Seminar in Political Theory
POS 701, Spring 2017
Monday, 2:30-5:20 HS 015

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Office Hours
Main Campus, Humanities 016. W/F: 11:25-12:30
Downtown Campus, Milne 218. M: 12:45-2:45

Course Description

One of the great debates in political theory has been about what kind of "individual" democratic societies produce and require. This topic has occupied the minds of the finest thinkers in America and in Europe during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Do democracies necessarily produce or require individuals who are moral? immoral? political? apolitical? apathetic? acquisitive? narcissistic? aesthetic? subservient? alienated? resentful? enlightened? violent? peaceful? Is there a distinction to be made between "individualism" and "individuality"? Or, perhaps, is democracy not productive or in need of any sort of individual, so that the individual is a fiction, a fabrication of several centuries of discourse? This course will take up "the question of the individual" in modern democracy and will explore it through the writings of Tocqueville, Emerson, Whitman, Thoreau, Melville, Mill, Marx, Nietzsche, Foucault, Kateb, and Stirner.

Course and Learning Objectives

The goal of this course is to teach students how to carefully read and interpret texts, how to identify key concepts on which theoretical arguments are based, and how to use these arguments and concepts to develop critical analyses and understandings of politics according to various schools of political and philosophical thought. Students will be taught to think more expansively about the complex matter of what counts as politics and how the definition of politics changes for political theory as its practitioners grapple with the difficult challenges posed by the complexities of the modern world and by new theoretical and philosophical discoveries and arguments. These objectives will contribute to teaching students how to formulate concepts and arguments of their own in their written work (term papers) and in oral presentations (class participation and formal presentations) and to conceptualize larger scholarly research projects.


**Course Requirements**

There are three requirements for this course:

1. Every student is expected to attend and to participate in class on a regular basis, posing questions, answering questions, contesting or arguing on behalf of their views and the views of other students in the course and, most certainly, challenging the views of the instructor. Since POS 701 is a “seminar” format, meaning the class is comparatively small in size and allows for discussion among the members of the class, student participation is facilitated. Class participation is valued at 25% of the final grade. In order to participate students must attend class. Since this is a graduate course, students are strongly discouraged from missing class for any reason other than illness or compelling personal matters.

2. Given the small size of our seminar, over the course of the semester each student will make several oral presentations in class on the reading material assigned for the week. Presentations should be no more than 30 minutes long. This may seem like a long time for a presentation, but once student presenters read and study an assigned text and begin to prepare their presentations they will see that the time allotted is not generous. Presentations are valued at 25% of the final grade. Student presentations must accomplish three things:

   First, presentations should summarize the arguments in the reading assignment for that day.

   Second, presentations should critically relate the argument in the reading to class readings and discussions earlier in the semester and to the overall interests and concerns of the course as they are described in the course description and evolve over the term;

   Third, presenters should stake out their own position on the reading and should pose critical questions about the reading material in relation to their own interests and ideas.

   Best presentations (grade of A) will include all three of the above, the purpose of which is to open and guide the discussion of the assigned reading for the day. It should be added that while the three guidelines above should be followed closely, the third guideline offers students their own opportunities to shape class discussion of the reading for the day. In other words, making a presentation is not simply a requirement to be followed according to a set of wrote instructions, but an intellectual opportunity to influence the direction of the work the class is to do for that day. Students should view class presentations as an essential part of the agonistics of the performative dimension of political theory.
3. Finally, students will write a term paper of 15 plus pages, the goal of which will be to conceptualize and analyze a problem raised in the course. Each student will submit a term paper prospectus due on April 5. This date is relatively late in the term to allow students the fullest opportunity to conceptualize a topic in light of the majority of course readings and to have begun writing the paper in addition to formulating its prospectus. Term papers count as 50% of the final grade.

The term paper prospectus should be 2-3 typewritten pages outlining the term paper project and should additionally include a working bibliography. Prospectuses will be deposited in the class Dropbox folder by Professor Schoolman to be shared with the class as a whole. Students should take advantage of Professor Schoolman's office hours to discuss their ideas for a prospectus, which students should begin to think about from the first class meeting. Students are encouraged to develop a term paper topic within their own disciplinary interests in Political theory, Philosophy, English, and so on, as one of the main goals of our course is for students to discover if our approach to politics can teach them new things about questions in their disciplines not available from other approaches. Term papers are due on May 17. No late prospectuses or term papers accepted.

**Course Readings**

Most required texts are available in our class Dropbox (link below), though students will have to purchase several texts, as indicated below. As my arguments will analyze readings and students can only follow these analyses with the readings in front of them, for Dropbox reading assignments it is strongly recommended students print hard copies of reading material to bring to class or have laptops on which readings are downloaded and can be referred to in class.

**Required Readings**

Readings available in Dropbox, by Tocqueville, Whitman, Emerson, Thoreau, and Melville, are accessed with the following link:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/46xsmfan5l2uye3/AADGxgWcQdaRndzFspwX0f2na?dl=0

To be Purchased:
J.S. Mill, *On Liberty*
F. Nietzsche, *Beyond good and Evil*
M. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*
G. Kateb, *The Inner Ocean*
M. Stirner, *The Ego & His Own*
Weekly Reading Assignments

Jan. 23. Monday. Course Introduction


Feb. 6 (M)  Tocqueville, Democracy in America, Vol. II, pp. 76-149.

  Whitman, Democratic Vistas, all.

Feb. 20 (M).  Whitman, “1855 Preface” to Leaves of Grass
  “Song of Myself”


Mar. 6 (M)  Thoreau, “Civil Disobedience,” Slavery in Massachusetts.”
  Melville, “Bartleby”

March 13-15-17  Spring Break

Mar. 20 (M).  Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, Preface and Parts 1-5.

Mar. 27 (M).  Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, Parts 6 - High Mountains


April 10 (M).  No Classes, Passover

April 17 (M).  Kateb, The Inner Ocean, chs. 6,9, 10.

April 24 (M).  Foucault, Power/Knowledge, chs. 1-3, 5.

May 1 (M).  Foucault, Power/Knowledge, chs. 10-11.
  Kateb, “The Fate of Individuality”

May 8 (M).  Max Stirner, The Ego and Its Own
Absences from Examinations: Students are expected to attend all examinations, except for a compelling reason. A student who learns that he or she will miss a quiz, examination, or other evaluation must notify the instructor as soon as the conflict is noted. In cases where documentation is called for, appropriate documentation must be provided to the instructor or to the Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education as soon as possible (see section below on Documentation and the Role of Undergraduate Education). All documentation must be presented before the end of the semester in question. Unless faculty have received a letter from the Office for Undergraduate Education stating that we have received appropriate documentation, you should ask to see original copies of medical excuses; do not accept photocopies.

Faculty Obligation to Provide Opportunities to Make Up Missed Work

i. If the cause of the absence is documented hospitalization, a death in the immediate family, a personal emergency, or a religious observance, the instructor must administer a makeup exam or offer an alternative mutually agreeable to the instructor and student.

ii. If the cause of the absence is a major academic conference at which the student has significant participation, a varsity athletic contest (excluding practice sessions and intra-squad games), a field trip in another course, or some other compelling reason, the student must notify the instructor involved well in advance. The instructor is expected to provide, if at all possible, an alternative by which the student will not be penalized as a result of the absence. Any conflicts between student and faculty in agreeing on the alternative may be presented for resolution to the chair of the department in which the course is offered. The resolution proposed by the chair is advisory, leaving the final decision to the faculty member.

Fraudulent excuses for missed examinations are considered violations of academic integrity and are grounds for academic and disciplinary penalties.

Documentation and the Role of Undergraduate Education: Instructors may, at their discretion, require or waive documentation of absences. Although we (the Office for Undergraduate Education) require students to discuss missed examinations and other penalized absences directly with instructors, we do, in some cases, serve as a central repository for any required documentation. For example, occasionally events such as hospitalization or a death in the family cause students to request that the Office for Undergraduate Education write a letter of excuse. This is most commonly done when a student faces an unexpected absence from the University and asks us to contact all course instructors simultaneously. It also allows students to maintain confidentiality regarding circumstances associated with personal or family emergencies. In these cases, the Office for Undergraduate Education will send a letter requesting that special consideration be given to the student, after proof is provided by the student in the form of documentation from, or phone consultation with, credible professionals or others. Although the Office for Undergraduate Education provides this service, we strongly encourage faculty to use their best judgment when students have appropriate documentation for legitimate absences and not to rely on our office when it is not necessary. It should be made clear that while the preceding paragraphs describe circumstances under which faculty are required or expected to provide opportunities to make up missed work, the burdens of promptly contacting the instructor and providing appropriate documentation rest with the student.