

## MODERN POLITICAL THEORY: HOBBS TO HEGEL

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Sarah Lawrence College  
2006-7, Syllabus for Fall Term  
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30-11:00  
Heimbold 210

**Course Description:** Political theory presents a tradition of thinking about the nature of political power, the conditions for its just and unjust use, the rights of individuals, minorities and majorities, and the nature and bounds of political community. Rather than tackling pressing political problems one at a time, political theorists seek systematic solutions in overall visions of just societies, or comprehensive diagnoses of the roots of oppression and domination in existent political orders. In this course we focus on modern writers who shaped the Western political imagination, that is, the conscious and unconscious ideas about rights, power, class, democracy, community and the like that we use to make sense of our political lives. Thinkers to be considered include: Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Wollstonecraft, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Mill, Nietzsche, Weber, and Ghandi. In studying their work, we will seek answers to the following questions. What is the nature of political power? What is the content of social justice? Does democracy threaten basic individual rights? Is it more important to respect the individual or the community when the interests of the two conflict? Is a market economy required by or incompatible with democracy? What aspects of human potential and social worlds do different grand theories of political life illuminate and occlude? Finally, this course will also pose the issue of the worth and legitimacy of European modernity, that is, the historical process that produced capitalism, representative democracy, religious pluralism, the modern sciences, ethical individualism, secularism, fascism, communism, new forms of racism and sexism, and many 'new social movements'. Which of the ideas that jostle for prominence within this tradition are worth defending? Which should be rejected? Or should we reject them all and instead embrace a new, post-modern political epoch? In answering these questions, we will be forced to test both the internal coherence and the continuing relevance of the political visions that shape modern politics.

**Requirements and Grading:** There are three main requirements this term: regular informed participation in class discussion and conferences based on careful reading and critical thought; an interpretive essay of seven to ten pages; and either completion of a term-long conference paper (of roughly fifteen to twenty pages) or satisfactory progress on a yearlong conference project. Interpretive essays are due two weeks after the end of class discussion of the thinker(s) on which they focus. The conference paper will count for forty percent of the grade, participation for forty, and the interpretive essays for twenty. (Though not marked on assignments, grades are available upon request.) Extensions will be granted only in the case of a genuine emergency. In the absence of an extension, late assignments will be penalized one third of a grade per day late. Note that these readings are both relatively heavy, averaging between 100 and 200 pages per week, and quite dense.

**Absences:** Three unexcused class absences are allowed per term. Additional absences will result in loss of class credit. Unexcused conference absences will not be rescheduled and may also lead to loss of credit.

**Special Needs:** I encourage students with disabilities, including invisible disabilities like chronic diseases and learning or psychiatric disabilities, to contact me regarding specific needs.

**Texts:** Please use only the editions listed below, which are available through the Sarah Lawrence Bookstore. They can also be purchased on line, often for a considerable discount. I recommend web-sites that link independent bookstores, especially since it is often possible to get these texts used in near-new condition. (Advanced Book Exchange [[www.abe.com](http://www.abe.com)], Fetch Book [[www.fetchbook.info](http://www.fetchbook.info)], Alibris [[www.alibris.com](http://www.alibris.com)] and Amazon's used book service [[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)] offer this service.) I list editors, publishers and ISBN numbers below to assist you in getting the correct editions.

- Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Richard Tuck, ed., Cambridge, 0-521-39641-7
- John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, Peter Laslett, ed., Cambridge, 0-521-35730-7.
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The First and Second Discourses*, Roger D. Masters, ed., St. Martin's, 0-312-69440-7.
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, Roger D. Masters, ed., St. Martin's, 0-312-69446-6.
- Immanuel Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, Mary Gregor, trans. & ed., Cambridge, 0521654084.
- Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men With Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Sylvana Tomaselli, ed., Cambridge, 0521436338.
- Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, J. G. Pocock, ed., Hackett, 0872200205.
- G.W.F. Hegel, *Reason in History*, Robert S. Hartman, trans., Library of the Liberal Arts/Bobbs-Merrill, 0-672-60200-8
- G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right*, T.M. Knox, ed. & trans., Oxford, 0-19-500276-8.

**WEEKLY READING ASSIGNMENTS:**

**Week 1: HOBBS**

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Dedication and Introduction, Chs. 1-10.

**Week 2: HOBBS**

Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chs. 11-19.

**Week 3: HOBBS**

Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chs. 21, 24, 30, 32, 41, 43, 46, and Conclusion.

**Week 4: LOCKE**

John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government: First Treatise*, 'Preface,' & paragraph 106; *Second Treatise*, Chs. I-VII, VIII (paragraphs 95-100; 119-122).

**Week 5: LOCKE**

John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government: Second Treatise*, IX-XIV, XVIII, XIX (paragraphs 211, 223-233)

**Week 6: ROUSSEAU**

Jean Jacques Rousseau, *A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, entire

**Week 7: ROUSSEAU**

Jean Jacques Rousseau, *On The Social Contract*, Books I-II, entire

**Week 8: ROUSSEAU**

October Study Days: no class on Tuesday

Jean Jacques Rousseau, *On The Social Contract*, Books III-V, entire

**Week 9: WOLLSTONECRAFT**

Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men and A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, (selections)

**WEEK 10: BURKE**

Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, (selections)

**WEEK 11: KANT**

Immanuel Kant, *Practical Philosophy*:

“An answer to the question: What is enlightenment?”

“Toward Perpetual Peace”

**Week 12: KANT**

Thanksgiving Break, no class Thursday, November 23

Immanuel Kant, *Practical Philosophy*:

*Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, (entire)

**Week 13: Kant**

Immanuel Kant, *Practical Philosophy*:

*Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, (cont.)

*The Metaphysics of Morals*, (selections)

**Week 14: HEGEL**

G. W. F. Hegel, *Reason in History* (entire)

**Week 15: HEGEL**

Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (selections on reserve)

G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right*, pp. 10-13.