

Introduction to Political Philosophy

POSC 2401

Fall 2015

Fordham University

Professor Nicholas Tampio

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Class: Keating Hall 120, TF 10-11:15 am

Office hours: Faber 665, T 4-5 and by appt



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 William E. Connolly. 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 by considering how Tariq Ramadan aims to enact a Copernican revolution in Islamic political thought.

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

Plato, *The Republic* (Basic Books) ISBN-10: 0465069347
Machiavelli, *The Prince* (Chicago) ISBN-10: 0226500438
Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (Yale) ISBN-10: 0300094876
Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Oxford) ISBN-10: 0198751729
Marx, *Communist Manifesto* (Yale) ISBN-10: 0300123027
Mill, *On Liberty* (Yale) ISBN-10: 0300096100
Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam* (Oxford) ISBN-10: 0195183568

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 **October 14**, 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, Connolly.

(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. September 4: *The Republic*, Books 1, II
2. September 8: *The Republic*, Books III-V
3. September 11: *The Republic*, Books VI-VIII

II. Machiavelli's Power Politics

4. September 15: *The Prince*, Epistle Dedicatory-Chapter XXIV
5. September 18: *The Prince*, Chapters XV-XXIV
6. September 22: *The Prince*, Chapters XXV-XXVI
7. September 25: Student Presentations

III. Kant's Enlightened Politics

- 8 September 29: *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Second Section, 4:406-412
9. October 2: *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Second Section, 4:412-427
10. October 6: *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Second Section, 4:427-445
11. October 9: Student Presentations
12. October 13: Midterm

IV. Hume's Enlightened Politics

13. October 16: *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Intro; Book 2, Part 3, Sect. 3; Book 3, Part 1
14. October 20: *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book 3, Part 2
15. October 23: *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book 3, Part 3
16. October 27: Student Presentations

V. Marx's Communist Politics

17. October 30: *The Communist Manifesto*, Chapter 1

- 18. November 3: *The Communist Manifesto*, Chapter 2-4
- 19. November 6: Student Presentations

VI. Mill's Liberal Politics

- 20. November 10: *On Liberty*, Introductory
- 21. November 13: *On Liberty*, Chapters II, III
- 22. November 17: *On Liberty*, Chapters IV, V
- 23. November 20: Student Presentations

VII. Tariq Ramadan on Salafi Reformism

- 24. November 24: Introduction, Chapter 1
- 25. December 1: Chapter 2
- 26. December 4: Chapters 7, 9
- 27. December 8: Student Presentations

Final Exam: Tuesday, December 15, 9:30 am