RPOS 103: Introduction to Political Theory  
Fall 2014: What is Freedom?  
(8007)

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Political Science Department  
smcpeeker@albany.edu  

M/W/F 1:40-2:35  
Business Administration 130  
Office Hours: W/F 12:30-1:30 (HU 016)  

Course Description
In this course, we will read a sampling of works from some of the most influential thinkers in the Western political theory tradition. Through these readings, we will discover what political theory is, and why it is important for the study of politics. For this course, we will be most interested in studying how various thinkers define freedom, and how they think that we can be free. These thinkers will be divided into three groups: Freedom and Truth, Freedom and Economics, and Freedom and Government, so they can “debate” the answers to three important clusters of questions: 1) Does the search for truth lead to freedom? If so, how can we arrange our political and/or governmental institutions to facilitate that search for truth, so that we can be free? If not, what does that mean for our political institutions; 2) How do various economic institutions lead toward or away from freedom? How can we build economic institutions that make us free? How will this affect our political and/or governmental institutions?; and 3) Can we construct governmental institutions that lead to freedom? If so, how? If not, then what other options do we have? We will tackle one of these cluster of questions for each section of the course.

Course Objectives
1) To read and understand some of the most important political texts in the Western political tradition  
2) To understand how the different writers of these texts conceptualized freedom and to understand how these various conceptions compare to and contrast with each other  
3) To connect these various concepts and ideas of freedom to the contemporary political scene  
4) To better learn how to read complex texts and to comprehend the nuances within and among these difficult texts  
5) To better learn how to communicate difficult ideas and how to translate them into political practice

Course Requirements
• Arrive on time to all lectures.  
• Complete all readings on time.  
• Bring the assigned readings to class.  
• Come to class ready to participate. This requires you to not only read the assigned readings but to think about them in advance of the lecture. Be prepared to answer questions about the text and to ask questions of your own. It may help to take notes
while you are reading, to underline key passages of the text, or to write down questions that you still have about the text.

- Complete two midterm exams and one final exam.

**Required Readings**
The following books are required for this course and are available at Mary Jane Books or online (please be sure to get the correct edition so we are, literally, all on the same page):

- **Alexis de Tocqueville** (Translated by Gerald Bevan), *Democracy in America* (Penguin Classics, 2003)

Additional readings will be made available online. They are marked with “*” in the “Schedule of Readings and Assignments” section of this syllabus.

**Attendance Policy**
Political theory is an activity not a formula. The process is at least as important as the result, which is to say it is impossible to understand the theory without understanding how the theory is put together. To understand how the theory works and moves, we will need to pick it up, mull it over, and try it out. This takes both time and conversation, which is the purpose of the class lectures and any resulting class discussions during our thrice weekly meetings. If you miss class time, you will not be able to fully make up what you missed. In a class of this size it is not possible to fully monitor your attendance. However, even though I will not take attendance, *I strongly recommend that you attend all classes.*

**Office Hours**
In a class of this size, it is not easy to generate discussions with widespread participation during our scheduled class meetings. Fortunately, the conversations and musings do not need to stop in the classroom. *I am always happy to further the discussion in my office hours, and, in fact, I encourage it.* The more you can actively engage with the material, the better you will understand it. If your class schedule makes it impossible for you to meet with me during my regularly scheduled office hours, please send me an e-mail so that we can arrange a mutually convenient time to meet. Attending my office hours affords you the opportunity to ask questions that are pertinent to your individual struggles and also allows you to formulate the theories in your own words.

**Excused Absences:**
If you must miss a class with a scheduled exam, you must have documentation from the dean of undergraduate studies (Lecture Center 30 Phone: 518-442-3950) that details the reason for your absence and excuses you from that absence. Absent this proper documentation, your grade will be adversely affected.
In addition, if you know that you will miss class time (for an athletic event, a religious holiday, or the like), please bring these to my attention (with proper and official documentation) within the first 3 class meetings or, if that is not possible, as soon as you become aware of them.

**Grading**
Midterm 1: 30%
Midterm 2: 30%
Final Exam: 40%

This course is graded on a scale of A-E.

**Exams:**
This class will have two midterm exams and one final exam. Both midterm exams will follow the same format. Part I of each midterm exam will consist of 3-5 short answer identification questions. Part II of each midterm exam will consist of one essay question. Two class meetings prior to the beginning of each midterm exam, I will distribute a sheet of paper that includes all possible short answer identification and essay questions. When you get to Parts I and II of the exam you will not have a choice of which questions you would like to answer, but you will have seen every possible question before taking the exam. Since our class periods are only 55 minutes long, you will have two class meetings to complete each midterm exam. On the first day of the midterm exam, I will distribute Part I of the exam, and you will have the full 55 minute class session to answer the short answer identifications. Then the following class meeting I will distribute Part II of the midterm exam, and you will have the full 55 minute class session to answer the essay question.

The final exam will follow a slightly different format. The final exam will consist of two sections. Each section will ask you to answer one essay question. The first section of the final exam will deal with the third part of the course entitled “Freedom and Government.” The second section of the final exam will ask you to address the theories from the course as a whole. In other words, *the final exam is cumulative*. On the last day of class, I will distribute a sheet of paper including all possible exam questions for each of the two sections of the final exam. Again, you will not be able to choose which essay questions you would like to answer, but you will have seen all possible questions before taking the exam.

As per the “Excused Absence” policy outlined above, make-up examinations, early examinations, or incomplete grades will be given only in the event of serious personal or family illness or other unusual circumstances as they are approved by the dean of undergraduate studies.

**Classroom Decorum:**

*Disruptive Behavior:*
Participation includes not only actively adding to the academic discourse of the classroom, but it also includes not engaging in activity that is disruptive of that discourse. This behavior includes, but is not limited to, making loud or distracting noises, visually
distracting students or the instructor, repeatedly leaving and entering the classroom, persisting in speaking without being recognized, or resorting to physical threats or personal insults.

_Laptops and Electronic Devices:_
All cell phones, iPods, and other electronic devices must be silenced and stored out of sight for the duration of class time. Additionally, usage of laptops, iPads, or the like is strongly discouraged. Usage of these devices for any activity other than note taking is prohibited. Please see me after the first class if you anticipate taking notes on a laptop or similar device.

**Grade Appeals:**
In order to appeal an exam grade, you should see me during office hours within 2 weeks of receiving back the exam and submit a 1-2 page typewritten explanation of your reasons for believing that the grade should be changed. A grade appeal may result in the grade being raised, lowered, or left unaltered. After two weeks, grade complaints will not be considered unless there are mitigating circumstances such as a serious illness.

**Cheating and Plagiarism**
Under no circumstances should you submit someone else’s work as your own. This includes, but is not limited to: copying text from another student on tests or papers, copying text from internet sites (e.g. Wikipedia, Sparknotes) or other sources without quotation marks and full citations, or submitting your own work from another course.

Cheating on an exam or plagiarizing written work will result in course failure 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).

**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, 518-442-5490). That office will provide the course instructor with verification of your disability, and will recommend appropriate accommodations ([http://www.albany.edu/disability/current.shtml](http://www.albany.edu/disability/current.shtml)).

If you wish to discuss academic accommodations for this course, for the above reasons or other cases including religious holidays, inform the instructor at the beginning of the term. Reasonable accommodations are generally established well in advance and are rarely granted retroactively.

**Writing Center (Humanities 140)**
The writing center provides tutorials on writing essays and improving language skills (ESL). Visit their website at: [http://www.albany.edu/writing/](http://www.albany.edu/writing/).
Academic Support Services (Library Room 94)
Academic support services arrange individual and group tutorials as well as study skills workshops on time management, how to improve your concentration, essay exam skills, listening skills, and overcoming procrastination. Visit their website: http://www.albany.edu/oaae/index.shtml.
### Schedule of Readings and Assignments

Reading selections not from required books will be made available online.

**This schedule is subject to change. All changes will be announced in class.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading Selections</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 25</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
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#### I. Freedom and Truth

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading Selections</th>
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<tr>
<td>Aug. 27</td>
<td>Plato <em>Republic</em> Book I (all)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug. 29</td>
<td>Plato <em>Republic</em> Books II (all) and III (ln. 412b8-end)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sep. 1</td>
<td><strong>NO CLASS LABOR DAY</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sep. 3</td>
<td>Plato <em>Republic</em> Books IV (all) and V (beg.-ln. 471c)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sep. 5</td>
<td>Plato <em>Republic</em> Books V (471c-end) and VI (ln. 487e6-ln. 489d4; ln. 496a11-end)</td>
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<td>Sep. 8</td>
<td>Plato <em>Republic</em> Book VII (beg.-521c7)</td>
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<td>Sep. 10</td>
<td>Plato <em>Republic</em> Books VIII (all)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep. 12</td>
<td>Plato <em>Republic</em> Books IX (all) and X (ln. 608b2-end)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sep. 15</td>
<td>Mill <em>On Liberty</em> Chapter 1</td>
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<td>Sep. 17</td>
<td>Mill <em>On Liberty</em> Chapter 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep. 19</td>
<td>Mill <em>On Liberty</em> Chapter 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sep. 22</td>
<td>Foucault “Two Lectures” *</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sep. 24</td>
<td>Foucault “Two Lectures” *</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sep. 26</td>
<td><strong>NO CLASS (USE THIS TIME TO REVIEW) (No Office Hours)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sep. 29</td>
<td>Midterm Exam 1: Part I</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 1</td>
<td>Midterm Exam 1: Part II</td>
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#### II. Freedom and Economics

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading Selections</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 3</td>
<td>Locke <em>Second Treatise of Government</em> Chapters I-IV</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 6</td>
<td>Locke <em>Second Treatise of Government</em> Chapters V</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Oct.  8  Locke *Second Treatise of Government* Chapters VI-IX
Oct. 10  Locke *Second Treatise of Government* Chapters XIX
Oct. 13  Marx *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* Pages 66-105 *
Oct. 15  Marx *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* Pages 66-105 *
Oct. 17  Marx *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* Pages 66-105 *
Oct. 20  Friedman “Introduction” * and “The Relation Between Economic Freedom and Political Freedom” *
Oct. 22  Friedman “The Role of Government in a Free Society” *
Oct. 24  **NO CLASS (USE THIS TIME TO REVIEW)**
Oct. 27  Midterm Exam 2: Part I
Oct. 29  Midterm Exam 2: Part II

**III. Freedom and Government**

Oct. 31  Rousseau *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* Preface and Part I
Nov.  3  Rousseau *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* Part II
Nov.  5  Rousseau *Social Contract* Book I
Nov.  7  Rousseau *Social Contract* Book II
Nov. 10  Rousseau *Social Contract* Book III (Ch. 1, 10-15, 18) and IV (Ch. 1-3)
Nov. 12  Tocqueville *Democracy in America* (“Author’s Introduction;” Vol. 2, Part 3, Ch. 1)
Nov. 14  Tocqueville *Democracy in America* (Vol. 1, Part 1, Ch. 4, 5; Vol. 1, Part 2, Ch. 7)
Nov. 17  Tocqueville *Democracy in America* (“The Author’s Note to the Second Volume; Vol. 2, Part 1, Ch. 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11)
Nov. 19  Tocqueville *Democracy in America* (Vol. 2, Part 2, Ch. 1-9; Vol 1. Part 2, Ch. 4; Vol. 2, Part 3, Ch. 13)
Nov. 21  Tocqueville *Democracy in America* (Vol. 2, Part 2, Ch. 1-9; Vol 1. Part 2, Ch. 4; Vol. 2, Part 3, Ch. 13)
Nov. 24  Tocqueville *Democracy in America* (Vol. 2, Part 2, Ch. 10, 13, 14; Vol. 2, Part 4, Ch. 1-4, 6, 7)

Nov. 26  NO CLASS THANKSGIVING (No Office Hours)

Nov. 28  NO CLASS THANKSGIVING (No Office Hours)

Dec. 1  Goldman “A New Declaration of Independence”* “Was My Life Worth Living” * “An Anarchist Looks at Life” *

Dec. 3  Goldman “Anarchism: What It Really Stands For” *

Dec. 5  Semester Wrap-Up

Dec. 8  Semester Review

**Final Exam: Wednesday December 17, 2014 8:00am-10:00am**