Course Objectives
1. To understand and critically assess significant political writings of the modern era (17th – 20th centuries), including key concepts and debates.
2. To understand the historical context that gave rise to these concepts and debates.
3. To analyze their relevance and value for contemporary politics.
4. Develop critical thinking skills to be applied in reading, writing, and discussion.

Course Description
Modern political thought understands itself as the product of a radical break with the past: with tradition and a natural order for social and political relations. For the social contract tradition, such a radical break meant inventing political authority anew based on human reason. We inherit from this tradition a new understanding of revolution and political resistance that echoes today in the language of constitutions, human rights, and the rule of law.

What kind of political freedom is inaugurated by such revolutionary reasoning? Does equality between rich and poor, men and women, colonizer and colonized require that we strip away our social and political identities and cultural traditions in order to start fresh? What are the costs of turning a blind eye to political history, economic inequality, or identity differences such as race, culture, and gender? In response to these questions, we will consider the various meanings of political freedom and equality offered by theorists of the social contract tradition (Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau), their critics (Hume, Wollstonecraft, Burke), and the heirs to these debates who seek to consider political rationality and freedom anew (Mill, Marx, Arendt).

Required Texts
The following texts are required for this course and are available for purchase at the University bookstore and at Mary Jane Books (corner of Western Avenue and Quail Street). There will be a few additional readings made available on-line through Blackboard (as indicated in the schedule of readings).

- David Wootton, editor, Modern Political Thought, Second Edition (Hackett, 2008)
  ** Be sure to get the second edition of the Wootton volume **
- Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (Penguin, 2004)
Course Requirements
As a student in this course, you are required to:
• Attend class.
• Arrive on time.
• Complete all readings by the assigned date.
• Come to class prepared to participate actively in discussions on the assigned readings.
• Bring assigned texts to class with you.

** The use of laptops in class is strongly discouraged.

Evaluation
Students will be assessed in the course based on the following criteria:
Midterm: 25%; Paper 25%; Participation: 20%; Final Exam: 30%

Exams: Your ability to understand and critically analyze the course material will be assessed through a two quizzes and a final examination. Exams and quizzes will consist of identifications and in-class essays. Identifications will require you to identify a passage from the assigned readings, interpret its meaning, and explain its significance. In-class essays ask you to formulate an argument in response to a question and defend it using evidence from readings and lectures. The final exam will test you on material from readings and lectures from the entire semester. No make-up examinations, early examinations, or incomplete grades will be given, except in the event of serious personal or family illness or other extraordinary circumstances approved by the dean of undergraduate studies.

Paper: A short paper (5 pages) will give you the opportunity to develop an argument based on a careful analysis of a political theory text. You will be asked to respond to a question (out of a choice of at least two) and support your argument through evidence from assigned readings. You must be sure to cite (page numbers in the body of the essay) all of the passages or ideas taken from other authors. The paper is meant as a means of evaluating your skills in textual interpretation, so no research beyond the assigned texts is required. Citing non-academic sources, especially from the internet, is strongly discouraged and will likely result in a lower grade.

You will be required to submit two copies of your paper: 1) on paper at the beginning of class on the due date; and 2) electronically through Blackboard’s Safe Assign, a program that evaluates the originality of written work. The purpose of SafeAssign is to guard against academic dishonesty by judging whether essays draw from sources without citation. For more information on SafeAssign, see http://www.albany.edu/its/bls/safe_assign.htm.

Participation: Worth 20% of the course grade, participation is highly valued in this course and is essential for your success. The greater the quality and quantity of your participation, the more rewarding the class will be for everyone. You should always walk into class prepared with some contribution: a question, an interesting observation about the text, and/or an opinion on the readings. When the material is particularly difficult is the best time to bring questions about particular passages or key terms.
The participation grade is based on three components:

1) Attendance: Attendance will be taken each week, but attendance alone is insufficient to receive full credit for participation. Missing more than two (2) classes, lateness, or arriving unprepared to lecture will guarantee a grade of a C or lower.

2) Class Discussion: Each student is expected to regularly make an *active and thoughtful* contribution to class discussions. This includes asking questions, offering observations about the readings and formulating opinions. You are particularly encouraged to respectfully respond to your fellow students’ thoughts and opinions.

3) In-class assignments: In-class assignments will consist of writing a short piece, one page or less, that will be used to test your understanding of the reading. **In-class assignments will be given without notice periodically throughout the semester.** There will be no opportunity to make up missed in-class assignments. Missed assignments will be disregarded in the case of documented, excused absences.

**Excused Absences**

Students who are sick are strongly encouraged to stay home as necessary. For this reason, two absences will not be counted against your grade. This policy DOES NOT APPLY TO EXAM DATES. If you must miss an exam or more than two normal classes, you must have documentation from the **dean of undergraduate studies** (Lecture Center 30 Phone: 518-442-3950) or your grade will be adversely affected.

**Reasonable accommodation**

“Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with documented physical, sensory, systemic, cognitive, learning and psychiatric disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation in this class, please notify the Director of Disabled Student Services (Campus Center 137, 442-5490). That office will provide the course instructor with verification of your disability, and will recommend appropriate accommodations ([http://www.albany.edu/studentlife/dss/Accommodation.html](http://www.albany.edu/studentlife/dss/Accommodation.html)].”

If you wish to discuss academic accommodations for this course please also inform the instructor as soon as possible. In addition, the instructor will make every effort to accommodate difficulties arising from religious observance. You are asked to bring any possible conflicts to the instructor’s attention as soon as possible. Reasonable accommodations are generally established well in advance and are rarely granted after retroactively.

**Cheating and Plagiarism**

You will be required to complete the library’s on-line tutorial on plagiarism for this course. Cheating on an exam or plagiarizing written work will result in failure in the course and referral of the case to a university committee. For more information, please see the undergraduate bulletin: [http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html](http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html)

**Improvement**

In cases where you have shown marked improvement over the term, I will take this into consideration in computing final course grades.
Schedule of Readings and Assignments
**This schedule is subject to change. All changes will be announced in class.**

I. Introduction: Reason, Resistance, and Revolution

Week 1:
Jan 20 Introduction: What is Political Theory? What is Modern?
Jan 22 1) Syllabus

II. The Authority of Reason: The Social Contract Tradition

Week 2:

Week 3:
Feb 3 John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, chs. 1-5
Feb 5 Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, chs. 6-8

Week 4:
Feb 8 Locke, John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, chs. 9-12
Feb 10 Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, chs. 14, 18-19
**Paper Topics handed out**

Feb 12 Steve Pincus, *1688: The First Modern Revolution*, pp. 3-28 (Blackboard)
**On-line assignment #1 due: Complete the tutorial on plagiarism offered through the university library. Go to http://library.albany.edu and follow links to ‘tutorials’ to ‘plagiarism 101’ to ‘credit’. The library will issue a report confirming that you have completed the tutorial.**

Week 5:
Feb 15: No Class
February 19: Hume, *On the Original Contract*

Week 6:

**Paper Due at the beginning of class.**

February 24: Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, pp. 400 - 426

February 26: Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Book 1

Week 7:

March 3: Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Bk. 4

March 5: *Declaration of the Rights of Man* (Blackboard)

*Declaration of Independence* (Blackboard)


**On-line assignment #2 due: See Blackboard for assignment.**

III. Resistance and the Empire of Reason

Week 8:
March 8: Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, intro. and ch. 1

March 10: Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ch. 2

March 12: Olympe de Gouges, *Declaration of the Rights of Woman* (Blackboard)

Week 9:
March 15: **Quiz #1: covering all material from Hobbes through Wollstonecraft**


2) Review Pincus, *1688*, pp. 3-28

March 19: Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*

Week 10:
March 22: John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*

March 24: Mill, *On Liberty*

March 26: Mill, *On Liberty*

March 29 – April 5: Spring Break --- No Class
Week 11:
Apr 7       Mill, *The Subjection of Women*, ch. 1
Apr 9       Mill, *The Subjection of Women*

**IV. Revolutionary Reasoning**

Week 12:
Apr 12      1) Marx, *The German Ideology*, pp. 775-789 (until the section, “Division of Labor”)
             2) Marx, Alienated Labor, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, pp. 766-772
Apr 14      Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*
Apr 16      Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*

Week 13:
Apr 19      Marx, *Capital*, pp. 832-839
Apr 21      Marx, *Capital*, “The Working Day” and “The General Formula for Capital” (Blackboard)
Apr 23      **Quiz #2: Covering all material from Gouges through the Manifesto**

Week 14:
Apr 26      Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, introduction and ch. 4
Apr 28      Arendt, *On Revolution*, ch. 5
Apr 30      Arendt, *On Revolution*, ch. 6
May 3       Arendt, *On Revolution*
            Final Review

**Final Exam: Friday, May 7, 3:30 – 5:30 pm**