of organizing argument.
Writing (20%)	Few errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation.	Some errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation, but errors do not affect ability to get point across in paper.	Errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation interfere at times with ability of reader to understand points in paper.	Frequent errors in grammar, spelling or punctuation; errors make paper difficult to read.
Grade:	Comments:			