Political Science 302: History of Political Thought

In this course we will read and discuss the ideas about political power that took form in conjunction with the development of capitalism in England. We will pay especially close attention to ideas about freedom, reason, property, human nature, popular power and the role of the state, and will ask how various proposals intersect with social relations such as capitalism, colonialism, racism and patriarchy.

Course Format and Requirements

Despite the large enrollment, this course will be conducted primarily as a seminar, centered on very close readings of selected texts. Thorough preparation and active participation are essential, as class meetings will consist of in-depth discussion of the assigned reading. The reading load is relatively light, reflecting the emphasis that will be placed on reading and thinking deeply about the material. These are extremely interesting works (and you are all curious and intelligent readers), so we should have an exciting semester. You will be reading difficult, primary sources, and I will not be spoon-feeding you information to be recited back to me on tests and in papers. Many students report loving the kind of thinking that will be required for this course. But not all do. Don’t take the course unless you’re up for it.

Your grade will be based on a mid-term (25%), a paper (35%) and a final exam (40%). There may also be a quiz during the second half of the semester, which would reduce the weight of the other assignments. Attendance is mandatory. Really. Plagiarism will result in failure for the course.

Texts

Books for the course have been ordered through the University at Albany Bookstore.

Heilbroner, The Nature and Logic of Capitalism
Tucker, Marx-Engels Reader
Hobbes, Leviathan
Locke, Second Treatise of Government
Rousseau, The Social Contract and Discourses
Mill, On Liberty, Utilitarianism, On Representative Government

Reproduced materials will be available on e-reserve.
Reading/Discussion Schedule (approximate)

Jan 23 - About the course
Jan 25 – Introductory lecture

I. What is Capitalism?

January 28 – Feb. 8

Marx, *Capital*, Vol 1, Part. 1, ch. 1, sections 1-3; Part 2, ch. 4

Marx, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, "Estranged Labour"

Marx, *Capital*, Vol 1, Part 1, ch. 4
Heilbroner, *The Nature and Logic of Capitalism*, ch.4
Wood, "The ‘demos’ versus ‘We the People’" (e-reserve)

II. Force, Monarchy and the Modern World-View - Hobbes

Feb. 13 - *Leviathan*, chs. 6, 8, 11; then 1, 4, 5
Feb. 15 - *Leviathan*, chs. 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 26 (secs. 1-6), 29
Monday, Feb. 18 – No class
Feb 20 – Hobbes discussion, continued

III. God, Parliament and Property - Locke

Feb. 22 – Debate at Putney Church (e-reserve)

Feb. 25- March 7

Locke, *2nd Treatise of Government*, chs. 1-5
*Essay on the Laws of Nature* (e-reserve)

2nd Treatise, Re-read ch. 5; Macpherson (e-reserve)

2nd Treatise, chs. 6, 7, 8, 9

2nd Treatise, chs. 16, 18, 19 (secs. 211-222; 240-243)
IV. Alienation, History and the Lockean State - Rousseau

March 10-17 – Rousseau, *A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*

Wednesday, March 19 – Mid-term

*** SPRING BREAK ***

March 31 – April 11 – Rousseau, *The Social Contract*

V. Abstract Universality – Kant

April 14 – Kant, selected political writings (e-reserve)

VI. Liberal Perfectionism - Mill

April 16 – April 25

    Mill, *On Liberty*, chs. 1-4;
    Mill, *Utilitarianism*, chs. 1-4
    Mill, *Representative Govt.*, chs. 1-5

VII. Reflections

April 28-May 2 – Readings to be determined
May 4 – Exam/Exam prep