Introduction to Political Theory
POSC 2401, Fall 2014
Fordham University
Professor Nicholas Tampio
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Class: Dealy Hall 112, TF 11:30 am- 12:45 pm
Office hours: Faber 665, T 2-3 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, Niccolo 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 concludes with a discussion of William E. Connolly’s vision of political pluralism.

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


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

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research paper</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research presentation</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>10</td>
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Class Schedule

I. Plato’s Aristocratic Politics
1. September 5: *The Republic*, Books 1, II

II. Machiavelli’s Power Politics
4. September 16: *The Prince*, Epistle Dedicatory-Chapter XXIV
5. September 19: *The Prince*, Chapters XV-XXIV
7. September 26: Student Presentations

III. Kant’s Enlightened Politics
11. October 10: Student Presentations
12. October 14: Midterm

IV. Hume’s Enlightened Politics
13. October 17: *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Intro; Book 2, Part 3, Sect. 3; Book 3, Part 1
16. October 28: Student Presentations

V. Marx’s Communist Politics
17. October 31: *The Communist Manifesto*, Chapter 1
19. November 7: Student Presentations

VI. Mill's Liberal Politics
20. November 11: On Liberty, Introductory
22. November 18: On Liberty, Chapters IV, V
23. November 21: Student Presentations

VII. Connolly on Pluralism
24. November 25: Ethos of Pluralization, Introduction, Chapter 1
25. December 2: Ethos of Pluralization, Chapter 3
26. December 5: Ethos of Pluralization, Chapters 4, 6
27. December 9: Student Presentations

Final Exam: Tuesday, December 16, 1:30 p.m.