

RPOS 308: Theorists and Theorizing (8326)
Rights and Toleration Then and Now: John Locke
Fall 2011

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Tues and Thurs: 10:15-11:35
BA 130
Office Hours: HU B16
Tues and Thurs: 11:40-12:40

Course Objectives

Students successfully completing this course will be able to:

1. Understand and critically assess the significant political writings of John Locke.
2. Describe the historical context that gave rise to the concepts and debates associated with Locke's thought.
3. Explain and analyze the continuing relevance of Locke's key concepts in contemporary politics.
4. Develop critical thinking skills exhibited in reading, discussion, and writing.

John Locke figures auspiciously and notoriously in the history of political thought as a founding figure of Anglo-American liberalism, an agent of British imperialism, a spokesman for early capitalist society, and defender of individual rights and religious toleration. Locke's legacy continues to be invoked today by critics and admirers alike, weighing in on questions of gender, racial, and class equality, religious freedom, and the limits of state power. What should we make of this legacy? How do Locke's ideas help us to better understand our political practices and assumptions today? How do contemporary political questions shed new light on Locke's ideas?

Class meetings will combine lecture, in-class assignments and reading quizzes, and discussion. Classroom discussions will emphasize active, thoughtful contribution by each member of the class. Completing all reading and viewing assignments prior to each class meeting is essential to successful completion of this course. The course will have regular written components, including a final paper in place of an exam of no less than 12 pages.

Required Texts:

The following texts are required for this course and are available at the University Bookstore and Mary Jane Books (corner of Western Avenue and Quail Street). There will be additional readings made available electronically (marked by **).

John Locke, *Political Writings* (Hackett)

Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down* (Penguin, 1975)

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (Penguin 2003)

Course Requirements

As a student in this course, you are required to:

- Attend class and arrive on time.
- Complete all readings by the assigned date.
- Come to class prepared to participate actively in discussions of assigned readings.
- Bring assigned texts to class with you.

** The use of laptops in class is strongly discouraged. Talk to me if there are extenuating circumstances.

Evaluation

Short Paper: 20%; Final Paper: 30%; Exam: 20%; Reading quizzes: 15%
Participation (on-line assignments, discussion, and attendance): 15%

Short Paper (5 pages): You will write an analytical essay interpreting a contemporary film through the framework of Locke's political thought, using assigned course readings. The film will be made available by streaming through Blackboard. The purpose of this essay is to hone your skills of interpretation and argumentation on both canonical theory texts and popular narrative. No outside research is needed and your paper should show your own observations, criticisms, and evaluations of the text or film without relying on the views of others. If you need to draw on an outside source for a point of fact or argument, you must cite the source appropriately.

Final Paper (10-12 pages): You will write an essay in response to questions distributed to the class. You will have a choice of questions and may also propose your own topic. **Individual topics require approval of the instructor no less than one week after the questions have been distributed.** The primary purpose of this paper is for you to reflect, analyze and critically evaluate the ideas covered in readings, viewings, lectures and discussions of this course. It is possible that some additional reading will be involved, but for the most part this essay emphasizes interpretation and analysis of ideas and debates covered in this class.

Papers must be submitted 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.

For both papers, you will have the opportunity to revise your work. For the short paper, you have the choice to revise the paper once after having received a grade in order to improve your grade on this assignment. The two grades will be averaged together. For the final paper, a draft is due in advance. Your draft will be returned in time for you to make revisions before the final version is due. The two grades will be averaged together. Students who do not turn in a draft will receive a failing grade, meaning that your final paper grade cannot exceed a C. Your ability to incorporate suggestions for revision will be factored into your overall grade for the final paper.

Exam and quizzes: There will be one exam and periodic reading quizzes. The exam will consist of short-answer questions on the concepts of the *Second Treatise* and its historical context. Reading quizzes will general consist of only one or two questions, asking either for a description of key arguments in the text or your informed opinion on a particular issue raised by the readings. The exam will receive a score out of 100. Reading quizzes will be graded by +, ✓+, ✓, ✓-, or -. Absences for reading quizzes will receive a mark of 0.

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.

The participation grade is based on three components:

- 1) **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.
- 2) **On-line Assignments:** On the schedule of meetings, you will find several on-line assignments that ask you to consult Blackboard in *preparation for class discussion*. Because these assignments use web technology to enhance classroom discussion, no late assignments will be accepted.
- 3) **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.

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 consecutive classes or any exam date, 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>)."

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. If you have already done so in a previous class, you may send me an email stating that you have completed it. The assumption will be that after the first week, everyone in the course is fully up-to-date on what plagiarism is, how to avoid it, and the consequences it entails. 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

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

August 30 Introduction

Online assignment #1: Post a link to Blackboard featuring a video, text, or other contemporary example of appeals to Locke's political legacy (e.g. rights, consent, rule of law, social contract). Write one paragraph explaining why you chose it. Due Saturday, Sept. 10.

Online assignment #2: 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 confirm when you have completed the tutorial. Must be completed by Saturday, Sept. 10. If you have completed this for a past course, you may send me an email indicating so and I will assume you fully understand plagiarism and its consequences.

II. The Seventeenth Century Background

Sept. 1 No Class Meeting
Read: Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down*: 13-56

Sept 6 Christopher Hill, *The World Turned*: 57-72, 85-6, 113-123, 344-366

III. The Varieties of Social Contract

Sept. 8 John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, chs. 1-5

Sept 13 Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pt. 1, ch. 13-14**
Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Pt. 1, chs. 4-9, Pt. 2, chs. 1-2**
Review Blackboard submissions on Locke's legacy.

IV. The Political Anthropology

Sept 15 Locke, *Second Treatise*, chs. 6-9

Sept 20 Jeremy Waldron, "John Locke: Social Contract versus Political Anthropology" **

V. The Lockean Commonwealth

Sept 22 Locke, *Social Contract*, chs. 10-19

Sept 27 ****Exam****

Sept 29 No Class Meeting

VI. The Politics of Property and Personhood

- Oct. 4 Locke, *First Treatise* (excerpts)
Jeremy Waldron lecture (in-class)
Recommended: Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down*, ch. 15
Waldron, "Locke, Adam, and Eve" *Feminist Interpretations of John Locke*
- Oct. 6 Teresa Brennan and Carole Pateman, 'Mere Auxiliaries to the Commonwealth':
Women and the Origins of Liberalism" **
- Oct 11 C. B. Macpherson, *Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*, 197-237 **
- Oct. 13 James Farr, "Locke, Natural Law, and New World Slavery"
Fundamental Constitutions of the Carolinas, esp §63-117
Recommended: Michael Rogin, "Liberal Society and the Indian Question"
James Tully, "Rediscovering America: the *Two Treatises* and
Aboriginal Rights"
Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract*
- Oct 18 *The Unforgiven* (film) **
Short Paper Topics Distributed

VII. The Politics of Toleration

- Oct 20 Robert Filmer, *Patriarcha*, ch 1 **
Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*
Recommended: Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down*, chs. 6,8
- Oct 25 Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*
- Oct 27 Wendy Brown, *Regulating Aversion*, chs. 1-2 **
Short Paper due

VIII. Locke in America?: Tocqueville

- Nov 1 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, pp. 11-85
- Nov 3 Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 116-22, 201-2, 219-227, 228-231, 277-287
- Nov 8 Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 370-426
Paper Topics Distributed
- Nov 10 Tocqueville, 587-95, 677-83

IX. Liberal Foundings?

Nov 15 Declaration and Constitution

Online assignment #3: Follow the links on Blackboard to the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution. Make a list of (or highlight) phrases and ideas that reflect Locke's influence. In addition, note any ideas that sound very un-Lockean. Bring assignment to class.

Nov 17 Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America*, pp. 3-66 **

Nov 22 Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition* (continued)

Nov 24 No Class Meeting

X. The Dark Side of the Social Contract

Nov. 29 Final Paper drafts due

*** Bring 3 hard copies: 1 for me and 2 for peer reviewers***

*** Submit electronic version to Blackboard ***

Dec 1 Film: *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (film)

XI. Peer Review and Course Review

Dec 6 Peer Reviews due

Dec 8 Final Discussion, Review, and Paper Consultations
Drafts returned with comments

Final Paper due: Friday, December 16

Submit to Electronic Dropbox on Blackboard