Modern Political Thought

Professor Nicholas Tampio
Fordham University, POGA 5301
Fall 2013
Class: Faber Hall 668, M 5:30-7:20 pm
Office hours: Faber 665, M 4:30-5:30 pm
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Course Overview

During the Thirty Years War (1618-48), a conflict largely between Catholics and Protestants, approximately one-fifth of the population of the Holy Roman Empire died. One of the great questions of modern political thought is how to transmute militant religiosity into pacific pursuits—how to make captains of war, in one formulation, into captains of industry. In this course, we consider how modern political philosophers justified and criticized capitalism. A goal is to gain insight on contemporary debates about religion, capitalism, and politics.

The course sets up a dialogue between profound defenders and critics of capitalism, using a historical framework presented by Albert Hirschman in *The Passions and the Interests*. We begin by examining how one of the leading thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment, Adam Smith, draws a connection between moral philosophy and economics in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* and *The Wealth of Nations*. Next, we consider how the eighteenth-century Swiss philosopher, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, condemns the moral corruption of modern civilization in the *Discourses* and promotes radical democracy in *The Social Contract*. Then, we show how Karl Marx radicalizes Rousseau’s vision in his philosophical, political, and economic writings and Max Weber argues that Protestantism gave birth to capitalism. Milton Friedman, in *Capitalism and Freedom*, defends capitalism’s role in a free society, and William E. Connolly considers the possibility of eco-capitalism in *Capitalism and Christianity, American Style*.

Texts


Course Requirements

1. Class participation. Students are expected to come to class on time and prepared to discuss the readings.

2, 3, 4. Class presentation, paper, and handout. Early in the semester, students will volunteer to lead two classes. For each class that you lead, write a 4-5-page paper describing the context of the book (especially if you are the first one presenting on an author) and the argument of the assigned readings. Highlight key passages of the argument and describe recent controversies over the work. For the class, distribute a one-page handout (with key dates, quotes, diagrams, arguments, and critiques), speak for about 20 minutes, and lead class discussion. This seminar gives you the chance to hone the art of teaching.


6. Second paper: Write a 8-10 page essay either (1) comparing and contrasting Marx and Weber on the relationship between religion and capitalism or (2) comparing and contrasting Friedman and Connolly on freedom, or democracy, and capitalism. Due December 16.

Grade Distribution

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<td>Class participation</td>
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<td>Class presentations</td>
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1. September 4 – The Basis of Modern Political Philosophy

   Albert Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests* (entire)

2. September 9 – The Moral Philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment

   Adam Smith, *The Theory of the Moral Sentiments*, Parts 1 and 2

3. September 16 – The Economics of the Scottish Enlightenment


4. September 23 – The Economics of the Scottish Enlightenment

5. September 30 – An Enlightenment Critique of Capitalism
   Rousseau, First and Second Discourses (entire)

6. October 7 – Democracy versus Capitalism
   Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (entire)

7. October 21 – Marx on Religion (*First paper due.*)
   Marx, Selected Writings, Part One

8. October 28 – Marx on History
   Marx, Selected Writings, Part Two

9. November 4 – Marx on Economics
   Marx, Selected Writings, Part Three

10. November 11 – Weber on Protestantism and Capitalism

12. November 18 – Capitalism and Freedom
    Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*, Introduction-Chapter II

13. November 25 – Capitalism and Government
    Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*, Chapters III-XIII

14. December 2 – Connolly on the Spirit of Capitalism
    Connolly, *Capitalism and Christianity, American Style*, Preface-Chapter 2

15. December 9 – Connolly on Eco-Politics
    Connolly, *Capitalism and Christianity, American Style*, Chapter 4

16. December 16 – Final papers due. Let's meet at my office at 5:30 and walk to Little Italy for dinner.