POLI 434: HISTORY OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL THOUGHT 4 (19TH AND 20TH CENTURIES)

Wednesdays and Fridays, 10h05-11h25, in Burnside 1824

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Office Hours: TBD
Also available by appointment

Course Description:

This is a course in 19th and 20th century political theory. The aims of the course include:
1) To conclude the education in the history of western political thought taught in the four semester sequence POLI 333-334-433-434
2) To offer substantive knowledge about a selection of the most important thinkers in the history of western political philosophy and social thought, and about the intellectual, political, economic, and social history of the era;
3) To offer students the opportunity to learn to interpret and understand theoretical and philosophical texts about politics, and to adjudicate among rival understandings or interpretations of those texts;
4) To offer students the ability to critically evaluate those texts, both with respect to the quality of their arguments and with respect to their normative or explanatory claims;
5) To offer students the ability to improve their own ability to make normative and explanatory arguments about politics and society;
6) To improve students’ skills at communicating such arguments in discussion and in written work.

Prerequisites: Normally students will have taken POLI 433 or PHIL 444, or be taking one of them simultaneously as a co-requisite. Those courses’ prerequisites in turn mean that normally this course is taken as the conclusion of a four-semester sequence (POLI 333/PHIL 345; POLI 334/PHIL 344; POLI 433/PHIL 444). Note that this course may not be taken in addition to PHIL 345 (19th century political theory). Although these two courses are not interchangeable, they are too close to allow them to both be taken for credit.

Course Texts:
The following texts are available at The Word Bookstore, at 469 Milton St. (cash/cheque only). They are also available on course reserve in the Humanities & Social Sciences Library.


All other readings are either directly linked to in this document or will be available on myCourses.
Students are encouraged to read texts in the original languages when possible. Contact me for bibliographic information.

WORK:
You can tailor this course to your needs and expectations to a greater degree than many other courses. The evaluation of coursework is always of two sorts: qualitative and quantitative. My aim in this class is to maximize productive qualitative evaluation and to make the assignment of quantitative marks a minor and mutual affair. The final evaluation of your work in this course will be based upon a mix of essays and in-class presentation (60%), active attendance (10%), and a peer- and self-evaluation portfolio (30%).

a) Writing: There are three essay opportunities spread over the course of the term. You can choose to write one, two, or three of those essays (but see (b) below). If you write all three, each should be 1000-1200 words long. If you write two, one should be 1000-1200 words long and the other 2000-2500 words. If you write only one, it should be 4000-5000 words.
   • NB: Written assignments should be handed in at the beginning of class on the due date, and will not be accepted by email.
   • I strongly encourage you to stop by my office hours to talk about your written assignments before turning them in.

b) In-class presentations: In lieu of one essay opportunity, you may choose to make one short in-class presentation (~10 minutes). When you present, you will provide the class with a one-page outline of the reading for the day. You will orally present a brief synopsis of the reading (no more than 5 or 6 minutes), highlighting what you take to be the most important argumentative developments. You will use the remainder of your time to ask and develop 2-3 lines of questioning regarding the reading. What is especially puzzling or provocative? Why? Does the reading shed light on (or complicate) a question we have considered previously? What do we need to grapple with? Your presentation should be a type-written text, and you will hand this text in to me. For most people, 100–120 words per minute is a comfortable reading pace; using that baseline, presentation texts should be 1000-1200 words total. There are limited opportunities for presentations, so I cannot guarantee this option to you; it is available on a first-come-first-served basis.

c) Attendance and Participation: Class meetings will involve frequent writing exercises and questions about the reading, and Thursday class meetings will usually conclude with 30–45 minutes of questions and discussion. Prepare for class by taking notes and thinking about questions, ideas, or problems that arise from your readings. Be sure to bring your books and/or hard copy printouts of readings to class. You are responsible for all of the assigned material, including the parts we do not discuss in class.
   • NB: As per McGill’s courtesy policy, cell phone use, texting, emailing, and surfing the web are prohibited during class. Additionally, I ask that you turn off and put away your laptop and tablet computers. There is increasing evidence that laptop use in classrooms – even for note-taking alone – is detrimental to attention and learning. (If you think that there are special circumstances that make this policy unwise in your own case, please speak to me.)

d) Peer- and self-evaluation dossier: You will take part in a series of objective-setting and self-evaluation exercises over the course of the term, where I ask you to reflect on what you want to get out of the course and its assignments and to evaluate your own performance in the light of your objectives. I will also ask you to evaluate one another’s written work. At the end of the term, I will schedule a short meeting with each student, at which we will go over your work and the various evaluations it has received, and to arrive at a final mark in the course on that basis.
**SCHEDULE:**
8 Jan: Intro
5 Feb: Marx, *On the Jewish Question*
       *Towards a Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right, Introduction*
7 Feb: Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*
       *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (selections)
12 Feb: Marx, *Capital* (selections)
14 Feb: Marx, *The Civil War in France* (excerpt)
       *Critique of the Gotha Program*
19 Feb: TBD
21 Feb: TBD
26 Feb: TBD
28 Feb: Arendt, “Civil Disobedience”
       **First essay due**

Reading Week
13 Mar: Arendt, “Thoughts on Politics and Revolution”
20 Mar: Foucault, *Discipline & Punish*, Part II
27 Mar: Foucault, *Discipline & Punish*, Part IV
1 Apr: Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, Part I
3 Apr: Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, Part II
8 Apr: Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, Part III
10 Apr: Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, Parts IV & V
       **Second essay due**
**Rules, Policies, and Pedantries:**

Because it is in everyone’s interest that the coursework end when the course ends, we will not consider a request for K in the absence of documented extenuating circumstances. (Having too many papers to write is not enough – we all have too many papers to write.)

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l’étudiant de l’Université McGill, chaque étudiant-e a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté.

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. Please note that I take plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty seriously, and your work will be reviewed for potential plagiarism issues by means of text-matching software.

As the instructor of this course I endeavour to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with us and the Office for Students with Disabilities/MyAccess (514-398-6009).