

Contemporary Political Philosophy

PORU-2407-001

Fordham University

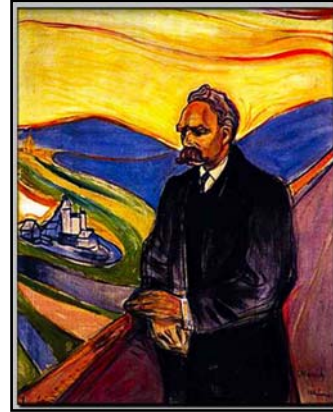
Fall 2008

Professor Nicholas Tampio

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Keating 219, MR 2:30-3:45

Office hours: Faber 665, MR 4-5



Course Overview

We live in an interesting time. To understand our time, and perhaps to change it, we turn to political theory. Political theory articulates the concepts and principles that we use to interpret and evaluate political phenomena. The aim of this course is to produce a map of contemporary political theory. We do this by surveying several profound and influential theorists of our time.

The course begins with Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche's work at the end of the nineteenth century problematized traditional groundings of political morality and issued a challenge, or an invitation, to "philosophers of the future." In the body of the course, we consider how six theorists think about politics after Nietzsche. Initially, we analyze how John Rawls reworks Kantianism to construct a liberal political conception of justice. Then, we contemplate how Leo Strauss returns to classical political philosophy to justify a conservative, aristocratic politics. Next, we examine how Hannah Arendt appeals to the civic republican tradition to revalorize the *vita activa*. Afterwards, we observe how Charles Taylor transforms Hegelianism to defend an ethics of authenticity and a politics of recognition. Then, we consider how Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari democratize Nietzsche to conceive a rhizomatic politics. Finally, we consider how William E. Connolly combines elements from Anglo-American and Continental philosophy to envision a pluralism appropriate to late-modernity.

To get to the heart of each philosopher's views, as well as to construct a conversation between them, we pose six questions for each:

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 justify their theories?
6. What do *we* think of their theories?

Texts

Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality* (Cambridge)

John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (Columbia)

Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago)

Leo Strauss, *Introduction to Political Philosophy* (Wayne State)
Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism* (Princeton)
Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (Minnesota)
William Connolly, *Neuropolitics* (Minnesota)

Course Requirements

(1) The midterm, on **October 16**, covers the political theories of Friedrich Nietzsche, John Rawls, and Leo Strauss. 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.

(2) The final, **December 15, 1:30 p.m.**, has the same format as the midterm, and is on Hannah Arendt, Charles Taylor, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, and William Connolly. I will distribute a list of 6 questions on the class, and we will follow the same format as the midterm.

(3-4) Early in the semester, I will assign students to write a 5-7 research paper, present a 5-7 minute talk, and lead discussion on what the theorist would say about a current event or controversy, e.g. “John Rawls and National Health Care” or “Leo Strauss and the War in Iraq.” For assistance with the essay, I recommend that you contact Fordham’s online reference librarians at <http://www.library.fordham.edu/asklibrarian/asklibrarian1.html> and that you set an appointment with the **Writing Center** (x4032) to edit the first draft of your essay. Papers are due at the start of the class you present.

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

Grade Distribution

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

Class Schedule

I. Friedrich Nietzsche on the New Aristocracy

1. September 4: *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Preface, First Essay
2. September 8: *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Second Essay
3. September 11: *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Third Essay, “The Greek State”

II. John Rawls on Political Liberalism

4. September 15: *Political Liberalism*, Lecture I

5. September 18: *Political Liberalism*, Lecture II
6. September 22: *Political Liberalism*, Lecture III
7. September 25: Student Presentations

III. Leo Strauss on Conservativism

8. September 29: *Introduction*, “What is Political Philosophy?”
9. October 2: *Introduction*, “On Classical Political Philosophy”
10. October 6: *Introduction*, “The Three Waves of Modernity”
11. October 9: Student Presentations

12. October 16: Midterm

IV. Hannah Arendt on Civic Republicanism

13. October 20: *The Human Condition*, Prologue, Chapter I (entire); Chapter II, §§4-6
14. October 23: *The Human Condition*, Chapter III, §§11-13; Chapter IV, §§18-23
15. October 27: *The Human Condition*, Chapter V, §§24-27; Chapter VI, §§40-45
16. October 30: Student Presentations

V. Charles Taylor on Multiculturalism

17. November 3: *Multiculturalism*, “The Politics of Recognition”
18. November 6: *Multiculturalism*, “The Politics of Recognition”
19. November 10: Student Presentations

VI. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari on Rhizomatic Pluralism

20. November 13: *A Thousand Plateaus*, Plateau #1
21. November 17: *A Thousand Plateaus*, Plateau #6
22. November 20: *A Thousand Plateaus*, Plateau #9
23. November 24: Student Presentations

VII. William Connolly on Neuropolitics

24. December 1: *Neuropolitics*, Chapter 1
25. December 4: *Neuropolitics*, Chapter 4
26. December 8: Student Presentations

Final Exam: Monday, December 15, 1:30 p.m.