

## **Social Contract Theory and Its Limits**

Political Science 215, Spring 2007, PPHAC 338: T, TH 2:20-3:30,  
Office Hours: M, W 10:15-noon and by appointment, Comenius 112  
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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 and various 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

Tuesday, January 16 Thursday, January 18	Introduction Visiting Speaker: Professor Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer, <i>Is Religion Killing Us? Violence in the Bible and the Quran</i> (copies)	
Tuesday, January 23 <b>1651</b> Thursday, January 25	Thomas Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> (1-35) <i>Leviathan</i> (47-50 and 63-78)	
Tuesday, January 30 Thursday, February 1	<i>Leviathan</i> (79-105) <i>Leviathan</i> (106-145)	
Tuesday, February 6 Thursday, February 8	<i>Leviathan</i> (210-219 and 477-497) John Locke, <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> (2-30)	<b>1690</b>
Tuesday, February 13 Thursday, February 15	<i>Second Treatise of Government</i> (30-65) <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> (65-91)	
Tuesday, February 20 Thursday, February 22	<i>Second Treatise of Government</i> (91-124) Jean-Jacques Rousseau, <i>The Social Contract</i> , Book I - Book II, chapter 4	<b>1762</b>
Tuesday, February 27 Thursday, March 1	<i>The Social Contract</i> , Book II, chapter 5 - Book III, chapter 2 <i>The Social Contract</i> , Book III, chapter 3 – Book IV, chapter 1	

**Spring Recess: March 3 - 12**

Tuesday, March 13 Thursday, March 15	In-class midterm examination Montesquieu, <i>Persian Letters</i> , letters 1-53	<b>1721</b>
Tuesday, March 20 Thursday, March 22	<i>Persian Letters</i> , letters 53-100 <i>Persian Letters</i> , letters 101-161	
Tuesday, March 27 Thursday, March 29	Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844" (66-93) Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844" (94-125)	<b>1844</b>
Tuesday, April 3 Thursday, April 5 <b>1848</b>	Karl Marx, "The German Ideology: Part I" (146-200) Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party" (469-511)	<b>1846</b>

**Easter Recess: April 6 - 9**

Tuesday, April 10 759) Thursday, April 12	Friedrich Engels, "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State" (734-759) Engels, "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State"	
Tuesday, April 17 Thursday, April 19	Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> , chapters 1 and 2 (5-55) <i>On Liberty</i> , chapter 3 (56-74)	<b>1859</b>
Tuesday, April 24 Thursday, April 26	<i>On Liberty</i> , chapter 4 (75-93) Closing Discussion	

*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, 2/7	5 pages	20%
• Midterm	Thursday, 3/13	TBA	25%
• Paper #2:	Friday, 4/27	15 pages	25%
• Evaluation of engagement, incl. presentation			30%

### *Textual Evidence*

Learning how to use textual evidence is one of the top priorities of this course. We cannot work without the text. It is an explicit requirement that you bring your impulsively highlighted and passionately marked up books or articles to every meeting. If you prefer not to write in books, you should take detailed notes on the text, including the page numbers of critical passages. The highest form of participation is to take the voice of the author seriously, to be able to reconstruct and reconsider the argument, and to direct others to critical passages. Unsupported answers will be less valued than those that draw the discussion back into the text.

Analysis, not only summary, is the point of our reading. Underline important passages, take notes, ask questions, and come to class prepared to participate in discussions. A good question is an excellent contribution. What does the text say? What does it not say? What does it imply? When we read political theories we are looking for arguments, implications, and complications. Do not regard the text as a smooth surface. Don't be afraid to change your mind. Discussion is generative when it allows all participants to voice a position, to receive feedback from others, to reconsider, and to possibly revise the initial claim.

### *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) Compose three questions about the reading for each meeting. I will call on students to inquire about questions and will also occasionally collect questions during class. You may want to keep a journal for questions. 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) All written assignments must be completed in order to pass this course.

*Engagement*

A - Critical, innovative and careful readings; substantial and consistent notes or written preparations for discussion; frequent and illuminating text-based contributions; contribution of discussion-shaping questions; careful engagement of the arguments of others; support and promotion of positive discussion dynamics.

B - Complete and careful readings; consistent notes or written preparations for discussion; lively, substantial, and argumentative text-based contributions; contribution of independent questions, engagement of the arguments of others.

C - Incomplete or superficial readings; minimal notes or written preparations for discussion; regular (at least once per meeting) discussion participation.

D - Incomplete or missing readings; lack of notes or written preparations for discussion; mostly passive presence.

F - Persistent vegetative state; low-level trance; slightly elevated body temperature.

General Housekeeping

- 1) I invite you to visit my office hours. Please be in touch with any questions and thoughts you may have about our work together. You can also contact me by e-mail at [haddad@moravian.edu](mailto:haddad@moravian.edu). For your engagement grade, I also take into account e-mail exchanges, discussions in office hours, and other forms of communication. If you're finding it difficult to participate in discussions, please contact me. I will help you develop a participation strategy.
- 2) We will discuss all assignments two weeks in advance of a given due date. I am happy to help you with outlines.
- 3) Expect to work six hours on average outside of class per week. Some weeks the reading load will be lighter, some weeks it will be considerably heavier.
- 4) Students with a documented learning disability who desire accommodations for this course must first visit the Office of Learning Services (ext. 1510) and follow college procedures on receiving accommodations.
- 5) I do not accept late assignments, except in appropriately documented emergency situations. For the sake of equity, please do not ask for special treatment.
- 6) Plagiarism will result in failure of the assignment in this class. Please see Moravian College Student Handbook for an account of academic honesty. See <http://www.moravian.edu/studentlife/handbook/academic2.htm>
- 7) Do not miss class. Undocumented absences beyond the first will harm your engagement grade at the rate of 5% per absence.
- 8) No food in the classroom, please. And, turn your cell phone off before class.

**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.