

## MODERN POLITICAL THOUGHT

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Office Hours: TBA, FT 901.  
Elective Course, 2Credits  
Winter 10/11

What values should *our* political institutions promote? One way to address this question looks at how our values were defended and articulated in the past. Thinking about the past can provide important insights of how *we* should live together. This course reviews some of the major figures in modern political thought from Hobbes to J. S. Mill. The course provides 1) an appreciation of how some political concepts and values such as authority, liberty, and equality were shaped during the XVII-XIX centuries, 2) a critical assessment of the arguments provided by these thinkers, 3) and a discussion about the methodological tools developed during the time. Special emphasis will be put on the significance of these ideas for contemporary controversies in political philosophy

### Aims:

- To trigger an understanding of central arguments in political philosophy.
- To be able to understand the historical context in which political ideas developed
- To foster the ability to analyse and discuss arguments in political philosophy.
- To develop the ability to link and apply arguments of political philosophy to social and political issues.
- To foster the ability to communicate both orally and in writing arguments in political philosophy.
- To develop the capacity to learn new ideas and approaches, and to apply them in research.

### Learning outcomes:

At the end of the course the student shall be able to:

- Understand the main arguments of modern political thought.
- Understand the key positions within the history of political philosophy.
- Produce critical and well-structured arguments in political philosophy.
- Balance and contrast the weakness and strengths of different positions in contemporary debates in liberal egalitarian thought.
- Summarise arguments clearly and succinctly.

### Requirements:

- All students must read the core reading before the lectures and seminars.
- Attendance is compulsory. You need at least 90% of attendance to get a grade.
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Grades will be awarded as follows:

- you should submit three short papers (1,000 words) on different authors during the course.
- Academic dishonesty will be severely penalised. **Don't plagiarise!!**

The essays must represent a significant piece of independent research; it can be a positive argument of your own, or a critical argument. They should provide succinct, clear statements of your positions and of arguments pro and con. Don't make claims without arguing strongly for them! Also, when you criticise and argument, use the best counter-argument you find, don't waste your time with straw men!

Finally, literary or emotive or heavily jargon-laden style is often unhelpful. *Do not write a one-sided essay: be sure to evaluate the strongest arguments on both sides!*

Weekly Program:

Week 1: 'Introduction'

Week 2: 'The state of Nature and the Social Contract'

Week 3: 'Political Obligation'

Week 4: 'Locke's State of Nature'

Week 5: 'Private Property'

Week 6: 'Civil Government'

Week 7: 'Inequality'

Week 8: 'The social contract'

Week 9: 'Hume's critique to contractualism'

Week 10: 'Utilitarianism'

Week 11: 'Liberalism'

Week 12 'Revision and Conclusions'

### **General Books:**

*Good introductions:*

- D. Boucher & P. Kelly, eds., *Political Thinkers: From Socrates to the Present*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003 (2nd ed. 2009).
- I. Hampsher-Monk, *A History of Modern Political Thought: Major Political Thinkers from Hobbes to Marx*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1992.
- A. Levine, *Engaging Political Philosophy: From Hobbes to Rawls*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2002. .
- J. Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*, Harvard University Press, 2007

*Other general references:*

- T. Honderich, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995.
- I. McLean, ed., *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003.
- D. Miller et al., eds., *Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Political Thought*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1987.

- M. Bevir, ed., *Encyclopedia of Political Theory*, London, Sage, 2010.
- J. Dunn, *Political Obligation in its Historical Context: Essays in Political Theory*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980.
- J. Dunn, *Rethinking Modern Political Theory: Essays 1979-1983*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- J. Dunn, *The History of Political Theory and Other Essays*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- A. Gamble, *An Introduction to Modern Social and Political Thought*, London, Macmillan, 1981.
- D. Knowles, *Political Philosophy*, London, Routledge, 2001.
- J. Lively & A. Reeve, eds., *Modern Political Thought from Hobbes to Marx, Key Debates*, London, Routledge, 1989.
- S.M. Okin, *Women in Western Political Thought*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1979 (1992, New Afterword).
- B. Parekh & R. Berki, "The History of Political Ideas", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 34, 1973, 163-184
- J. Plamenatz, *Man and Society: Political and Social Theories from Machiavelli to Marx, Vol.1: From the Middle Ages to Locke; Vol 2: From Montesquieu to the Early Socialists; Vol. 3: Hegel, Marx, and Engels and the Idea of Progress*, London, Longman, 1992.
- Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought; Vol 1: The Renaissance; Vol. 2: The Age of Reformation*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1978.
- H. Warrender, "Political Theory and Historiography: A Reply to Professor Skinner on Hobbes", *The Historical Journal*, 22 1979, 931-940
- N. Warburton, J. Pike, D. Matravers, *Reading Political Philosophy – Machiavelli to Mill*, London, Routledge, 2000
- J. Wolff, *An Introduction to Political Philosophy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995.

## **Week 1.**

### **'Introduction'**

We justify the importance of history of political thought, and discuss some methodological issues.

Seminar questions:

- Should we need to understand the author's intentions to understand a text?
- How should we approach a text?

Core reading:

- Rawls, J. *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*, 1-20.

Supplementary reading:

- D. Boucher & P. Kelly, eds., *Political Thinkers*, ch. 1.

- Hampsher-Monk, *A History of Modern Political Thought*, Introduction.
- Levine, *Engaging Political Philosophy*, Introduction
- J. Lively & A. Reeve, eds., *Modern Political Thought from Hobbes to Marx, Key Debates*, General Introduction.
- J. Coleman, “The History of Political Thought in a Modern University”, *History of Political Thought*, 21, 2000, 152-171.
- D. Miller, “The Macpherson Version”, *Political Studies*, 30, 1982, 120-127.
- Q. Skinner, “Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas”, *History and Theory*, 8, 1969, 3-53.
- Q. Skinner, *Visions of Politics, Volume I: Regarding Method*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002.

## Week 2.

### ‘Hobbes’s *Leviathan*: The State of Nature

We introduce Hobbes magisterial work and some of its basic ideas: the laws of nature, the state of nature and the social contract.

Seminar questions:

- What are the laws of nature?
- Why is the state of nature conflictive?
- Could men get out of the state of nature?

Core reading:

- Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 13-17.

Supplementary reading:

- R. Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation*, London, Penguin, 1990.
- D. Gauthier, *The Logic of Leviathan*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1969.
- J. Hampton, *Political Philosophy*. Boulder, Westview, 1997.
- G. Kavka, *Hobbesian Moral and Political Theory*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1986.
- C. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1962.
- A. Martinich, *Hobbes*. New York, Routledge, 2005.
- G. Newey, *Hobbes and Leviathan*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2008.
- P. Pettit, *Made with Words: Hobbes on Language, Mind and Politics*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2008.
- J. Champion, “How to Read Hobbes: Independent, Heretic, Political Scientist, Absolutist? A Review of Some Recent Works on Hobbes”, *Journal of Early Modern History*, 11, 2007, 87-98
- J. Cohen, “Protection for Obedience”, chs. 1-4. Unpublished manuscript available at <http://web.mit.edu/polisci/faculty/J.Cohen.html>.
- R. Dawkins, “Nice Guys Finish First”, in his *The Selfish Gene*, second edition, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989. (A review of Axelrod)
- G. Kavka, “Hobbes’s War of All Against All”, *Ethics*, 93, 1983, 291-310.

### **Week 3.**

#### **'Hobbes's *Leviathan*: Political Obligation'**

In this seminar we discuss Hobbes's account of political obligation and some problems that it raises.

Seminar questions:

- Does Hobbes's theory of obligation require God?
- Are we obliged to obey anybody who has power over us?
- Are there any limits to the sovereign?

Core reading:

- Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chs.18, 20, 21, 26.

Supplementary reading:

- B. Barry, "Warrender and his critics", in M. Cranston and R. Peters, eds., *Hobbes and Rousseau – a collection of critical essays*, Anchor Doubleday, New York, 1972, pp. 37-65.
- W. Greenleaf, "Hobbes – the problem of interpretation" in *Hobbes and Rousseau – a collection of critical essays*, Anchor Doubleday, New York, 1972, pp. 5-36.
- R. Halliday, T. Kenyon, A. Reeve, "Hobbes's Belief in God", *Political Studies*, Vol.31, no. 3, pp. 418-433.
- Ryan, "Hobbes's Political Philosophy", in T. Sorell, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 208-245.
- R. Tuck, "Hobbes's Moral Philosophy", T. Sorell, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 175-207.
- R. Tuck, *Hobbes*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989.

### **Week 4**

#### **'Locke on the State of Nature'**

In this session we introduce the idea of natural rights and Locke's account of the state of nature. We contrast it with Hobbes's.

Seminar questions:

- How did Locke respond to Filmer's criticisms of earlier natural rights theories?
- Why is Locke's state of nature less conflict-ridden than Hobbes's?
- Is Locke specific enough about what natural rights there are?

Core reading:

- Locke, *Second Treatise on Civil Government*, chapters 1-4.

Supplementary reading:

- Simmons, *The Lockean Theory of Rights*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1992.
- Simmons, *On the Edge of Anarchy*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1993.
- J. Waldron, *God, Locke and Equality: Christian Foundations in Locke's Political Thought*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002
- D. Lloyd-Thomas, *Locke on Government*, London, Routledge, 1995 (Routledge Philosophers' Guidebook
- Simmons 'Inalienable Rights and Locke's *Treatises*' *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 12 (1983), 175-204.

## **Week 5.**

### **'Locke on property'**

In this session we discuss Locke's theory of private property and whether there are any limits to inequality.

Seminar questions:

- Is Locke's theory simply a justification of inequality?
- Is the 'enough and as good' proviso plausible?
- Is there any conflict between the right to self-preservation and the right to private property?

Core reading:

- Locke, *Second Treatise on Civil Government*, chapter 5

Supplementary reading:

- M. Kramer, *John Locke and the Origins of Private Property*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- C. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1962.
- Sreenivasan, *The Limits of Lockean Rights in Property*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995.

## **Week 6**

### **'Locke on civil government'**

We introduce Locke's theory of civil government and political obligation. We discuss general problem of the consent theory of political obligation.

Seminar questions:

- What is the difference between tacit and explicit consent?
- Can consent be the basis of political obligation?

Core reading:

- Locke, *Second Treatise on Civil Government*, chapter 7, paragraphs 113-124.

Supplementary reading:

- Beitz, C. 'Tacit Consent and Property Rights' *Political Theory*, 8, 1980.
- Bennett, J. 'A Note on Locke's Theory of Tacit Consent', *The Philosophical Review*, 88, 1979.
- Waldron, 'Locke' in Boucher and Kelly.
- Flikschuh, K. 'Reason, Right, and Revolution: Kant and Locke' *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 36, (2008).

## **Week 7**

### **'Rousseau on inequality'**

We introduce Rousseau's state of nature and his critique to modern inequality.

Seminar questions:

- What's wrong with modern society?
- Is there any way out?
- How did we end up here?

Core reading:

- Rousseau, 'Dissertation on the Origins of Inequality of Mankind', skip dedication, preface, and appendix.

Supplementary reading:

- Cohen, J. *A Free Community of Equals*, OUP, 2010.
- Moran, F. 'Natural Man in the Second Discourse' *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 54, 1993.
- Dent, *Rousseau* Routledge 2005. 57-68.
- Chapters in Levine and Boucher and Kelly.

## **Week 8**

## **‘Rousseau on the social contract’**

We introduce the idea of the social contract as reconciliation between authority and liberty. We also discuss the concept of the general will and its relevance for democracy.

Seminar questions:

- What are the principles behind the Social Contract?
- To what extent does the Social Contract provide a solution to the problems identified in the *Discourse*?
- What is the general will?
- How attractive is Rousseau’s conception of freedom?
- How is the general will related to democracy?

Core reading:

- Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, book I, book II: chapters 1-4, book IV: ch. 1-2.

Supplementary reading:

- Chapters in Levine, Hampsher-Monk and Boucher and Kelly
- Cohen, J. *A Free Community of Equals*, OUP, 2010.
- Affedt ‘the Force of Freedom’ *Political Theory*, 27, 1999.
- Neuhaus, F. ‘Freedom, Dependency and the General Will’, *Philosophical Review*, 102, 1993.
- Sreenivasan ‘What is the General Will?’ *Philosophical Review*, 109, 2000.
- Waldron ‘Rights and Majorities: Rousseau revisited’ in his *Liberal Rights*.
- Dent, *Rousseau* Routledge 2005. ch. 5.

## **Week 9**

### **‘Hume’s critique to contractualism’**

In this seminar, we review Hume’s powerful critique to the social contract.

Seminar questions:

- What is Hume’s critique of the social contract?
- What is the foundation of justice?

Core reading:

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Hume, ‘Of Justice’ in Clayton. M. and Williams, A. (eds.) *Social Justice*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

Supplementary reading:

- Castiglione, D. 'History reason and Experience', in Boucher and Kelly *The Social Contract from Hobbes to Rawls*, Routledge, 1994.
- Haakonsen 'the structure of Hume's political theory' Norton, *the Cambridge Companion to Hume*.
- Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, 'On Justice and Injustice'
- Kelly, 'Hume' in Boucher and Kelly.
- Gauthier, D. 'David Hume Contractarian' in Boucher and Kelly *Social justice: From Hume to Walzer*. Routledge 1998.
- Miller, D. *Philosophy and ideology in Hume's political thought*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981)

## Week 10

### 'Mill on utilitarianism'

We introduce Mill's controversial theory of qualitative, hedonist utilitarianism as a basis of justice.

Seminar questions:

- Does Mill provide a plausible account of what is it for a life to go well?
- How plausible is Mill's defence of utilitarianism?
- Does he manage to reconcile justice and utility?

Core reading:

- Mill, 'Utilitarianism' chapters 1, 2, 4.

Supplementary reading:

- Chapters on Bentham and Mill in Boucher and Kelly, chapters on Mill in Hampshire-Monk and Levine.
- Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Political Thought*. I. Berlin, "John Stuart Mill and the Ends of Life", *Liberty*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002, 218-251
- D.Brink, "Mill's Deliberative Utilitarianism", *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 21,1992,67-103.
- R.Crisp, *Mill on Utilitarianism*, London, Routledge, 1997.
- J. Gray, "John Stuart Mill: Traditional and Revisionist Interpretations", *Literature of Liberty*, 2, no. 2, 1979, reproduced in *The Library of Economics and Liberty* ([www.econlib.org/library/Essays/LtrLbrty.gryMTR1.html](http://www.econlib.org/library/Essays/LtrLbrty.gryMTR1.html)).
- J. Riley, "Interpreting Mills Qualitative Hedonism", *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 53, 2003, 410-418
- H.West, *Mill's "Utilitarianism": A Reader's Guide*, London, Continuum, 2007
- Saunders, B. 'J. S. Mill's Conception of Utility' in *Utilitas* 22:1 [March 2010] pp. 52-69.

## **Week 11**

### **'Mill's liberalism'**

In this seminar we discuss Mill's defence of pluralism and liberty. We also discuss his famous 'harm-principle'.

Seminar questions:

- What is the harm principle?
- What does it permit? What does it prohibit?

Core reading:

- Mill, *On Liberty*, I, III.

Supplementary reading:

- P. Kelly, "J. S. Mill: on Liberty", in Boucher and Kelly, eds., *Political Thinkers*, ch. 19.
- Hampsher-Monk, *A History of Modern Political Thought*, ch. 8, pp. 367-84.
  - Levine, *Engaging Political Philosophy*, ch. 4.
- J. Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Political Thought*, Mill III, 284-296.
- E. Anderson, "Mill and Experiments in Living", *Ethics*, 102, 1991, 4-26.
- R. Arneson, "Mill versus Paternalism", *Ethics*, 90, 1980, 470-489.
  - Clark and J. Elliott, "John Stuart Mill's Theory Of Justice", *Review of Social Economy*, 59, 2001, 467-490
- Fuchs, "Autonomy, Slavery, and Mill's Critique of Paternalism", *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, 4, 2001, 231-251
- J. Gray and G. Smith eds., *J.S. Mill, 'On Liberty' in Focus*, New York and London, Routledge, 1991, several essays worth reading.
- J. Gray, "John Stuart Mill: Traditional and Revisionist Interpretations", *Literature of Liberty*, 2, no. 2, 1979, reproduced in *The Library of Economics and Liberty* ([www.econlib.org/library/Essays/LtrLbrty.gryMTR1.html](http://www.econlib.org/library/Essays/LtrLbrty.gryMTR1.html)).
  - Miller, "John Stuart Mill's civic liberalism", *History of Political Thought*, 21, 2000, 88-113.
- J. Riley, *Mill on Liberty*, London, Routledge, 1998..
- K. Zivi, "Cultivating Character: John Stuart Mill and the Subject of Rights", *American Journal of Political Science*, 50, 2006, 49-611-2

## **Week 12**

### **'Conclusions'**