

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY
Instructor: Jyl Josephson
Spring, 2022

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790:372 Modern Political Theory
Wednesday 6 to 9 pm, Hahne 322

COURSE GOALS:

The goal of this course is to provide a basic acquaintance with Western political theory of the modern period (approximately the 15th to 19th centuries) and the thinkers surveyed.

Learning Objectives:

Students will have a basic understanding of the modern period in political theory, including the basic ideas of the thinkers studied and some of the overall political concerns of this period.

Students will improve their skills in reading and comprehending historical and theoretical texts.

Students will write clear, well-argued analytical essays regarding the thinkers and topics surveyed.

Students will think critically and with curiosity about the thinkers studied and gain a basic understanding for the “canon” of political theory as contested intellectual and political terrain.

Students will engage with the strangeness and familiarity of the texts and understand the controversy over the ideas studied as worthy of exploration on their own merits, but also as deeply relevant to political controversies of the present.

Approach to teaching and learning

This course is being taught synchronously and hopefully mostly in person although we will begin remotely. I will also provide some materials such as brief video lectures for each module; these will give an overview and introduction to each thinker. In general the schedule is set up to spend about two weeks on each thinker, and in the parlance of Canvas, each thinker will be a “module”. Because these thinkers build on each other’s work, we will read them in historical sequence. I will hold weekly office hours in person right before class but will also hold hours by appointment via Zoom. Most assignments will be submitted via Canvas though we will also do some in class activities.

Introductory lecture and questions: For every module I will provide you with a brief introductory recorded lecture about the thinker and the text. With each lecture I will provide a set of questions regarding the text(s) that are to be read for that unit. These questions are intended to help guide your reading, so that you can focus on some of the key points of the text. The purpose of these questions will be to guide your reading and ensure that you comprehend some of the basic substance of the reading. Some of these questions will also be the basis for the class activities and discussion

The nature of political philosophy is such that one must read, reflect upon, and re-read the texts that we will study. You should not expect to come away from this course with a complete understanding of the political thought of any of these thinkers, or a complete understanding of the themes of the course--this takes a much longer period of study. At times you might feel like you are stepping into the middle of a fast-moving river. That is fine. It is a place to begin.

We will proceed primarily in three ways.

- First, we will carefully read the texts, and try to understand exactly what is being said. By analyzing the texts, we will address the stated and unstated assumptions of each author about the nature of human beings and of political life.
- Second, through short lecture and your guided response to the instructors' questions, we will try to understand what is meant by the overall argument of each text and each thinker. In doing so we will give some thought to how each text fits in to the larger context of political thought, and how each thinker might help us to understand the relationship between political theory and political practice.
- Third, through writing assignments and class discussion, you will develop your ideas about the thinkers and ideas studied and the approach of each thinker to analyzing political life. Hopefully, through these three methods, you will develop an understanding of the importance of political theory and theorizing in understanding the practice of politics.

Students are expected to complete all assigned readings during each unit (Module). Recorded lectures will provide material in addition to the reading material, and students should be acquainted with the material from both the readings and the lectures. Students will also be expected to contribute to class discussion during class and through written questions submitted to the instructor through Canvas; more details in the assignment information below.

Students are also expected to conduct themselves with honesty and integrity in all academic work including an expectation of civility and respect for the instructors and for other students. Mutual respect makes disagreement, discussion, and consideration of different interpretations both fruitful and interesting.

Required Reading:

Niccolo Machiavelli, The Prince (excerpts)

Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan (excerpts)

John Locke, Second Treatise of Government
Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract
Mary Wollstonecraft, Vindication of the Rights of Women (excerpts)
Marx and Engels, Communist Manifesto
John Stuart Mill, On Liberty

Please note: You may use any edition that you choose. These readings are available through the Rutgers library and *a course reading list has been posted for you to access these materials electronically in Canvas*. You are also welcome to purchase physical copies of the texts, but you are not required to do so.

Writing Assignments:

Student reading questions: For each module, you will have the opportunity to post three to five questions about the readings. You must participate with at least one post for at least five (5) of seven modules over the course of the semester to have the potential to receive full credit for this assignment. You will receive a grade of credit/partial credit/no credit on the reading questions based on the quality of your contributions. You should plan to submit at least three questions for a module to receive full credit.

For this assignment, there are two types of questions that you might post. First, you should post questions that you found confusing/perplexing from the readings. All of us will have these kinds of questions! This is a way for me to know what is confusing in the texts for you, so that we can discuss it in class.

The second type of question is a Jeopardy-style question, where the question has a definite answer and can be asked in the standard format of Jeopardy. You should provide both the question and the answer. We will use these questions to make sure everyone understands the basic course content, to review each thinker at the end of a module, and for a game at the end of the semester.

Essays: Students will be required to write three 4-5 page essays developing an argument regarding one or more of the thinkers studied. You will have four opportunities for these essays; three are required. A list of topics for the paper will be provided by the instructor; for each paper you will choose one of these topics. These papers will not require outside reading, although students may wish to use supplementary materials. The paper is intended to give you an opportunity to think through the texts studied, and to integrate and synthesize course material. There will be a separate handout on the specific standards of paper writing for this course.

While it is not required, you will have the opportunity to turn in an early draft of your paper for feedback from the instructor. Utilizing these comments, you will then revise the paper to turn in a second (final) draft. I try to provide 24 hour turnaround time on papers submitted to me. Papers should be submitted no later than 48 hours before they are due. Send your paper by email attachment to jylj@newark.rutgers.edu.

Final Jeopardy: For the final class of the semester, we will discuss the readings using the Jeopardy questions that we will have developed over the course of the semester. This is hopefully a fun and less stressful way to review what you have learned in the class.

Grading:

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|--------------------------------|-----|
| Essays (three) 25% each | 75% |
| Final Jeopardy (participation) | 10% |
| Student reading questions | 15% |

A word on reading political theory:

Reading political theory is different from much other reading, so reading a text once is unlikely to constitute adequate preparation for understanding what is being said. Students are encouraged to read the assigned texts carefully, and to take notes on the texts. The questions for each thinker are intended to help you read carefully and take notes.

Course Outline and Schedule:

Module 1: January 19 and 26

Nicolo Machiavelli, The Prince

Read: Dedication and chaps. 1, 2, 6, 8-9, 14-18 & 25-26

Reading questions for Machiavelli due Jan 25, 2022

Module 2 February 2 and 9

Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan

Read: chaps. 1, 3, 5, 6, 10, 13 to 21, 29, 30, 46 and Review and Conclusion

Reading questions for Hobbes due February 8, 2022

Essay #1 due February 15, 2022

Module 3 February 16 and 23

John Locke, Second Treatise

Read Chapters 1 through 19

Reading questions for Locke due February 22, 2022

Module 4 March 1 and March 8

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Social Contract

Read: Forward and Books 1 through 4

Reading questions for Rousseau due March 8, 2022

SPRING BREAK

Essay #2 due March 22, 2022

Module 5 March 23 and 30, 2022

Mary Wollstonecraft, Vindication of the Rights of Women

Read: Chapters 1 through 5, 9, 12, and 13

Reading questions on Wollstonecraft due March 29, 2022

Module 6 April 6

Marx and Engels, Communist Manifesto

Read: Entire text

Reading questions on Marx and Engels due April 5, 2022

Essay #3 due April 19, 2022

Module 7 April 13 and 20, 2022

John Stuart Mill, On Liberty

Read: Entire text

Module 8: April 27

Last day of class; final Jeopardy

Essay #4 due May 2, 2022

Course and University Policies:

Academic Integrity:

As an academic community dedicated to the creation, dissemination, and application of knowledge, Rutgers University is committed to fostering an intellectual and ethical environment based on the principles of academic integrity. Academic integrity is essential to the success of the University's educational and research missions, and violations of academic integrity constitute serious offenses against the entire academic community. The entire Academic Integrity Policy can be found here:

<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>

Your health and well-being matter, and Rutgers has put in place a number of resources that are intended to help students through the challenges that might emerge during these times. Information on many of these resources appears below. Please let me know immediately if you are experiencing circumstances that are negatively impacting your academic performance. I also strongly encourage you to contact your academic advisor.

Accommodation and Support Statement:

Rutgers University Newark (RU-N) is committed to the creation of an inclusive and safe learning environment for all students. RU-N has identified the following resources to further the mission of access and support:

- **Absences:** All students are responsible for timely notification of their instructor regarding any expected absences. The Division of Student Affairs can provide assistance for absences related to religious observance, emergency or unavoidable conflict (illness, personal or family emergency, etc.) Students should refer to the University's Course Attendance policy (10.2.7), for complete expectations and responsibilities. The office can be contacted at: (973) 353-5063 or deanofstudents@newark.rutgers.edu.
- **Disabilities:** The Office of Disability Services (ODS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter barriers due to disability. Once a student has completed the ODS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and reasonable accommodations are determined to be necessary and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be provided. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and follow up with a discussion. This should be completed as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at ods.rutgers.edu. Contact ODS: (973) 353-5375 or ods@newark.rutgers.edu.
- **Temporary Conditions/Injuries:** The Division of Student Affairs can assist students who are experiencing a temporary condition of injury (broken or sprained limbs, concussions, or recovery from surgery). Students experiencing a temporary condition or injury should submit a request for assistance at: <https://temporaryconditions.rutgers.edu>.
- **Pregnancy:** The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance is available to assist students with any concerns or potential accommodations related to pregnancy. Students may contact the office at (973) 353-1906 or TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu.
- **Gender or Sex-Based Discrimination or Harassment:** The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance can assist students experiencing any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, or stalking. Students can report an incident to the office at: (973) 353-1906 or TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu. Incidents may also be reported by using the following link: https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?RutgersUniv&layout_id=7. For more information, students should refer to the University's Student Policy Prohibiting Sexual Harassment, Sexual Violence, Relationship Violence, Stalking and Related Misconduct located at: <http://compliance.rutgers.edu/title-ix/about-title-ix/title-ix-policies/>.

- **Interpersonal Violence:** The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance can provide any student with confidential support. The office is a **confidential resource** and does **not** have a reporting obligation to report information to the University's Title IX Coordinator. Students can contact the office at: (973) 353-1918 or run.vpva@rutgers.edu. There is also a confidential, text-based line students can text for support: (973) 339-0734.
- **Crisis and Concerns:** The Campus Awareness Response and Education (CARE) Team works with students in crisis to develop a support plan to address personal situations that might impact academic performance. Students may contact the CARE Team at:
https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?RutgersUniv&layout_id=11 or careteam@rutgers.edu.
- **Stress, Worry, or Concerns about Well-Being:** The Counseling Center has confidential therapists available to support students. To schedule an appointment: counseling@newark.rutgers.edu or (973) 353-5805. If a student is not quite ready to make an appointment with a therapist but is interested in self-help, check out *TAO at Rutgers-Newark* for an easy, web-based approach to self-care and support: <https://thepath.taoconnect.org/local/login/home.php>.
- **Emergencies:** Call 911 or contact Rutgers University Police Department (RUPD) at (973) 353-5111.

▣ Learning Resources:

- Rutgers Learning Center (tutoring services)
(973) 353-5608
<https://sasn.rutgers.edu/student-support/tutoring-academic-support/learning-center>
- Writing Center (tutoring and writing workshops)
(973) 353-5847
nwc@rutgers.edu
<https://sasn.rutgers.edu/student-support/tutoring-academic-support/writing-center>

▣ Technology LaunchPad:

<https://runit.rutgers.edu/technology-launch-pad/>

Note:

This syllabus may be subject to change. Changes to the syllabus will be announced on Canvas and a new version of the syllabus will be posted.