

RPOS 103: Introduction to Political Theory
Fall 2015: What is Freedom?
(7646)

Prof. S. McKeever
Political Science Department
smckeever@albany.edu

M/W/F 1:40-2:35pm
Humanities 024
Office Hours: W/F 12:35-1:35 (HU 016)
Fulfills Gen. Ed. Req.--Hum., Intl. Pers.

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 theory 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 also 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):

- Plato (Translated by G.M.A. Grube), *Republic* (Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1992)
- John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (Dover Thrift Editions, 2002)
- John Locke (Edited by C.B. Macpherson), *Second Treatise of Government* (Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1980)
- Jean Jacques Rousseau (Translated and edited by Donald A. Cress), *The Basic Political Writings*, 2nd Edition (Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2012)
- 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. 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 imperative that we generate discussions with widespread participation. 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 that you can actively engage with the material, the better you will understand it. 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. Due to the small class size of this summer course, office hours will be by appointment. See me after class or send me an e-mail to schedule an appointment.

Excused Absences:

If you must miss a class with a scheduled exam, you must have documentation from the dean of undergraduate studies 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. All three exams will be essay exams. Each midterm exam will ask you to answer one essay question, which will ask you to synthesize all three thinkers from the preceding unit. Midterm Exam 1 will cover the first unit entitled “Freedom and Truth.” Midterm Exam 2 will cover the second unit entitled “Freedom and Economics.” The final exam will ask you to answer two essay questions: one on the final unit of the course (“Freedom and Government”) and one on the course as a whole. That means that the *final is cumulative*.

I will distribute a sheet of paper that includes all of the possible essay questions. You will not have a choice of which question(s) you would like to answer, but you will have seen every possible question 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. Usage of laptops, iPads, or the like 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 a midterm exam grade, you should see me during office hours within 1 week of the class 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 1 week, 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.

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 (Business Administration 120, 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>).

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/>.

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/oaee/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. **

Aug. 26 Introduction

I. Freedom and Truth

Aug. 28 Plato *Republic* Book I (all)

Aug. 31 Plato *Republic* Book II (all)

Sep. 2 Plato *Republic* Books III (ln.412b8-end), IV (all), and V (beg.-ln. 471c)

Sep. 4 Plato *Republic* Books V (471c-end) and VI (ln. 487e6-ln. 489d4; ln. 496a11-end)

Sep. 7 NO CLASS LABOR DAY

Sep. 9 Plato *Republic* Book VII (beg.-521c7)

Sep. 11 Plato *Republic* Books VIII (all) and X (ln. 608b2-end)

Sep. 14 NO CLASS ROSH HASHANAH

Sep. 16 Mill *On Liberty* Chapter 1

Sep. 18 Mill *On Liberty* Chapter 2

Sep. 21 Mill *On Liberty* Chapter 2

Sep. 23 NO CLASSES YOM KIPPUR

Sep. 25 Foucault "Two Lectures" *

Sep. 28 Foucault "Two Lectures" *

Sep. 30 Foucault "Two Lectures" *

Oct. 2 NO CLASS (USE THIS TIME TO REVIEW)

Oct. 5 Midterm Exam 1

II. Freedom and Economics

Oct. 7 Locke *Second Treatise of Government* Chapters I-IV

- Oct. 9 Locke *Second Treatise of Government* Chapter V
- Oct. 12 Locke *Second Treatise of Government* Chapters VI-IX
- Oct. 14 Locke *Second Treatise of Government* Chapters XIX
- Oct. 16 Marx *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* Pages 66-105 *
- Oct. 19 Marx *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* Pages 66-105 *
- Oct. 21 Marx *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* Pages 66-105 *
- Oct. 23 Marx *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* Pages 66-105 *
- Oct. 26 Friedman “Introduction” and “The Relation Between Economic Freedom and Political Freedom” *
- Oct. 28 Friedman “The Role of Government in a Free Society” *
- Oct. 30 NO CLASS (USE THIS TIME TO REVIEW)**
- Nov. 2 Midterm 2

III. Freedom and Government

- Nov. 4 Rousseau *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* Preface; Part I; and Part II
- Nov. 6 Rousseau *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* Preface; Part I; and Part II
- Nov. 9 Rousseau *Social Contract* Book I (all)
- Nov. 11 Rousseau *Social Contract* Book II (all)
- Nov. 13 Rousseau *Social Contract* Books III (Ch. 1, 10-15, 18) and IV (Ch. 1-3)
- Nov. 16 Tocqueville *Democracy in America* (“Author’s Introduction” and Vol. 2, Part 3, Ch. 1)
- Nov. 18 Tocqueville *Democracy in America* Vol. 1, Part 1, Ch. 4, 5
- Nov. 20 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. 23 Tocqueville *Democracy in America* (Vol. 2, Part 2, Ch. 1-9; Vol 1. Part 2, Ch. 4, Ch. 7; Vol. 2, Part 3, Ch. 13)

- Nov. 25** **NO CLASS THANKSGIVING**
- Nov. 27** **NO CLASS THANKSGIVING**
- Nov. 30 Tocqueville *Democracy in America* (Vol. 2, Part 2, Ch. 1-9; Vol 1. Part 2, Ch. 4, Ch. 7; Vol. 2, Part 3, Ch. 13)
- Dec. 2 Tocqueville *Democracy in America* (Vol. 2, Part 2, Ch. 10, 13, 14; Vol. 2, Part 4, Ch. 1-4, 6, 7)
- Dec. 4 Goldman “A New Declaration of Independence;” “Was My Life Worth Living;” “An Anarchist Looks at Life;” and “Anarchism: What It Really Stands For” *
- Dec. 7 Goldman “A New Declaration of Independence;” “Was My Life Worth Living;” “An Anarchist Looks at Life;” and “Anarchism: What It Really Stands For” *
- Dec. 9 Semester Wrap Up

Final Exam: Tuesday, December 15, 2015 10:30am-12:30pm