

Woodrow Wilson Department of Politics

GFPT 700
Introduction to Political Theory
Spring 2018

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This course has three related objectives. First, we will examine some great works in the history of political theory, with which all students in the field should be familiar. My expectation is that this material will be largely review for many if not most students. Our second concern is different interpretations of these great works and different strategies of interpretation. Approaches considered include that of Quentin Skinner, who is the main figure for issues of interpretation in the history of political theory, Leo Strauss, C. B. Macpherson, and some other scholars. Finally, moving beyond history of political theory, we will examine important issues of method more generally in political theory and how we are to understand political theory as a field.

Material for the course is available in different forms. I have ordered the books listed below at the University bookstore. If you have other editions, they should be fine, although it will be more difficult to follow discussion of specific passages in class. Much of the material is in the public domain and so available on the internet. Books are also on reserve in Clemons Library.

Other readings(although not all recommended readings) are on the class collab page, which also contains some useful additional, supplementary readings. A list of standard secondary works in the history of political theory is provided at the end of this syllabus.

T. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Second Edition (Chicago, paperback)

Plato, *Republic*, G.M.A. Grube, trans. (Hackett, paperback)

N. Machiavelli, *The Prince and the Discourses*, L. Ricci, E. R. P. Vincent, and C. E. Detmold, eds. and trans. (New York: Modern Library, 1950).

T. Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Cambridge, paperback)

J. Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (Cambridge, paperback)

J. S. Mill, *On Liberty* (Hackett, paperback)

J. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 1st. ed. (Harvard, paperback)

R. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader*, Second Edition (Norton, paperback)

M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (Vintage, paperback)

I Paradigms and Reflective Equilibrium

1. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* (Chicago, paperback)

J. Arras, "The Way We Reason Now: Reflective Equilibrium in Bioethics," *Oxford Handbook of Bioethics*, B. Steinbock, ed. (collab)

2. **T. Hobbes**, *Leviathan*, R. Tuck, ed. (Cambridge, paperback): Chaps. 1-18, 20-21, 26, 28-30, Review and Conclusion.

3. Interpretations of Hobbes and Strategies of Interpretation

J. Plamenatz, Introduction, *Man and Society*, pp, ix-xvii (collab)

Q. Skinner, Preface, *Foundations of Political Thought* (collab)

Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory*, 8, (1969) (collab).

A. E. Taylor, "The Ethical Doctrine of Hobbes," in *Hobbes Studies*, S. Brown, ed. (collab)

Skinner, "The Context of Hobbes's Theory of Obligation," pp. 135-42, in *Hobbes and Rousseau: A Collection of Critical Essays*, M. Cranston and R. S. Peters, eds. (collab)

recommended: Skinner, "History and Ideology in the English Revolution," *Historical Journal*, 8 (1965) (collab).

recommended: Skinner, "The Ideological Context of Hobbes's Political Thought," *Historical Journal*, 9 (1966) (collab).

recommended: Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*, Part II (on reserve (not collab)).

4. **Plato**, *Republic*, G.M.A. Grube, trans. (Hackett, paperback).

5. Interpretations of Plato

L. Strauss, "On Plato's *Republic*," *The City and Man* (University of Chicago Press, 1964) (collab).

G. Klosko, "The 'Rule' of Reason in Plato's Psychology," *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, 9 (1988) (collab).

recommended: Strauss, "Persecution and the Art of Writing," in *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (collab).

recommended: "On a Forgotten Kind of Writing," in *What is Political Philosophy?* (collab).

recommended: Exoteric Teaching," in *The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism*, T. Pangle ed. (collab).

recommended: G. Klosko, "The 'Straussian' Interpretation of Plato's *Republic*," *History of Political Thought*, 7 (1986) (collab).

6. N. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, in *The Prince and the Discourses*, L. Ricci, E. R. P. Vincent, and C. E. Detmold, eds. and trans. (New York: Modern Library, 1950).

F. Gilbert, "The Humanist Concept of the Prince and *The Prince* of Machiavelli." *Journal of Modern History*, 11 (1939) (collab).

M. Colish, "Cicero's *De Officiis* and Machiavelli's *Prince*." *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 9 (1978) (collab).

7 J. Locke, *The Second Treatise on Civil Government*, in *Two Treatises of Government*, P. Laslett, ed. (Cambridge, paperback)

8. Interpretation of Locke

C. B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*, Chap. 5 (collab)

J. Dunn, *The Political Thought of John Locke*, Preface, Chap. 1 (collab).
recommended: Chap. 1

R. Ashcraft, "Revolutionary Politics and Locke's *Two Treatises of Government*," *Political Theory*, 8 (1980) (collab).

R. Ashcraft, Introduction, *Revolutionary Politics & Locke's Two Treatises of Government*, (collab).

recommended: A. J. Simmons, *The Lockean Theory of Rights*, Introduction (collab)..

recommended: Strauss, "Locke," in *Natural Right and History*.

9. Utilitarian Liberalism

J. Bentham: "Selections from *Principles of Legislation*," in *Introduction to Contemporary Civilization in the West* (collab).

J.S. Mill, *On Liberty* (Hackett, paperback)

10. Interpreting Mill

C. McGlynn and I. Ward, "Pornography, Pragmatism, and Proscription." *Journal of Law and Society* 36 (2009) (collab).

N. Cowen, "Millian Liberalism and Extreme Pornography," *American Journal of Political Science*, 60 (2016) (collab).

11. Contemporary Analytical Political Theory

J. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 2nd. ed. (Harvard, paperback): Chaps. I-III; IV: Secs. 33-35, 38-40; VI; VII: Secs. 66-67; VIII: Sec. 77; IX: Secs. 78-79, 82, 85-7.

recommended: D. Miller and R. Dagger, "Beyond Utilitarianism: Contemporary Analytical Political Theory" *Cambridge History of Twentieth Century Political Thought*, ed. T. Ball (Cambridge, 2003) (collab).

12. Values and Political Theory

M. Weber, "Objectivity in the Social Science," in *The Methodology of the Social Sciences* (collab).

E. Nagel, *The Structure of Science*, 485-502 (collab).

Strauss, "What is Political Philosophy?" in *An Introduction to Political Philosophy*, pp. 12-24 (collab)..

recommended: D. Easton, *The Political System*, Ch. 9 (collab).

recommended: A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, pp. 102-20 (collab).

13. Political Theory as Ideology

R. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader*, Second Edition (Norton, paperback): pages (to be read in this order): 3-6, 681-2, 469-500, 146-200, 143-145, 203-217, 294-302, 361-76, 419-442, 760-68

14. Postmodern Critique

M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.

E. Midelfort, "Madness and Civilization in Early Modern Europe: A Reappraisal of Michel Foucault," in *After the Reformation*, B. Malament, ed. (collab).

G. Gutting, "Foucault and the History of Madness," in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, Gutting, ed. (collab).

REQUIREMENTS:

There are three main requirements.

1. You should do all the reading for each class and come to class prepared to discuss it. Please be advised that the reading is heavy and often complex and difficult, especially if you lack background in particular areas. So please set aside adequate time for the readings for each class.

2. In class presentation. This should be an informal presentation of approximately 15 minutes, on an aspect of a primary text or one of the secondary works. This should be a critical examination of the subject. For instance, if you choose a secondary source, you should be concerned with questions such as distinctiveness of the approach, its strengths and weaknesses, and assessment of the author's use of the approach. But you have a good deal of flexibility in regard to what you will discuss.

Please sign up for a specific subject and date, well in advance of that class meeting.

3. Paper of approximately 20 pages on a subject of your choosing. Once again, you have great flexibility in regard to this assignment. Recommended subjects include assessment of specific readings or a more general approach discussed in the course. (If you prefer, you may substitute two shorter papers, of approximately 10 pages each.)

4. Students who are planning to minor in political theory must take a final exam, which will be in lieu of one of the two shorter papers just noted.

Basic Secondary Sources on the History of Political Thought (on reserve)

G. H. Sabine, *The History of Political Theory*.

J. Plamenatz, *Man and Society*, two vols. (Machiavelli through Marx)

C. H. McIlwain, *The Growth of Political Theory in the West*. (Ancient and Medieval)

M. Forsyth and M. Keens-Soper, eds., *A Guide to the Political Classics: Plato to Rousseau* (Oxford, 1988)

M. Forsyth, M. Keens-Soper, and J. Hoffman, eds., *The Political Classics: Hamilton to Mill* (Oxford, 1993)

M. Forsyth and M. Keens-Soper, eds., *The Political Classics: Green to Dworkin* (Oxford, 1996)

I. Hampsher-Monk, *A History of Modern Political Thought*.

A useful source on contemporary political theory is:

W. Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, Second edition (Oxford, 2002).

A useful overview of issues in the history of political theory, including chapters on the different approaches addressed in this course, is

G. Klosko, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Political Philosophy* (Oxford, 2011).