MODERN POLITICAL THOUGHT

Prof. Víctor M. Muñiz-Fraticelli  
POLI 232, Fall 2015  
MWF* 9:35–10:25  
FDA Auditorium

Office: 3674 Peel, Rm. 302  
Hours: WF 11:00 – 12:00  
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1. Aims and Learning Objectives

The course introduces students to modern political thought through a critical examination of some of the key political ideologies and concepts of contemporary political discourse. We will specifically examine the distinctive problem of modern political theory: to construct a universal basis of political legitimacy that is grounded neither in nature nor in sectarian religious premises. The course follows a generally chronological structure, with occasional integration of more recent work. While we start with an overview of pre-modern texts, the bulk of our attention will be on the period between the 16th and 19th centuries.

Among the issues to be discussed are:

- the relationship of morality to politics,
- the source of law and duty to obey it,
- the boundaries of political society
- the relationship of the individual to the community

The specific objectives of the course are (1) to arrive at an informed opinion of the problems that modern political theorists identify as being of foremost concern, and their reasons for foregrounding these problems; (2) to chart their attempts to answer these concerns, with special attention to their endorsement, rejection, or revision of the arguments of their predecessors; (3) to recall, understand, and offer a critical evaluation of the principal arguments of each thinker. The more general objectives of the course include developing the ability to critically evaluate political and philosophical arguments and adjudicate among different interpretations of texts, and improve the skills of communicating normative and interpretative arguments in oral discussion and written work.

This is an introductory course. There are no prerequisites.

2. Required and suggested texts

The following required texts have been ordered at Paragraphe Bookstore (on Sherbrooke and McGill College, across from the Roderick gates):


In addition, supplementary readings, podcasts and videos have been posted on myCourses. Some of these are not required and are so noted in the Schedule of Readings.

*There will be Monday lectures only on 14 and 21 September. After that time, the Monday lectures drop out and conferences (discussion sections) begin. In addition, the lecture for October 23 will be replaced by a film screening at a time and place TBA.
3. Grading and teaching policies

The class will follow a lecture format. Because of the size of the class, it is unlikely that there will be space for questions in-lecture. There will be a mandatory conference, which will determine the participation component of the grade, and which will be the major forum for discussion. Please come to each conference prepared to initiate topics of conversation and to draw others’ attention to important themes or passages in the text, as well as answer direct questions posed by the instructor or your classmates. Attendance to both lecture and conference is mandatory, and lack of attendance will affect your participation grade.

Late papers will be penalized by 1/3 of a letter grade per day (an A paper becomes A-, then B+, then B, and so on) with the first day beginning immediately after the papers are due. Papers that are over one week late will not be accepted, resulting in failing the paper which means (see below) failing the entire course. Documented illnesses or documented family emergencies will be the only grounds for exceptions, extensions, or acceptance of emailed papers.

Papers are due at 5:00pm, and only hard copies will be accepted. I will not accept emailed papers, even as evidence that you finished it by the deadline, except under the circumstances mentioned in the previous paragraph, or by prior (and exceptional) arrangement. Papers should be left in the lobby of 3674 Peel Street either with my secretary (Ms. Libby Parker), or in a box that will be labeled with the course name and number. If you leave a paper anywhere else, I will consider it delivered when I find it, and impose penalties accordingly.

In order to pass the course as a whole, you must receive a passing grade for each of the course components. Excessive absences, a consistent failure to take part in discussion, or failing to turn in any one of the papers will result in a failing grade for the course as a whole. I apply this policy strictly, and have failed students for consistently failing to attend conferences.

Laptop and electronic device policy

Laptops, iPads, tablets, or other electronic devices should be put away during lecture or conference. If a reading has been posted on myCourses, you may wish to print it out before class. Exceptions may only be made on recommendation of the Office for Students with Disabilities.

Required assignments:

- First paper (1500 words) – further instructions will be provided.
- Second paper (1500 words) – further instructions will be provided.
- Conference attendance and participation – see weekly schedule of topics below.
- Final exam – scheduled in the final exam period, TBA.

Grade Distribution:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First paper (due Oct 15)</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second paper (due Nov 17)</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference attendance</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
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4. **Additional Notices**

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (for more information, see [http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity](http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity)).

L’université McGill attache une haute importance à l’honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l’on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l’étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (veuillez consulter le site [http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity](http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity) pour de plus amples renseignements,).

In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University’s control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

If you have a disability please contact the instructor to arrange a time to discuss your situation. It would be helpful if you contact the Office for Students with Disabilities at 398-6009 (online at [http://www.mcgill.ca/osd](http://www.mcgill.ca/osd)) before you do this.
### Schedule of Readings *(Podcasts and videos are not required, but are very helpful)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Lecture days</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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| -    | Sept 4       | Introduction (no required reading)  
*  *Suggested: Larmore, ‘What is Political Philosophy’ |
|      | Sept 7       | Labour Day *(No class)* |
| I    | Sept 9, 11   | Aristotle, *Politics* Bks 1, 3-5, 7 [BV 177-187, 204-242]  
*Podcast: Terence Irwin on Aristotle's Ethics*  
*  *Suggested: Cicero, *Republic* and *Laws* [myCourses]* |
| II   | Sept 14      | Augustine, *City of God* [BV 267-281]  
Aquinas, *Summa Theologicae* [BV 309-322]  
*Podcast: Anthony Kenny on Aquinas' Ethics*  
*  *Suggested: Cicero, *Republic* and *Laws* [myCourses]* |
|      | Sept 16      | Weber, *Politics as Vocation* |
|      | Sept 18, 21  | Machiavelli, *Prince* and *Discourses* [BV 346-389]  
*Podcast: Quentin Skinner on Machiavelli's *The Prince** |
*Podcast: Quentin Skinner on Hobbes on the State* |
| IV   | Sept 30, Oct 2 | Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chs. XXXI and XLII [myCourses]  
*Podcast: Noel Malcolm on Hobbes' *Leviathan* in Context* |
| V    | Oct 7, 9     | Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*  
and *Letter Concerning Toleration* [BV 496-565]  
*Podcast: John Dunn on Locke on Toleration*  
*  *Suggested: Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws* [BV 578-583]* |
<p>|      | Oct 12       | Thanksgiving <em>(No class)</em> |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading and Notes</th>
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| VI   | Oct 14, 16 | Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* and *On the Social Contract* [BV 615-718]  
*Podcast*: Chris Bertram on Rousseau's Moral Psychology  
*Podcast*: Melissa Lane on Rousseau on Modern Society |
Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (1789) [myCourses]  
Des Gouges, *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen* [BV 782-785]  
Wollstonecraft, Vindication of the *Rights of Women* [BV 790-827]  
*Suggested*: Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, ch. 1 [myCourses] |
Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* [BV 830-834]  
Tocqueville, Democracy in America [BV 966-971]  
Oakeshott, ‘On Being Conservative’ [myCourses]  
*Podcast*: Richard Bourke on Edmund Burke on Politics |
| Oct 23 |         | Ford, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (time and place TBA) |
| VIII | Oct 28  | Kant, *Groundwork for a Metaphysics of Morals* [BV 733-741]  
Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* and *Philosophy of Right* [BV 850-875]  
*Podcast*: Robert Stern on Hegel on Dialectic |
| Oct 30 |         | Bentham, *Principles of Morals and Legislation* and *Panopticon* [BV 877-884, 889-894]  
Mill, *Utilitarianism* [BV 931-941]  
*Podcast*: Roger Crisp on Utilitarianism  
*Podcast*: Philip Schofield on Jeremy Bentham's Utilitarianism |
IX  Nov 4, 6  Mill, On Liberty [BV 900-925]  
Berlin, ‘Two concepts of liberty’ [myCourses]  
Foucault, The Birth of the Prison [myCourses]  
*Podcast:* Richard Reeves on Mill’s On Liberty  
*Podcast:* Henry Hardy on Isaiah Berlin’s Pluralism  
*Suggested:* Taylor, ‘What’s wrong with negative liberty’ [myCourses]

Taylor-Mill, The Enfranchisement of Women [BV 956-962]  
Truth, Speech at the Akron Convention [BV 964-965]  
Du Bois, The Souls of Black Folk, chs. 1 and 2 [myCourses]  
*Video:* Mills, Liberalism and Racial Justice [myCourses]  
*Podcast:* Janet Radcliffe Richards on Men and Women’s Natures

XI  Nov 18, 20  Marx, On the Jewish Question, Theses on Feuerbach, The Communist Manifesto [BV 990-1002, 1029-1046]  
*Podcast:* Jonathan Wolff on Marx on Alienation

XII  Nov 25, 27  Sorel, Reflections on Violence [myCourses]  
Schmitt, The Concept of the Political [myCourses]  
Gentile, Origins and Doctrine of Fascism [myCourses]

XIII  Dec 2, 4  Rawls, A Theory of Justice and Political Liberalism [myCourses]  
*Podcast:* Jonathan Wolff on John Rawls’ A Theory of Justice

Readings are subject to change, but sufficient notice will be given.