

POLT 270: Political Thought in the West

Spring 2006

MWF 2-2.50pm, Mayer 200a

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 9-11, & by appointment

Course description

This course is an *introduction* to political theory. In the coming semester, we will try to get a handle on four contributors to Western political thought: Plato, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Karl Marx, and John Dewey. While each of these men (!) contributed volumes upon volumes of valuable ideas, the limits of the semester calendar will only allow us to scratch the surface of each thinker's work. With some work, however, that scratch will be a significant contribution to your understanding of the history of political thought.

We will be focusing our scratching on works that highlight a theme quite salient to a country currently engaged in international war: the demands of citizenship. Certainly a timeless concern, the appropriate posture of citizens defines one of the great social and political cleavages in the contemporary US; should citizens be loyal or critical, deferential or participatory? Underlying this cleavage stands a perennial if only infrequently asked political question: What is the value of democracy?

Required texts

Plato, *The Republic & Other Works* (Doubleday)

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Basic Political Writings* (Hackett)

Karl Marx, *Selected Writings* (Hackett)

John Dewey, *Freedom & Culture* (Prometheus)

These relatively inexpensive versions are available at the Tulane University Bookstore. You are, of course, welcome to use different version and translations if you wish, though you should be prepared to "translate" page numbers during class discussions if you have a different edition. Also note that different translations may vary substantially – particularly with Plato.

Attendance & participation

Students are required to attend class *every day*, having *carefully* read and being prepared to discuss the assigned reading. Note: being "prepared to discuss" the reading is not the same as "having completely understood" the reading; asking questions can be just as valuable as answering them. *Always bring the readings to class.*

We will have pop quizzes to test reading and also keep attendance. The quizzes will be very quick and quite easy if you've done the reading. There will be no make-up quizzes, though you will be excused from quizzes on days for which you provide a written, university-approved excuse.

I do understand that some students find it difficult to speak up on a regular basis, and I will make every effort to make the class atmosphere supportive. I expect that you as students will do the same for each other. I encourage you to visit me during my office hours if you are concerned about this aspect of your grade.

Exams & grades

There will be four (4) exams in this class, one for each of the thinkers we are covering.

Each exam will count for 20% of your total grade.

Quizzes, attendance, and participation will account for the remaining 20% of your final grade.

EXTRA CREDIT: You have the option of writing an extra-credit paper on a topic of your choosing to boost your quiz scores. These papers should be 2 to 4 pages in length, and apply an aspect of one of more of the theories from class to something in your daily life: a television show you saw, a political event in the news, your favorite band, a classroom or work experience, etc. You can turn in an extra credit paper at any time during the semester, up until FRIDAY, APRIL 21. Limit: one extra credit paper per student.

Honor code

Students are expected to adhere to the Tulane University Honor Code. If you have any questions at all about this code or what constitutes plagiarism, ask the professor.

Class schedule

All readings are to be completed for the day for which it is assigned. For example, You should have read *The Apology* before you show up to class on Friday, January 20.

W Jan 18 Welcome to Ancient Greece. Mind the gap.

F Jan 20 Plato, *The Apology*

M Jan 23 Plato, *The Republic*, Book 1

W Jan 25 Plato, *The Republic*, Book 2

F Jan 27 Plato, *The Republic*, Book 3

M Jan 30 Plato, *The Republic*, Book 4

W Feb 1 Plato, *The Republic*, Book 5

F Feb 3 Plato, *The Republic*, Book 6

M Feb 6 Plato, *The Republic*, Book 7

W Feb 8 Plato, *The Republic*, Book 8

F Feb 10 TBA

M Feb 13 PLATO EXAM

W Feb 15 Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, Letter to Geneva and preface

F Feb 17 Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, part 1

M Feb 20 Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, part 2

W Feb 22 Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Book I

F Feb 24 Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Book II

Feb 26 – Mar 5 Spring Break

M Mar 6 Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Book III

W Mar 8 Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Book IV

F Mar 10 TBA

M Mar 13 ROUSSEAU EXAM
 W Mar 15 TBA
 F Mar 17 Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (pp. 157-186)

 M Mar 20 Marx, *1844 Manuscripts*: preface, “Alienated Labor” and “Private Property and Communism” (pp. 58-79)
 W Mar 22 Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*: Preface (pp. 209-213)
 F Mar 24 Marx, *Contribution to Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*: Introduction” (pp. 27-39)
 Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach” (pp. 99-101)

 M Mar 27 Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology* (pp. 102-132)
 W Mar 29 Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology* (pp. 102-132)
 F Mar 31 Marx, *On the Jewish Question* (pp. 2-26)

 M Apr 3 TBA
 W Apr 5 MARX EXAM
 F Apr 7 Dewey, *Freedom & Culture*, Chapter 1

 M Apr 10 Dewey, *Freedom & Culture*, Chapter 2
 W Apr 12 Dewey, *Freedom & Culture*, Chapter 3
 F Apr 14 No class

 M Apr 17 Dewey, *Freedom & Culture*, Chapter 4
 W Apr 19 Dewey, *Freedom & Culture*, Chapter 5
 F Apr 21 Dewey, *Freedom & Culture*, Chapter 6 { *last day to turn in extra credit* }

 M Apr 24 Dewey, *Freedom & Culture*, Chapter 7
 W Apr 26 TBA
 F Apr 28 DEWEY EXAM