Course Overview

Politics, like the ocean, has different levels. The day-to-day events are the waves that are recorded by journalism. The currents are the deeper trends best captured by the social sciences: economics, political science, sociology, and history. The flows—the deepest substratum of the ocean that circulate water around the globe—represent the most profound level of politics and are the subject of political theory. The aim of this course is to investigate the ocean flows of politics with Plato, Niccolò Machiavelli, Immanuel Kant, David Hume, Karl Marx, J.S. Mill, and Nicholas Tampio. We also consider how well these philosophers help us understand and shape contemporary politics.

The course begins with Plato. *The Republic* starts the tradition of political philosophy and presents the case for an intellectual aristocracy. Machiavelli’s *The Prince* challenges Plato’s elitism and argues that politicians must recognize the political world as it is, not how it ought to be. Kant and Hume advance Enlightenment political theories that steer a path between Platonic idealism and Machiavellian realism. In the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant constructs a moral and political doctrine on the foundation of pure reason; in the *Treatise on Human Nature*, Hume builds a political theory on the natural virtue of sympathy and the artificial virtue of justice. If Machiavelli symbolizes the dark side of modernity, Hume and Kant show how ordinary people have the capacity to live moral lives. In the nineteenth century, Marx’s *Communist Manifesto* advocates the doctrine of communism that seeks to rectify the injustices of capitalism, and Mill argues in *On Liberty* that humans, as progressive beings, must fight social tyranny. The course concludes with Tampio’s argument in *Kantian Courage* for how to advance the Enlightenment in the twenty-first century.

To understand each author’s political vision, we address the following questions:

1. What is their biography?
2. What philosophical problems do they address?
3. What political problems do they address?
4. A) What is their theory of human nature?
   B) What is their theory of politics?
5. How do they justify their theories?
6. What do we think of their theories?
Texts

Kant, Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals (Yale) ISBN-10: 0300094876
Marx, Communist Manifesto (Yale) ISBN-10: 0300123027
Tampio, Kantian Courage (Fordham) ISBN-10: 0823245012

Course Requirements

(1-2). Students have a chance to write and present a research paper on one of the authors we discuss this semester. Early in the semester, I will assign students to a group. On the day your group leads discussion, each student will turn in to me, and present to the class, a 5-7 page research project on how the philosopher helps us grasp contemporary politics.

Focus on one aspect of the author’s thinking and read at least scholarly 4 books or articles on that topic. For example, if you present on Machiavelli, imagine what he would say about American foreign policy towards Iran or North Korea, nuclear power, or national health care. Cite relevant passages from the Prince as well as recent scholarship on your topic from reputable periodicals (e.g. New York Times, Financial Times) and academic books and journals (e.g., The American Political Science Review, The Journal of Politics). For assistance with the essay, I recommend that you contact Fordham’s online reference librarians and that you set an appointment with the Writing Center (x4032) to edit the first draft of your essay. I will meet with the presenting group at the end of class before their presentations.

For class presentations, I recommend that you:
• Dress professionally
• Practice your talk beforehand, to yourself or with friends
• Speak from an outline
• Use Powerpoint (Please send me at least 10 minutes before class.)
• Engage the entire classroom
• Solicit questions
• Have fun!

(3) The midterm, on February 28, covers Plato, Machiavelli, and Kant. A week beforehand, I will distribute 6 essay questions, and on the day of the exam we will roll a die to determine 2 questions. Well-written essays should incorporate material from the lectures, readings, presentations, and your own thoughts. You may study in groups, but the exam is close-booked. The exam is 1 hour.

(4) The final has the same format as the midterm, and is on Hume, Marx, Mill, Tampio.
(5) Class participation. Students are expected to come to class on time prepared to discuss the readings. I employ the Socratic method in the classroom, which means that I will often call on you even if your hands are down; be ready! Students are expected to read, listen, observe, and think actively rather than passively.

Grade Distribution

Research paper 20
Research presentation 10
Midterm 20
Final exam 40
Class participation 10

Class Schedule

I. Plato’s Aristocratic Politics
1. January 14: The Republic, Books 1, II
2. January 17: The Republic, Books III-V

II. Machiavelli’s Power Politics
4. January 28: The Prince, Epistle Dedicatory-Chapter XXIV
5. January 31: The Prince, Chapters XV-XXIV
6. February 4: The Prince, Chapters XXV-XXVI
7. February 7: Student Presentations

III. Kant’s Enlightened Politics
11. February 25: Student Presentations

12. February 28: Midterm

IV. Hume’s Enlightened Politics
16. March 21: Student Presentations

V. Marx’s Communist Politics
17. March 25: The Communist Manifesto, Chapter 1
18. April 4: *The Communist Manifesto*, Chapter 2-4
19. April 8: Student Presentations

**VI. Mill’s Liberal Politics**
20. April 11: *On Liberty*, Introductory
22. April 18: *On Liberty*, Chapters IV, V
23. April 22: Student Presentations

**VII. Tampio on the Enlightenment**
23. April 25: *Kantian Courage*, Introduction
25. May 2: Student Presentations

**Final Exam:** TBA