

Spring 2008

Modern Political Theory: Social Contract Theory and Its Limits

Political Science 215, Spring 2008, PPHAC 338: W, F 10:10-11:20

Office Hours: Wednesday 3:45-5, Thursday 10:20-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

Wednesday, January 16 Friday, January 18	Introduction Thomas Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> (1-35)	1651
Wednesday, January 23 Friday, January 25	<i>Leviathan</i> (47-50 and 63-78) <i>Leviathan</i> (79-105)	
Wednesday, January 30 Friday, February 1	<i>Leviathan</i> (106-145) <i>Leviathan</i> (210-219 and 477-497)	
Monday, February 4	Hobbes paper due at 4 p.m., Comenius 206.	
Wednesday, February 6 Thursday, February 8	John Locke, <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> (2-30) <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> (30-65) JEN	1690
Wednesday, February 13 Friday, February 15	<i>Second Treatise of Government</i> (65-91) PAM <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> (91-124)	
Wednesday, February 20 Friday, February 22	Jean-Jacques Rousseau, <i>The Social Contract</i> , Book I - Book II, chapter 4 <i>The Social Contract</i> , Book II, chapter 5 - Book III, chapter 2	1762
Wednesday, February 27 Friday, February 29	<i>The Social Contract</i> , Book III, chapter 3 – Book IV, chapter 1 Selected readings (on reserve)	
	Spring Recess: March 1 - 10	

Wednesday, March 12	Montesquieu, <i>Persian Letters</i> , letters 1-53	1721
Friday, March 14	<i>Persian Letters</i> , letters 53-100 NICK	
Wednesday March 19	<i>Persian Letters</i> , letters 101-161 KRISTINA	
	Easter Recess: March 21 – 23	
Tuesday, March 25	Locke-Rousseau paper due	
Wednesday, March 26	Karl Marx, “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844” (66-93)	1844
Friday, March 28	Karl Marx, “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844” (94-125) STEVE	
Wednesday, April 2	Karl Marx, “The German Ideology: Part I” (146-200) MIKE	1846
Friday, April 4	Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, “Manifesto of the Communist Party” (469-511)	
1848		
Wednesday, April 9	Friedrich Engels, “The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State” (734-	
Friday, April 11	Engels, “The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State” ALEX	
Wednesday, April 16	Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> , chapters 1 and 2 (5-55)	1859
Friday, April 18	<i>On Liberty</i> , chapter 3 (56-74) ANDREW	
Monday, April 21	Marx paper due	
Wednesday, April 23	<i>On Liberty</i> , chapter 4 (75-93)	
Friday, April 25	Closing Discussion	
Friday, May 2	Mill paper due along with all revised papers	

**Writing assignment schedule and preliminary instructions
(detailed instructions will be available for each project)**

Calendar	Topic	Instructions	%
2/4	Hobbes	Exploration of a single theme of your choice in <i>Leviathan</i>	15
3/25	Locke-Rousseau	a) two comparative pages that link your discussion of Locke and Rousseau to Hobbes (written after you have completed the task below) b) four pages of a thematically focused approach to Locke and Rousseau	15
4/21	Marx	a) two comparative pages that link your discussion of Locke and Rousseau to your reading of Marx b) four pages on Marx	15
5/2	Mill	a) two comparative pages that link your discussion of Marx to Mill b) four pages on Mill c) at this time, all your revised papers are due as a single document in which the Mill paper is the final section	15

All papers are due at 4 p.m. to Mrs. Ortiz in Com 206.

In addition to these assignments, the final course grade includes **25% for engagement** and **15% for your presentation of the text**. I will apply both quantitative and qualitative judgments in determining grades for individual assignments and for the course.

- Please support a culture of discussion.
 - You cannot pass this course without completing all assignments and requirements.
- I recommend taking drafts to the Writing Center. The better your writing is, the more interesting my comments will be.
 - I do not accept late assignments, except in appropriately documented emergency situations.
 - The texts in this course are challenging and take a significant amount of time to read.
- 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 for receiving accommodations.

- Plagiarism will result in failure of the assignment in this class. See www.moravian.edu/studentlife/handbook/academic2.htm
 - As your engagement grade constitutes a full quarter of your final grade. Enough said.