

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

PHI 2400

SPRING 2008

INSTRUCTOR: GABRIEL ROCKHILL

Time: MW 1:30-2:45

Location: Vasey 201

Office Hours: MW 12:30-1:30 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.

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. Locke, John. *The Second Treatise of Government and a Letter Concerning Toleration*. Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 2002.
2. Grafton, John, Ed. *The Declaration of Independence and Other Great Documents of American History 1775-1865*. Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2000.
3. Vaughn, Lewis. *Writing Philosophy: A Student's Guide to Writing Philosophy Essays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
4. 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.
5. 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, www.fair.org, www.informationclearinghouse.info, www.english.aljazeera.net. You might also be interested in registering to vote if you have not already: <http://www.dos.state.pa.us/dos/site/default.asp>

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 – 35%.** 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. **Two** of these papers will be collected and graded. You will also receive a general grade for having completed (or not) all of the response papers, which 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. **Debate – 20%.** You will also be expected to participate in one of the debates at the end of the semester. Guidelines for the debates will be provided.
4. **Final Take-Home Exam – 30%.** You will be required to write one 6-8 page double-spaced research paper. I will provide you with a topic and guidelines. 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).

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 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.
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. **No computers** will be allowed in the classroom unless you obtain explicit consent.

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 e-mailing me the paper **before class** and printing the paper immediately after class so that you can place it in my mailbox in the philosophy office.
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

January 14 **Introduction to the History of Political Cultures**
January 16 **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

January 21 **Martin Luther King Day: No Class**
January 23 **Politics in the Abstract: Plato and the Greek World**
Plato. *The Republic* (Book III).
January 28 **The Divorce between *Poēsis* and *Politeia***
Plato. *The Republic* (Book X).

	<i>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?</i>
January 30	The Nature of the Polis Aristotle. <i>Politics</i> (Book I)
February 4	Is Slavery Natural? Aristotle. <i>Politics</i> (Book I) Lewis Vaughn. <i>Writing Philosophy</i> (Chapter 1) <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?</i>
	PART 2: ECCLESIASTICAL POLITICAL CULTURE
February 6	Civitas Augustine. <i>The City of God</i> (selection Book VIII on Plato and Book XI)
February 6 (7 p.m.) Cinema	Extraordinary Rendition and the Torture Regime In order to make up for a class cancelled at the end of the semester, you are required to attend this presentation.
February 11	New Worlds: Barbarians and Pagans 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>
	PART 3: CONTRACTUAL POLITICAL CULTURE
February 13	Politics as Contract John Locke. <i>The Second Treatise of Government</i> (Chapters I-VII)
February 18	Commonwealth, Civitas, Polis John Locke. <i>The Second Treatise of Government</i> (Chapters VIII-X, XVI-XIX) Lewis Vaughn. <i>Writing Philosophy</i> (Chapter 3) <i>Question 5: Explain why John Locke's work can be understood as straddling "ecclesiastical political culture" and "contractual political culture."</i>
February 20	Public Sphere Jürgen Habermas. <i>The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere</i> (Chapter 2).
February 25	Culture and Civilization Jean-Jacques Rousseau. <i>Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men</i> (Part I). Lewis Vaughn. <i>Writing Philosophy</i> (Chapter 4)
February 27	Social Contract Jean-Jacques Rousseau. <i>On the Social Contract</i> (selection). <i>Question 6: Analyze the relationship between Rousseau and "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 Rousseau.</i>
March 1-9	Semester Recess
March 10	Foundations of American Democracy Alexis de Tocqueville. <i>Democracy in America</i> (selection).

- March 12 Lewis Vaughn. *Writing Philosophy* (Chapter 5)
The Time of Revolution
 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. "Manifesto of the Communist Party."
Question 7: 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.

SECTION II: CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL ETHOS

PART 1: THE WHAT OF POLITICS

- March 17 **Liberalism**
 John Rawls. *A Theory of Justice* (selection).
 Lewis Vaughn. *Writing Philosophy* (Chapter 6)
- March 19 **No Class (Professor Absent for Lecture)**
 March 20-24 **Easter Recess**
 March 25 **The American "Founding Fathers"**
 "The Declaration of Independence" and "The Constitution of the United States."
- March 27 **The Media's Service in Selling the Wars in Iraq, Iran, and Beyond**
 Lecture by Edward S. Herman
 7 p.m., Bartley 1011
 In order to make up for a cancelled class, you are required to attend this presentation.
- March 28 **Make-Up Class, 3:30-4:45, Bartley 023A**
 March 31 **The American "Founding Fathers"**
 "The Declaration of Independence" and "The Constitution of the United States."
The Federalist Papers nos. 9 and 10.
 John Rawls. *A Theory of Justice* (selection).
Question 8: 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 2 **Communitarianism and Multiculturalism**
 Charles Taylor. *Multiculturalism* (selection).
 Lewis Vaughn. *Writing Philosophy* (Chapter 7)
Question 9: Is the founding of America as an independent political entity an outgrowth of the tradition of "liberalism" and "democracy"? Why or why not?
- April 7 **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* (selection); Samuel Huntington. *The Clash of Civilizations* (selection).
Debate 1: Cultural Politics
 Position Defended by Group 1 (the "realists"): Cultural issues inevitably lead to political conflicts.
 Hope Collis, Victoria Ziemlewicz, Jimmy Ma
 Position Defended by Group 2 (the "multiculturalists"): It is possible, and beneficial, to mediate between cultural differences.
 Eric Alvarez, Carla Banks, Nicole Cabezas, Janet Lee

April 23
April 28
April 30

Final Discussion and Review
No Class (Professor Absent for Lecture)
No Class (Professor Absent for Lecture)

May 8

FINAL EXAM (TAKE HOME)
Final Exam: 8 a.m.-10:30 a.m.