

SOCIAL CONTRACT THEORY AND ITS LIMITS

Political Science 215, Spring 2005—M, W 2:20-3:30, PPHAC 338

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How should we arrange our lives together?

Some political theorists regard this question as the most important of all. Against the traditions of divine right monarchy, they claim that political foundation requires a contract among would-be subjects. John Locke, for example, argues that only explicit consent on the part of the future subject makes political order legitimate and creates an obligation to obey the law. For others, such as Marx and Mill, considering political order through the perspective of a founding contract alone is of limited value because important aspects of shared lives remain invisible, intractable, or uncontested.

The aim of this course is to familiarize students with core texts of the social contract tradition and other classics of modern political thought. The questions we will ask are: What makes the state legitimate? Why should I obey the law? When do political subjects face conflicts about what they should do? How do various theorists conceptualize power? What aspects of life should be considered politically relevant? And, finally, what are the limits of the social contract perspective?

Course Objectives

- To introduce critical ways of thinking about power and legitimacy
- To explore several important shifts in the history of political thought
- To study selected texts of the early modern and modern period that are fundamental to the study of political theory
- To perform close readings of those original texts
- To investigate these texts with regard to the relationship between the political subject, political, economic, and social institutions
- To enhance students' understanding of the challenges of liberal democratic ideals
- To identify and better understand the values and assumptions we bring to the judgment of a political argument
- To strengthen analytical, written, and oral skills

Monday, January 16	Introduction	
Wednesday, January 18	Thomas Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> (1-35)	1651
Monday, January 23	<i>Leviathan</i> (47-50 and 63-78)	
Wednesday, January 25	<i>Leviathan</i> (79-105)	
Monday, January 30	<i>Leviathan</i> (106-145)	
Wednesday, February 1	<i>Leviathan</i> (210-219 and 477-497)	
Monday, February 6	John Locke, <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> (2-30)	1690
Wednesday, February 8	<i>Second Treatise of Government</i> (30-65)	
Monday, February 13	<i>Second Treatise of Government</i> (65-91)	
Wednesday, February 15	<i>Second Treatise of Government</i> (91-124)	
Friday, February 17	Paper #1 due at 4 p.m. to Mrs. Ortiz in Comenius 206	
Wednesday, February 22	Jean-Jacques Rousseau, <i>The Social Contract</i> , Book I - Book II, chapter 4	1762
Monday, February 27	<i>The Social Contract</i> , Book II, chapter 5 - Book III, chapter 2	
Wednesday, March 1	<i>The Social Contract</i> , Book III, chapter 3 – Book IV, chapter 1	
	Spring Recess	
Monday, March 13	Review of social contract models	
Wednesday, March 15	In-class midterm examination	
Monday, March 20	Montesquieu, <i>Persian Letters</i> , letters 1-53	1721
Wednesday, March 22	<i>Persian Letters</i> , letters 53-100	
Monday, March 27	<i>Persian Letters</i> , letters 101-161	
Wednesday, March 29	Karl Marx, “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844” (66-93)	
Monday, April 3	Karl Marx, “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844” (94-125)	
Wednesday, April 5	Karl Marx, “The German Ideology: Part I” (146-200)	1846
Monday, April 10	Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, “Manifesto of the Communist Party” (469-511)	1848
Wednesday, April 12	Friedrich Engels, “The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State” (734-759)	1859

	Easter Recess	
Wednesday, April 19	Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> , chapters 1 and 2 (5-55)	1859
Monday, April 24	<i>On Liberty</i> , chapter 3 (56-74)	
Wednesday, April 26	<i>On Liberty</i> , chapter 4 (75-93)	
Friday, May 4	Paper #2 due at 4 p.m. to Mrs. Ortiz in Comenius 206	

Evaluation

We will discuss all assignments two weeks in advance of a given due date. I do not accept late assignments. For the sake of fairness, please do not ask for special treatment. Plagiarism will result in failure of the assignment in this class. I will apply both quantitative and qualitative judgments in determining grades for individual assignments and for the course.

- Paper #1: Friday 2/17 5 pages 20%
- Midterm Wednesday 3/15 TBA 25%
- Paper #2: Friday 5/4 15 pages 25%
- Evaluation of engagement, incl. presentation 30%

Academic Honesty

Students in this course should refer to the statement on academic honesty at Moravian College in the current Student Handbook. It is also available online at <http://www.moravian.edu/StudentLife/handbook>.

Students must retain copies of all written work submitted, as well as all notes, drafts, and materials used in preparing assignments. These are to be made available for inspection at any time.

Questions about appropriate collaboration, proper documentation, and other honesty issues can be confusing. If in doubt, ask me.

Your part in our work together

I expect faithful attendance and active discussion participation.

1) Completing the reading and preparing contributions in the form of questions, arguments, or passages to be examined in class are the two activities that are critical to our work together. I especially value text-based contributions, thoughtful questions, and willingness to engage the concerns of other students. Requests for clarification are always welcome.

2) Each student will present readings to the class once in the course of the semester. We will discuss guidelines for these presentations in class. You will prepare your presentation in consultation with me several days in advance. It is your responsibility to contact me by email or in person with your presentation ideas for text passages and questions.

3) For your engagement grade, I also take into account e-mail exchanges, discussions in office hours, and other forms of engagement.

5) Absences will require documentation or count against your participation grade (.5%/20%). A pattern of late arrivals will be interpreted as disrespect for the group and counted as absences.

Required Texts

The books listed below are available for purchase at the Moravian College Bookstore. Other required readings will be distributed in class. Reading selections for each class will be announced at the preceding meeting.

Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1990.

Locke, John. *Second Treatise of Government*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1980.

Mill, John Stuart. *On Liberty and other writings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Montesquieu, *Persian Letters*, New York: Penguin Classics, 1993.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *The Social Contract*. New York: Penguin Classics, 1968.

Tucker, Robert, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader*. New York: Norton, 1988.

N.B.:

This syllabus is subject to change. Expect to work at least six hours per week outside of class preparing for this class. Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact the Learning Services Office as soon as possible to enhance the likelihood that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.

“For by art is created that great LEVIATHAN called a COMMONWEALTH, or STATE (in Latin CIVITAS), which is but an artificial man, though of greater stature and strength than the natural, for whose protection and defence it was intended.”

-Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*

“Thus in the beginning all the world was America, and more so than it is now; for no such thing as money was anywhere known. Find out something that hath the use and value of money amongst his neighbours, you shall see the same man will begin presently to enlarge his possessions.”

-John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*

“Man was born free, and he is everywhere in chains.”

-Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*

Roxana to Usbek at Paris

“How could you have thought me credulous enough to imagine that I as in the world only in order to worship your caprices? That while you allowed yourself everything, you had the right to thwart all my desires? No: I may have lived in servitude, but I have always been free. I have amended your laws according to the laws of nature, and my mind has always remained independent.”

-Montesquieu, *Persian Letter*

“He is a hunter, a fisherman, a shepherd, or a critical critic and must remain so if he does not want to lose his means of livelihood; while in a communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd, or critic.”

-Karl Marx, *The German Ideology*

“He who lets the world, or his own portion of it, choose his plan of life for him, has no need of any other faculty than the ape-like one of imitation.”

-John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*