

# Course # | Modern Political Thought

## Description

---

This course offers an introduction to the history of Western political ideas from Hobbes to Rawls. Close readings of the canon allow us to discuss enduring questions regarding modernity, the state, legitimacy, freedom, equality, toleration, and political economy. Particular attention is paid to the development of modern liberalism by thinkers such as Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Kant, and Mill, as well as the radical critiques of liberalism advanced by traditionalism, socialism, feminism, and critical race theory. The course concludes with a look at the continuing impact of these canonical thinkers on contemporary political thought.

## Assignments

---

- (1) *Reading Notes*: For each session's assigned readings, answer the questions identified in the provided "Reading Notes Template" and submit them to your online reading journal. The journals are ungraded, but their content may be used on the exams.
- (2) *First Response Essay*: The readings for each class are accompanied by two or three reflection questions. Sign up for one class from "Part 1" of the course for which you will compose a 1000-word response paper to one question for that date. Papers are due by 11:59 PM one week after the class to which you are responding. Choices must be submitted by 5:00 PM Friday, [Date].
- (3) *Midterm Exam*: A closed-book, open-note exam will be held in class on [Date]. The exam will cover everything up to that point. It will be one-half text identifications and one-half essay questions. Identifications quote a passage from the readings and ask you to identify the source of the quote and explain its meaning and context. The essay questions will engage with the themes raised in Part 1 of the course.
- (4) *Second Response Essay*: Like the first assignment, sign up for one class from "Part 2" of the course for which you will compose a 1000-word response paper to one question for that date. Papers are due by 11:59 PM one week after the class to which you are responding. Choices must be submitted by 5:00 PM Friday, [Date].
- (5) *Simulation*: An in-class simulation will take place [Date]. In addition to participating in this activity, you will be asked to respond to several short reflection questions.
- (6) *Final Exam*: A closed-book, open-note final exam will be held during the university's exam period. It will be one-half text identifications from Parts 2 and 3 of the course and one-half essay questions. The essay questions will focus on the grand themes of the course.

## Course Schedule

---

### 1. The Foundations of Liberalism

#### 01. **Descartes: *The Origins of Modernity***

- Descartes, *Discourse on Method*

#### 02. **Hobbes: *The Specter of Skepticism***

- Hobbes, *Leviathan*, intro, chs. 1, 2, 5, and 7: pp. 1– 11, 22 – 27, and 35 – 37.

#### 03. **Hobbes: *The State of Nature and the Social Contract***

- Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chs. 13 – 14, skim 15: pp. 74 – 88, skim 89 – 100.

#### 04. **Hobbes: *The Sovereign and the Subjects***

- Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chs. 16 – 18, and 21: pp. 101 – 118, and 136 – 145.

---

05.        **Locke: *The State of Nature and Pre-Social Rights***

- Locke, “Second Treatise,” *Two Treatises of Government*, chs. 1 – 3, and 5: pp. 267 – 282, and 285 – 302.

---

06.        **Locke: *Legitimacy, Consent, and the Ends of Politics***

- Locke, “Second Treatise,” *Two Treatises of Government*, chs. 8 (§§ 95 – 101, 104, 113-116, 119 – 122), 9, and 7 (§§ 87 – 94): pp. 330 – 334, 336, 344 – 353, and 323 – 330.

---

07.        **Locke: *Representation & Revolution***

- Locke, “Second Treatise,” *Two Treatises of Government*, chs. 10, 11, 13 (§149) and 14 (§159, 160, and 168), 18 (§§199 and 201) and 19: pp. 354 – 363, 366 – 367, 374 – 375, 379 – 380, 398 – 400 and 406 – 419.

---

08.        **Rousseau: *The Social Pact and Legitimacy***

- Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Book I: pp. 41 – 56.

---

09.        **Rousseau: *The General Will***

- Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Book II, chs. 1 – 6: pp. 57 – 68.
- Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Book IV, chs. 1 and 2: pp. 121 – 125.

---

10.        **Rousseau: *The Sovereign and the Government***

- Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Book III, chs. 1 – 3, and 10 – 18: pp. 82 – 90, and 106 – 120.

---

11.        **Kant: *Liberal Cosmopolitanism and Perpetual Peace***

- Kant, “What is Enlightenment” and “Perpetual Peace”

---

12.        **MIDTERM EXAM**

---

**2. Critics of Liberalism**

---

13.        **Burke: *In Defense of Tradition***

- Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, selections.

---

14.        **Rousseau: *Natural Man***

- Rousseau, “The Discourse on Inequality,” Preface and Part I, pp. 124 – 160.

---

15.        **Rousseau: *Progress and Corruption***

- Rousseau, “The Discourse on Inequality,” Part II, pp. 161 – 180.

---

16.        **Marx: *Historical Materialism***

- Marx, “The German Ideology,” *The Marx-Engels Reader*: pp. 148 – 163.

---

17.        **Marx: *The Critique of Capitalism***

- Marx, “Wage Labor and Capital,” *The Marx-Engels Reader*: pp. 203 – 217.

---

18.        **Marx: *The Ideological Critique of Liberalism***

- Marx, “Marx on the History of His Opinions,” *The Marx-Engels Reader*: pp. 3 – 6.
- Marx, “On the Jewish Question,” *The Marx-Engels Reader*: pp. 40 – 46.

---

- 
19. **C.W. Mills: *The Racial Contract***
- Mills, Charles W., *The Racial Contract*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997: pp. 9 – 40.
- 
20. **Jaggar: *A Feminist Critique of Liberalism***
- Allison Jaggar, “Liberal Feminism and Human Nature,” in *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*, pp. 27 – 48.
- 
21. **Nietzsche: *Eagles and Lambs***
- Nietzsche, “First Essay” in *The Genealogy of Morals*.
- 
- 3. Contemporary Defenses of Liberalism**
- 
22. **J.S. Mill: *Tyranny of the Majority and the Harm Principle***
- Mill, “On Liberty,” *On Liberty, Utilitarianism, and Other Essays*, chs. 1 and 2, pp. 5 – 54.
- 
23. **J.S. Mill: *Liberty to Disagree***
- Mill, “On Liberty,” *On Liberty, Utilitarianism, and Other Essays*, chs. 3 and: pp. 55 – 90.
- 
24. **J.S. Mill: *The Value of Representative Government***
- Mill, “Considerations on Representative Government,” *On Liberty, Utilitarianism, and Other Essays*, ch. 3: pp. 209 – 224.
- 
25. **Rawls: *The Main Idea of Justice as Fairness***
- Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, §§ 1 – 4 and 24: pp. 1 – 19 and 118 – 123.
- 
26. **Rawls: *The Problem of Choice in the Original Position***
- [In-class simulation: “John Rawls’s Original Position”]
- 
27. **Rawls: *The Two Principles of Justice***
- Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, §§ 11 – 14: pp. 52 – 78.
- 
28. **Rawls: *Just Institutions***
- Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, §§ 31 and 36: pp. 171 – 176, 194 – 200.
- 
29. **Shklar: *The Liberalism of Fear***
- Shklar, Judith. “The Liberalism of Fear.” In *Liberalism and the Moral Life*, edited by Nancy L. Rosenblum. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1989: pp. 21 – 38.
- 
30. **REVIEW**
-