

**PLEASE PUT AWAY YOUR PHONE BEFORE YOU ENTER THE CLASSROOM.**

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**The Social Contract Theory and Its Limits  
POSC 215: Modern Political Theory, Spring 2014**

This course meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1:10 to 2:20 p.m. in PPHAC 338. I invite you to visit my office hours on Wednesdays from 11 a.m. to noon, on Thursdays from 2:45 to 3:45 p.m. or by appointment. If you would like to make an appointment, please contact me via e-mail. I recommend that all students make use of office hours. Please feel free to bring any questions you may have about this course.

**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

## Evaluation

Assignment	Calendar	Description	% of final grade
Exam 1	February 20	Hobbes, Locke	25
Exam 2	April 10	Rousseau, Marx, Engels	25
Final paper	April 30	TBA	25
Engagement	ongoing	see below	25

## Calendar

Tuesday, January 14	1) Introduction
<b>Thomas Hobbes</b>	
Thursday, January 16	2) Thomas Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , pp. 1-35
Tuesday, January 21	3) pp. 47-50 and 63-78
Thursday, January 23	4) pp. 79-105
Tuesday, January 28	5) pp. 106-145
Thursday, January 30	6) pp. 210-219 and 477-4
<b>John Locke</b>	
Tuesday, February 4	7) John Locke, <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> , pp. 2-30
Thursday, February 6	8) pp. 30-65
Tuesday, February 11	9) pp. 65-91
Thursday, February 13	10) pp. 91-124
Tuesday, February 18	11) Review
<b>Thursday, February 20</b>	<b>12) Examination</b>
<b>Jean Jacques Rousseau</b>	
Tuesday, February 25	13) Jean-Jacques Rousseau, <i>The Social Contract</i> , Book I - Book II, chapter 4
Thursday, February 27	14) Book II, chapter 5 – Book III, chapter 2
<b>Spring Recess</b>	
Tuesday, March 11	15) Book III, chapter 3 – Book IV, chapter 1
Thursday, March 13	16) Review

<b>Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels</b>	
Tuesday, March 18	17) Friedrich Engels, "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State"
Thursday, March 20	18) continued
Tuesday, March 25	19) Karl Marx, "The German Ideology: Part I," pp. 146-200
Thursday, March 27	20) Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844," pp.66-93
Tuesday, April 1	21) pp. 94-125
Thursday, April 3	22) Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," pp.469-511
Tuesday, April 8	23) Review
<b>Thursday, April 10</b>	<b>24) Examination</b>
<b>John Stuart Mill</b>	
Tuesday, April 15	25) John Stuart Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> , chapter 1
Thursday, April 17	26) chapter 2
<b>Easter Recess</b>	
Tuesday, April 22	27) chapters 3 and 4
Thursday, April 24	28) Review, course evaluations, paper workshop
<b>Wednesday, April 30</b>	<b>Final paper due by noon to Mrs. Deitch in Comenius 206</b>

<b>Hobbes</b>	<b>Locke</b>	<b>Rousseau</b>

Advantages of the social contract model	Limits of the social contract model

### 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.

### What does an engagement grade represent?

- A. Critical, innovative and careful reading of all assignments; substantial notes or written preparation for discussion; frequent text-based contributions; contribution of discussion-shaping questions; careful engagement of the arguments of others; support of positive discussion dynamics.
- B. Complete and careful readings; consistent notes or written preparation 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 preparation for discussion; regular (at least once per meeting) discussion participation.
- D. Incomplete or missing readings; lack of notes or written preparation for discussion; mostly passive presence.
- F Persistent, vegetative state; low-level trance; slightly elevated body temperature.

PLEASE PUT AWAY YOUR SILENCED PHONE BEFORE YOU ENTER THE CLASSROOM. YOUR PHONE SHOULD NEVER BE VISIBLE OR AUDIBLE IN THE CLASSROOM.

Our purpose is concentration and dialogue. Please protect the classroom as a space of learning. If you are a parent or a caretaker and thus need to be accessible at all times, please let me know.

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. It is my pleasure to help you improve your enjoyment of and performance in this course.

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).

Drinks are fine, but food or gum impedes your ability to participate in our discussion. No food in the classroom, please.

Expect to work five hours on average outside of class per week. The workload varies, and the texts can be challenging. Give yourself plenty of time to read, reread, 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. Don't skim or rush. Avoid online resources in favor of a direct experience with the text.

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 30 % of the assignment grade on the four-point scale.

Plagiarism will result in failure of the assignment or the course. Please see Moravian College Student Handbook for an account of academic honesty. See <http://www.moravian.edu/studentlife/handbook/academic2.htm>

Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Elaine Mara, assistant director of learning services for academic and disability support at 1307 Main Street, or by calling (610) 861-1510. Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the Academic Support Center.

This syllabus is subject to change.