

# SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

PHI 2400

FALL 2007

INSTRUCTOR: GABRIEL ROCKHILL

**Time:** TR 2:30-3:45

**Location:** Tolent 407

**Office Hours:** M 3:30-4:20 and T 1:30-2:20 or by appointment (St. Augustine Center, office 171)

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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: natural 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.

In the final section of the course, we will focus more specifically on a set of “key concepts” that have come to define the unique nature of politics in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century: democracy, terrorism, freedom and neo-racism. In order to critically assess the relevancy and effectiveness of these concepts, we will relate them back to our earlier macroscopic historical overview of political cultures.

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 AND VISITS

1. John Locke. *The Second Treatise of Government*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1952.
2. 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.**
3. The films we will watch at the end of the semester will be available at Reel Divine or on the Internet.
4. A field trip will be organized to Independence Hall, most likely on October 11<sup>th</sup>.
5. I highly recommend that you see Michael Moore's most recent film for our discussion of freedom and public opinion on December 11<sup>th</sup>.

## REQUIREMENTS

1. **Attendance and Participation – 10%**. 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 – 30%**. You will be required to write **a single one-page paper per week** (1 or 1 ½ spaced) that responds to and critically engages with the material. A list of the questions can be found in the program below. Although you will write twelve response papers through the course of the semester, only **three** of them will be collected and graded. The other papers will act as springboards for class discussion and other pedagogical exercises (peer review, group work, class assessment, oral presentations). It is **highly 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).
3. **Midterm Paper – 30%**. You will be required to write one 5-6 page research paper (spacing: 1 ½ or 2). The topic for the paper will be presented in class, and I will provide guidelines and suggestions. You should know that the midterm paper, unlike the response papers, will require library research that goes beyond the required course books. A visit to the library will be scheduled prior to the due date in order to familiarize you with its resources. It is **highly recommended** that you make an **early appointment** to take advantage of the Villanova Writing Center for your paper (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.
4. **Final Exam – 30%**. A **comprehensive** final exam will be scheduled on December 19<sup>th</sup>. The exam will contain short answer questions, and you will be required to write an essay. 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 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.

## **POLICY ON E-MAILS**

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.
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.

## **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.**
3. If you absolutely have to miss class for an excusable reason, please let me know ahead of time.

## **PROGRAM (subject to change)**

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

August 28    **Introduction to the History of Political Cultures**  
Aug. 30     **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: NATURAL POLITICAL CULTURE

September 4 **Politics in the Abstract: Plato and the Greek World**

Plato. *The Republic* (Book III).

Sept. 6 **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?*

Sept. 11 **The Nature of the *Polis***

Aristotle. *Politics* (Book I)

Sept. 13 **Is Slavery Natural?**

Aristotle. *Politics* (Book I)

*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

Sept. 18 ***Civitas***

Augustine. *The City of God* (selection Book VIII on Plato and Book XI)

Sept. 20 **New Worlds: Barbarians and Pagans**

Anthony Pagden. "The Image of the Barbarian" in *The Fall of Natural Man*.

*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.*

### PART 3: CONTRACTUAL POLITICAL CULTURE

Sept. 25 **Politics as Contract**

John Locke. *The Second Treatise of Government* (Chapters I-VII)

Sept. 27 **Commonwealth, *Civitas*, *Polis***

John Locke. *The Second Treatise of Government* (Chapters VIII-X, XVI-XIX)

*Question 5: Explain why John Locke's work can be understood as straddling "ecclesiastical political culture" and "contractual political culture."*

October 2 **Public Sphere**

Jürgen Habermas. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Chapter 2).

Oct. 4 **Culture and Civilization**

Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men* (Part I).

*No Question This Week: Work on your midterm paper.*

Oct. 9 **Social Contract**

Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *On the Social Contract* (selection).

**Midterm Paper Due.**

*Topic: Choose one modern author (Locke or Rousseau) and one earlier "political culture" (Athenian "natural political culture" or ecclesiastical political culture). Analyze the relationship between*

*the modern author and the earlier “political culture” by discussing the ways in which their work differs from and/or is similar to either ecclesiastical or natural political culture. Explain why you think it does or does not make sense to speak of a “contractual political culture” in the case of Locke or Rousseau.*

**Oct. 11 Foundations of American Democracy**  
Alexis de Tocqueville. *Democracy in America* (selection).  
**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.

**Oct. 13-21 Semester Recess: No Class**

**Oct. 23 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

**Oct. 25 Liberalism**  
John Rawls. *A Theory of Justice* (selection).  
**Question 7:** How does Rawls’ theory of justice purport to renew the social contract tradition? How does it solve problems inherent in traditional social contract theory?

**Oct. 30 Liberalism and Pragmatism**  
John Rawls. *A Theory of Justice* (selection).  
Richard Rorty. *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (selection).  
**November 1 Radical Democracy**  
Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (selection).  
**Question 8:** What is “radical democracy” according to Laclau and Mouffe?

**Nov. 6 Communitarianism and Multiculturalism**  
Charles Taylor. *Multiculturalism* (selection).

**Nov. 8 Cultural Politics**  
Samuel Huntington. *The Clash of Civilizations* (selection).  
**Question 9:** Explain the significant differences between the way in which Taylor thinks about culture and how Huntington views the role of culture in contemporary politics.

**Nov. 13 Solving the Culture Issue by Exiting False Alternatives**  
Nancy Fraser. “From Redistribution to Recognition?” in *Justice Interruptus*.  
Will Kymlicka. *Multicultural Citizenship* (selection).

## PART 2: THE WHEN OF POLITICS

**Nov. 15 Postmodern Presentism and the End of Utopia**  
Jean-François Lyotard. *The Postmodern Condition* (selection).  
Fredric Jameson. “Postmodernism and Consumer Society.”  
**Question 10:** What are the similarities and differences between these two rival accounts of postmodernism? Which one do you find more compelling?

**Nov. 20 Has History Come to an End?**  
Francis Fukuyama. *The End of History* (selection).

## PART 3: THE WHERE OF POLITICS

**Nov. 27 Globalization Debate**  
David Held and Anthony McGrew. “The Great Globalization Debate: An Introduction” in *The Global Transformations Reader*.

- Nov. 29**      **Critiques of “Globalization Discourse”**  
 Pierre Bourdieu. “The Myth of ‘Globalization’ and the European Social State.”  
 Immanuel Wallerstein, “After Developmentalism and Globalization, What?,” *Social Forces*, vol. 83, n° 3, mars 2005, p. 1263-1278.  
**Question 11:** What is your position on globalization? Are you a ‘sceptic,’ a ‘globalist’ or something else? Use the readings to support your claims.

**SECTION III: KEYWORDS OF OUR TIMES**

- December 4**    **Democracy and Democratophilia**  
 Moses Finley. “Leaders and Followers” in *Democracy Ancient and Modern*.
- Dec. 6**        **Terrorism and Securitarian Politics**  
*National Security Strategy of the United States of America*.  
 Noam Chomsky. 9/11 (selection).  
 Terry Gilliam. *Brazil* (1985).  
**Question 12:** What is the difference between a “terrorist” and a “resistance fighter”? Use the readings and/or the film to support your claims.
- Dec. 11**      **Freedom and Public Opinion**  
 Robert Greenwald. *Outfoxed – Rupert Murdoch’s War on Journalism* (2004).  
*Outlawed* (available at [www.witness.org](http://www.witness.org)).  
 Optional Film: 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)).
- Dec. 13**      **Racism, Neo-Racism, and Meta-Racism in the Age of Multiculturalism**  
 Michael Banton. “The Idiom of Race” in *Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader*.  
 Sophia Coppola. *Lost in Translation* (2003).  
**No Question This Week:** Prepare for your final exam.

**FINAL EXAM**

- Dec. 19**      Final Comprehensive Exam: 10:45 a.m.-1:15 p.m.