

Social Contract Theory and Its Limits

Political Science 215, Fall 2009, T, TH 8:55-10:05 a.m.

Haddad, Comenius Hall Room 112

(610) 861-1559, haddad@moravian.edu

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:15-11:15 a.m., and by appointment

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

Books available for purchase at the Moravian College Bookstore

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Hackett)

John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* (Hackett)

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (Prometheus)

Robert Tucker (editor), *The Marx-Engels Reader* (Norton)

Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of Women's Rights* (Prometheus)

John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (Cambridge)

If you buy books elsewhere, please be sure to be using the same book as the rest of the class. It is not sufficient to purchase the same title. Books from other publishers will have different pagination and/or translation. Additional readings may be assigned.

Tuesday, September 1	Introduction
Thursday, September 3	Introduction to Modern Political Theory
Tuesday, September 8	Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , pp. 1-35
Thursday, September 10	pp. 47-50 and 63-78
Tuesday, September 15	pp. 79-105
Thursday, September 17	Sheldon S. Wolin, <i>Politics and Vision</i> , Chapter Eight: "Hobbes: Political Society as a System of Rules," pp. 214-256
	pp.106-145
Tuesday, September 22	pp.210-219 and 477-497
Thursday, September 24	Examination
Tuesday, September 29	John Locke, <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> , pp.2-42
Thursday, October 1	pp. 43-83
Tuesday, October 6	pp. 83-124
Thursday, October 8	Sheldon S. Wolin, <i>Politics and Vision</i> , Chapter Nine: "Liberalism and the Decline of Political Philosophy," pp.257-314 (Blackboard)
Thursday, October 15	Jean-Jacques Rousseau, <i>The Social Contract</i> , Book I - Book II, chapter 4
Tuesday, October 20	Book II, chapter 5 - Book III, chapter 2
Thursday, October 22	Book III, chapter 3 – Book IV, chapter 1 Elizabeth Rose Wingrove, <i>Rousseau's Republican Romance</i> , Chapter Four: "Loving the Body Politic," pp. 144-168 (Blackboard)
Tuesday, October 27	Locke/Rousseau paper due at noon to Mrs. Ortiz in Comenius 206
Thursday, October 29	Mary Wollstonecraft, <i>A Vindication of the Rights of Women</i> , "Author's Introduction," "Dedicatory Letter to M. Talleyrand-Périgord," "The Rights and Duties of Mankind Considered," and "The Prevailing Opinion of Sexual Character Discussed," pp. 9-46
Tuesday, November 3	"Of the Pernicious Effects Which Arise From the Unnatural Distinctions Established in Society," "Parental Affection," "Duty to Parents," "On National Education," and "Some instances of the Folly Which the Ignorance of Women Generates; With Concluding Reflections on the Moral Improvement that a Revolution in Female

	Manners Might Naturally Be Expected to Produce,” pp. 149-206
Thursday, November 5	Friedrich Engels, “The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State,” pp. 734-759
Tuesday, November 10	Karl Marx, Theses on Feuerbach, pp.143-145 Karl Marx, “The German Ideology: Part I,”pp.146-200
Thursday, November 12	Continued
Tuesday, November 17	Karl Marx, “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844,” pp. 66-93
Thursday, November 19	Karl Marx, “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844,” pp. 94-125
Tuesday, Nov 24	Sheldon S. Wolin, Chapter Twelve: “Marx: Theorist of the Political Economy or of Uncollapsed Capitalism?” pp. 406-453
Tuesday, December 1	John Stuart Mill, On Liberty, Chapters 1 and 2, pp. 5-55
Thursday, December 3	Chapter 3, pp.56-74
Tuesday, December 8	Chapter 4, pp.75-93 Course evaluations
TBA	Final exam or paper to be decided by the group

Evaluation

Engagement	25%
Daily notes (see below)	10%
Hobbes examination	15%
Locke/Rousseau paper	25%
Final examination or paper as decided by the group	25%

The most important part of our shared work is the discussion in class. Although I will prepare introductory lectures on each author and text, there will be ample time for discussion. Attendance does not equal participation in this course.

Daily notes: You will need to prepare three passages and three questions based on your independent reading of the text. Please bring one copy for yourself and one copy for me. Note that these texts are demanding and may require multiple readings.

You should be able to find important passages, including passages you did not understand. I will ask for page numbers so the group can follow your comments and read passages out loud. I encourage you to bring difficult passages to the group’s attention so we can work on them together.

All assignments are required. Late papers are discouraged and will be penalized at 50% unless you provide appropriate documentation in the case of illness or emergency.

How this course works

I invite you to visit my office hours. Please be in touch with any questions and thoughts you may have about our work together. I am happy to help you with difficulties relating to your reading of our texts as well as challenges that may arise with regard to assignments. If you are having trouble participating in discussions, I can help you strategize in order to improve your enjoyment of and performance in this course.

We will discuss written assignments two weeks in advance. I will offer instructions on how to prepare for examinations in the class preceding the examination date.

Expect to work six hours on average outside of class per week. The workload varies, and the texts can be challenging. Give yourself plenty of time to read, review, and take notes on texts. Our interest is in deep readings and in gaining a solid toolkit of political theory questions, concepts, and arguments. Please also note that this syllabus is subject to change.

Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a learning disability should contact Mr. Joe Kempfer, Assistant Director of Learning Services for Disability Support, 1307 Main Street (extension 1510). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the office of Learning Services.

I strongly discourage late assignments, except in appropriately documented emergency situations. For the sake of equity, please do not ask for special treatment. Late work is penalized at 50% of the assignment grade.

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>

Be diligent in your studies and attend class. Undocumented absences beyond the first will harm your engagement grade at the rate of 5% of your total course grade (per absence).

As this is an academic setting in which the goal is thoughtful discourse, neither food consumption nor mobile phone noise or activity of any kind is permitted.

Please support a culture of intellectual discussion and enjoy your study of political theory.