

# SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

PHI 2400-001

SPRING 2009

INSTRUCTOR: GABRIEL ROCKHILL

**Time:** MW 1:30-2:45

**Location:** Driscoll 248

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## OVERVIEW

This course explores the historical evolution of “political cultures,” understood as the practical modes of intelligibility that dictate the very nature of politics by determining who qualifies as a political subject, what is visible as a political action, and how the spatio-temporal framework of politics is structured.

The first section of the course is dedicated to analyzing the historical emergence and evolution of three major political configurations that have marked the history of the Euro-American world: cosmological political culture, ecclesiastical political culture, and contractual political culture. This macroscopic overview of the history of political cultures will allow us to highlight the specificity of the contractual political culture we are still living within. We will focus most notably on the links between a series of unique characteristics of modern politics: the emergence of the bourgeois public sphere, the appearance of modern democracy and social contract theory, the “birth” of public opinion, the development of the nation-state, the transformation of the notion of revolution, the gradual displacement of the limits of political visibility (which opened up to workers, women, foreigners, and other minorities), and the emergence of a battery of new concepts for thinking politics, including the modern concepts of race, culture, civilization, revolution, ideology, popular sovereignty, and terrorism.

The second section of the class will adopt a microscopic perspective in concentrating on the specificity of our own contemporary socio-political ethos and how it may or may not distinguish itself from modern contractual political culture. We will examine most notably changes in the *what* (redistributive justice versus cultural justice), the *when* (revolutionary versus post-revolutionary politics), and the *where* (the nation-state versus globalization) of politics. This will allow us to investigate some of the underlying themes in contemporary debates regarding political liberalism, pragmatism communitarianism, multiculturalism, radical democracy, minority rights, gender and race inequality, postmodernism, and globalization.

Students should come away from this course with a general understanding of the history of social and political philosophy as well as with a solid grasp of contemporary debates in this area. They will be provided with philosophical tools that will allow them to critically assess the current socio-political conjuncture.

## REQUIRED MATERIAL

1. John Locke. *Political Essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
2. Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
3. John Grafton, Ed. *The Declaration of Independence and Other Great Documents of American History 1775-1865*. Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2000.
4. *Optional*: Vaughn, Lewis. *Writing Philosophy: A Student's Guide to Writing Philosophy Essays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
5. Essays and articles will be made available to you electronically and placed on reserve in the library. **It is required that you print or photocopy them so that you can bring them to every class.** It is highly recommended that you collect them all together in a binder so that you have all of the course readings in one place.
6. It is highly recommended that the students keep abreast of current events through the course of the semester by consulting and comparing various media sources (conservative and progressive, American and foreign, etc.). In addition to well-known sources of news (NY Times, Washington Post, major network news, BBC, etc.), it is recommended that you look at alternative sources like [www.democracynow.org](http://www.democracynow.org), [www.english.aljazeera.net](http://www.english.aljazeera.net), [www.truthdig.com](http://www.truthdig.com), [www.fair.org](http://www.fair.org) and [www.informationclearinghouse.info](http://www.informationclearinghouse.info).

## REQUIREMENTS

1. **Attendance and Participation – 15%.** The class will be conducted as a seminar so it will be very important for you to come to class having engaged with the required material. This means taking notes on the readings, preparing informed questions and comments, and re-reading the material after class discussion. A cursory, passive overview of the material will prove insufficient. In addition, you should make sure that you organize your time wisely since some sessions will require more out-of-class work than others.
2. **Response Papers – 20%.** You will be required to write **nine one-page papers** (1 or 1 ½ spaced) that respond to and critically engage with the material. A list of the questions can be found in the program below. It is a good idea to make explicit references to the texts and clearly indicate the page numbers of any quotes. Unlike the “graded response papers” (see below), your grade for the response papers will be calculated based on the number of papers you complete and turn in **on time**. This means that you will not receive individual grades on each of the papers. Instead, you will receive a proportional grade based on the number of papers you successfully complete (8 out of 8 = 100% (A), 7/8 = 87.5% (B+), etc.). However, since you will not know in advance which assignments will be graded, it is highly recommended that you prepare each response paper as if you were handing it in for a grade. It is also recommended that you make use of the Villanova Writing Center for your response papers, particularly at the beginning of the semester (please turn in your Writing Center form with your paper). You can use their pamphlet *How to Write a College Paper* as a useful starting point.
3. **Graded Response Paper / Oral Presentation – 15%.** **One** of your response papers (see above) will be orally presented in class and graded. Since I will not tell you in advance who will be presenting their papers for a grade, it is highly recommended that you prepare every response paper as if it were going to be turned in for a grade.
4. **Debate – 20%.** You will be expected to participate in one of the debates at the end

of the semester. Guidelines for the debates will be provided.

5. **Final Exam – 30%.** A **comprehensive** final exam will be scheduled on May 5<sup>th</sup>. I will provide you with guidelines and study hints in advance of the exam. The best way to ensure a solid performance on your final exam is to take detailed course notes, spend ample time on your response papers, and take notes on the readings. With the exception of students with disabilities that require alternative test-taking arrangements or other university approved exceptions, all tests must be taken in class at the day and time listed on the syllabus. No other make-up tests will be administered.

#### **POLICY ON E-MAILS AND COMPUTER USE**

1. I will try to respond to all e-mails in a reasonable time frame. As a general rule of thumb, this means that you will get a response within 24 to 48 hours. If you send an email over the weekend or late at night, do not expect to receive a response back immediately, even if you deem it to be an emergency.
2. I will **not grant extensions via e-mail**. If you have a last-second problem printing your response paper, print it after class and drop it in my box before 7 p.m. that day (see “Policy on Grade Changes” below).
3. In general, I will not provide my lecture notes or other material that you could have obtained in class. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain this material.
4. I will not provide information already available in the syllabus via e-mail.
5. Please do not take offense to laconic e-mails since I find it preferable to respond to as many e-mails as possible within the shortest amount of time.
6. **No computers** will be allowed in the classroom unless you obtain explicit consent from me.

#### **POLICY ON GRADE CHANGES, LATE WORK AND ABSENCES**

1. I will not change grades based on oral negotiation. If you feel that I have overlooked something in my grading policy, please submit a detailed written explanation of what has been overlooked along with the graded copy of your work.
2. **No late work will be accepted.** Rather than looking behind in class, you should plan on looking ahead and catching up on future assignments any points you may have lost on past assignments. You will only be able to make up for late work in the most extreme cases, and preferably when you have let me know ahead of time that you have a serious extra-curricular problem. Since a “lost paper” does not constitute a valid excuse in the computer age, **always back up your work**. If you have problems printing at the last second, you should plan on **printing the paper immediately after class** so that you can place it in my mailbox in the philosophy office before 7 p.m. the same day (**do not e-mail me the paper**). You have the right to turn in two—and only two—papers like this through the course of the semester.
3. If you absolutely have to miss class, **make arrangements to turn in the paper ahead of time or ask a friend to turn it in for you.**

#### **POLICY ON PLAGIARISM AND RESEARCH RESOURCES**

Any form of plagiarism is unacceptable. This includes, but is not limited to, referencing or paraphrasing someone else’s ideas without proper citation as well as handing in someone

else's work as your own. This also includes using any part of an Internet resource without proper citation. Any assignment that is at all plagiarized will automatically receive an F and, depending on the circumstances, may constitute grounds for failing the course. Moreover, every incident will be reported to the university and could constitute grounds for expulsion. For a good list of resources on what counts as plagiarism and how to avoid plagiarizing see <http://directory.google.com/Top/Reference/Education/Educators/Plagiarism/Prevention/>

You should be aware of the fact that not all of the information on the Internet is equally accurate. This is why I strongly encourage library research over Internet research and require that you do most of your work in the library. Of course, you should also be wary of the quality of published sources and try to get a feel for what is reliable (based on the author's name, the publisher, journals' reputations, etc.). If you have any questions regarding the quality of Internet or published resources, please contact me.

**PROGRAM** (subject to change)

### **INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY**

**January 12**                    **Introduction to the History of Political Cultures**  
**January 14**                    **On the Nature of Political Philosophy**  
Leo Strauss. "What Is Political Philosophy."  
*Question 1: Discuss your background, interests, and expectations for this course. Provide a map of Strauss' basic historical argument, and give me a sense for how you found the first reading.*

### **SECTION I: HISTORY OF POLITICAL CULTURES**

#### **PART 1: COSMOLOGICAL POLITICAL CULTURE**

*January 19*                    *Martin Luther King Day: No Class*  
**January 21**                    **Politics in the Abstract: Plato and the Greek World**  
Plato. *The Republic* (Book III).  
**January 26**                    **The Divorce between *Poēsis* and *Politeia***  
Plato. *The Republic* (Book X).  
*Question 2: Does Plato's opinion on the relationship between poetry and politics change between Book III and Book X of The Republic? Why or why not?*  
**January 28**                    **The Nature of the *Polis***  
Aristotle. *Politics* (Book I)  
**February 2**                    **Is Slavery Natural?**  
Aristotle. *Politics* (Book I)  
Lewis Vaughn. *Writing Philosophy* (Chapter 1)  
*Question 3: Explain Aristotle's theory of "natural slavery." How does it relate to the natural hierarchy of the household and the social inequality that is a prerequisite for political equality in the Greek world?*

#### **PART 2: ECCLESIASTICAL POLITICAL CULTURE**

**February 4**                    *Civitas*

	Augustine. <i>The City of God</i> (selection of Book VIII on Plato and Book XI)
February 9	<b>New Worlds: Barbarians and Pagans</b> Anthony Pagden. "The Image of the Barbarian" in <i>The Fall of Natural Man</i> . Lewis Vaughn. <i>Writing Philosophy</i> (Chapter 2) <i>Question 4: Explain the major differences in political frontiers between the Greek world and the Christian world. Focus on how the us/them relationship changes by discussing the differences between "barbarians" in the Greek world and "pagans" in the Christian world.</i>
	<b>PART 3: CONTRACTUAL POLITICAL CULTURE</b>
February 11	<b>Politics as Contract</b> John Locke. <i>The Second Treatise of Government</i> (Chapters I-VII)
February 16	<b>Commonwealth, Civitas, Polis</b> John Locke. <i>The Second Treatise of Government</i> (Chapters VIII-X, XVI-XIX) Lewis Vaughn. <i>Writing Philosophy</i> (Chapter 3)
February 18	<b>Commonwealth, Civitas, Polis</b> John Locke. <i>The Second Treatise of Government</i> (Chapters XVI-XIX). <i>Question 5: Explain why John Locke's work can be understood as straddling "ecclesiastical political culture" and "contractual political culture."</i>
February 23	<b>Public Sphere</b> Jürgen Habermas. <i>The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere</i> (Chapter 2).
February 25	<b>Public Sphere</b> Jürgen Habermas. <i>The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere</i> (Chapter 2).
March 2-8	<b>Semester Recess</b>
March 9	<b>Culture and Civilization</b> Jean-Jacques Rousseau. <i>On the Social Contract</i> (Book I). Lewis Vaughn. <i>Writing Philosophy</i> (Chapter 4)
March 11	<b>Social Contract</b> Jean-Jacques Rousseau. <i>On the Social Contract</i> (Book II). <i>Question 6: Write an anonymous assessment of the class to date. Discuss both the strong points and the weak points. Highlight any difficulties or concerns you may have.</i>
March 16	<b>Social Contract</b> Jean-Jacques Rousseau. <i>On the Social Contract</i> (Book III). <i>Question 7: Analyze the relationship between Rousseau and "cosmological political culture." Explain why you think it does or does not make sense to speak of a "contractual political culture" in the case of Rousseau.</i>
March 18	<b>The American "Founding Fathers"</b> "The Declaration of Independence" and "The Constitution of the United States." Lewis Vaughn. <i>Writing Philosophy</i> (Chapter 5)

- Optional reading: Alexis de Tocqueville. *Democracy in America* (selection).
- March 23** **The American “Founding Fathers”**  
*The Federalist Papers* nos. 9 and 10.  
**Question 8:** *Is the founding of America as an independent political entity an outgrowth of the tradition of “liberalism” and “democracy”? Why or why not?*
- March 25** **The Time of Revolution**  
 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. “Manifesto of the Communist Party.”

## SECTION II: CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL ETHOS

### PART 1: THE *WHAT* OF POLITICS

- March 30** **Liberalism**  
 John Rawls. *A Theory of Justice* (selection).  
 Lewis Vaughn. *Writing Philosophy* (Chapter 6)
- April 1**  
 John Rawls. *A Theory of Justice* (selection).  
**Question 9:** *How does Rawls’ theory of justice purport to renew the social contract tradition? How does it solve problems inherent in traditional social contract theory?*
- April 6** **Communitarianism and Multiculturalism**  
 Charles Taylor. *Multiculturalism* (selection).  
 Lewis Vaughn. *Writing Philosophy* (Chapter 7)
- April 8** **Green Politics and Ecofeminism**  
 Rosemary Radford Ruether. “Corporate Globalization and the Deepening of Earth’s Impoverishment” in *Integrating Ecofeminism, Globalization, and World Religions*.
- April 15** **Solving the Culture Issue by Exiting False Alternatives**  
 Nancy Fraser. “From Redistribution to Recognition?” in *Justice Interruptus*.  
 Lewis Vaughn. *Writing Philosophy* (Chapter 8)  
 Optional Reading: Will Kymlicka. *Multicultural Citizenship*; Samuel Huntington. *The Clash of Civilizations*.  
**Debate 1: Cultural Politics**  
*Position Defended by Group 1 (the “realists”): Cultural issues inevitably lead to political conflicts.*  
  
*Position Defended by Group 2 (the “multiculturalists”): It is possible, and beneficial, to mediate between cultural differences.*

**March 9-13** **Easter Recess**

### PART 2: THE *WHEN* OF POLITICS

- April 20** **Postmodern Presentism and the End of Utopia**  
 Jean-François Lyotard. *The Postmodern Condition* (selection).  
 Fredric Jameson. “Postmodernism and Consumer Society.”  
**Debate 2: Postmodernism**  
*Position Defended by Group 1: We are living in a “postmodern” era.*

*Position Defended by Group 2: We are not living in a “postmodern” era.*

April 22

**Has History Come to an End?**

Francis Fukuyama. *The End of History* (selection).

**Debate 3: Post-revolutionary Era**

*Position Defended by Group 1: History has come to an end, and we are living in a post-revolutionary era.*

*Position Defended by Group 2: History has not come to an end, and we are not living in a post-revolutionary era.*

**PART 3: THE WHERE OF POLITICS**

April 27

**Globalization Debate**

David Held and Anthony McGrew. “The Great Globalization Debate: An Introduction” in *The Global Transformations Reader*.

*Optional Readings:* Immanuel Wallerstein, “After Developmentalism and Globalization, What?,” *Social Forces*, vol. 83, n° 3, mars 2005, p. 1263-1278; Pierre Bourdieu. “The Myth of ‘Globalization’ and the European Social State.”

**Debate 4: Globalization**

*Position Defended by Group 1 (the “Globalists”): We are living in an era of globalization.*

*Position Defended by Group 2 (the “Skeptics”): We are not living in an era of globalization.*

April 29

**Where Does the Media Look?**

Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman. “A Propaganda Model” in *Manufacturing Consent*.

*Optional Reports and Films:* The PIPA/Knowledge Networks Poll. “Misperceptions, the Media and the Iraq War” (October 2, 3003); Robert Greenwald. *Outfoxed – Rupert Murdoch’s War on Journalism* (2004); *Outlawed* (available at [www.witness.org](http://www.witness.org)); John Pilger. *Breaking The Silence - Truth and Lies in the War on Terror* (available at [www.video.google.co.uk](http://www.video.google.co.uk)).

**Debate 5: Media**

*Position Defended by Group 1: The media is purely objective and aims at presenting a non-normative account of events.*

*Position Defended by Group 2: The media is grounded in a series of interests and always presents tendentious accounts based on interest groups.*

**FINAL EXAM**

May 5

**8 a.m.-10:30 a.m.**