

POLS 285  
MWF 2:45-3:50, M-I 213  
Office: M-I 214

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Office Hours: M 11:05-12:15, 1:30-2:30; Tu/W by appt; Th 9-9:45, 12-1; F by appt

### **Modern Political Theory Spring 2017**

This course is a survey of modern political theory (approximately the 16<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries), examining the revolutionary challenges to classical and medieval political philosophy posed by such writers as Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Burke, and Marx. Our work seeks to address themes and questions such as: what is modern about modern political theory? What is human nature? What is power and how is it deployed? What are the possibilities and limits of social contract theory? What are the nature and scope of rights, duties, freedom, and equality? What is the relation between the state and the individual? What are rights and do they authorize political resistance? What are the core modern political values and how do modern political theorists grapple with their implementation? Does modernity signify *an age of progress* in terms of knowledge about the world and freedom for human beings? Or do modern technological, political and social developments actually constitute *a new kind of prison*? How do modern political thinkers conceptualize or fail to conceptualize race and gender? In what ways can modern political thought animate thinking about contemporary politics?

Simultaneously, we seek to critically engage with these classic texts about politics, political subjects, and political life in two ways. First, we will question what “modern” or “modernity” means historically and theoretically; in doing so, we will interrogate practices and theories of exclusion and violence that seek to grant only some subjects and collectivities access to the presumed progress of “modernity.” Second, and in a related vein, we will analyze these texts for the discourses of race and gender they produce, both explicitly and tacitly. We pursue these objectives by examining contemporary readings of this time period and of the theorists upon whom we will focus.

This is a writing-intensive course. This class will primarily be a discussion format, with the occasional lecture. Therefore regular attendance, careful preparation, and active participation are essential. You must prepare for every class by doing the reading, reflecting upon the course texts, and bringing to class issues, questions, and passages for discussion. **Bring the relevant text to class, always!**

#### **Learning Objectives:**

- Understanding the modern political theoretical tradition
- Improving skills in reading and comprehending theoretical and historical texts, especially for close reading and interpretation
- Writing clear, well-argued analytical essays dealing with political questions and concepts
- Thinking critically and inquisitively, and developing a sense of the political theory “canon” as a terrain of contested interpretation

- Becoming interested in controversy over ideas, in different historical and cultural contexts, as worthy of serious and deep exploration in its own right but also acutely relevant to the political controversies of today
- Improving the ability to engage in dialogue and debate through discussions in class and various modes of writing for class
- Thinking more systematically and analytically about one's own political beliefs

### Evaluation

- Class citizenship: 25%
- Class blog: 20%
- Essays: 30% (3 essays at 10% each)
- Final project: 25%

### Assignments

- **Class citizenship (25% of grade):** I care about whether you come to class and the role you play in it; our class will be most rewarding if you attend regularly, and if you are an active citizen. I expect you to come on time and to participate. After three unexcused absences, the class citizenship component of your grade will decrease by one letter grade for each additional unexcused absence. Class citizenship, however, entails more than just showing up. It means having done the reading, contributing to class discussions in large and small groups without monopolizing conversations, paying attention to me and to your classmates, completing short writing assignments in class, and generally participating in the collaborative activity of political thinking. I understand that speaking in class can be challenging. We will have a number of different kinds of discussions to encourage participation, and you should use the blog as a way of preparing ideas to bring to our class sessions. Regularly coming to office hours and discussing the readings can contribute to your class citizenship grade as well. Last but not least, class citizenship means being receptive of and interested in others' political and philosophical perspectives, respectful of experiences different than your own, and open to having others disagree with you. Disagreement is inevitable in a political theory class (including with me!), and can be incredibly productive so long as it proceeds collegially.
- **Class Blog (20% of grade):** Throughout the semester, we will write a class blog, using WordPress. During the first week of class, I will lead a brief WordPress tutorial and distribute instructions on joining WordPress and becoming a member of the blog. You are required to write one post of at least 250-300 words and 1-3 discussion questions approximately once per week; on the days you do not write a post, you are required to post two comments of at least two sentences on posts for that day. Posts are due by 7:00am the day of class, comments are due by 1 hour before the start of class. The class will be split into 3 groups, and the group you are in will determine what days you are required to write a full post. The posting schedule will be passed out and posted on Moodle.

The blog is *not* intended to be a place for you to summarize the readings, but rather to interpret and analyze them. Your blog posts can take many forms: offer a critique of the reading, connect it to contemporary or historical events, relate it to earlier readings in the course, offer a close reading of an especially important or interesting passage, and much

more. We will use responses and discussion questions in each class session. In order to encourage you to grapple with difficult ideas and challenge your own views, this will be a private blog visible only to our class.

A secondary goal of the blog is to familiarize you with the WordPress platform, gaining a skill set relevant for work in the many advocacy groups, organizations, and businesses that use WordPress or similar content management systems/web platforms.

- **Take-Home Essays (3 essays, 10% each; 30% of grade):** Three take-home essays will count toward your final grade, although there are four possible essays to be written. If you complete all four essays, I will drop the lowest essay grade, or you may choose to complete only three of the essays. For each day (not class period) an essay is late, it loses one letter grade. Essays are due 2/10, 3/3, 4/3, and 4/28; you will always have at least one week with the assignment.
- **Final Project (25% of grade):** For the final project, you will have the choice of (1) a 2500-3000 word paper on a topic that you develop or (2) a creative project (performance, short film, creative writing, artwork, etc.) related to themes and/or texts from the class, along with a short 2-3 page essay connecting the work to the course. I will work with all students to develop a topic and project, and we will use the second half of the semester to build up to the final version.

### **Texts**

The following list of books is required. They are available in the bookstore, and are readily available new and used online. If you plan to buy them online, please be sure to buy the same edition listed below (this can easily be done through searching by the ISBN number). We will read them in the order listed. All other readings will be provided on Moodle.

- Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Oxford Word Classics (ISBN: 0199537283)
- John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, Hackett (ISBN: 0915144867)
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Basic Political Writings* (ISBN: 0872200477)
- Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, Norton 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (ISBN: 039309040X)

### **Technology**

In general, my personal preference would be to minimize the use of tablets and laptops in the classroom. There is a growing set of evidence (for example [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#)) that, on aggregate, students taking notes by hand learn information more successfully and receive higher grades than those taking notes on computer, even when those on devices are exclusively focused on class tasks. Moreover, many of us (myself certainly included!) find it difficult to pull ourselves away from email, social media, news, etc. when we have screens in front of us. Finally, in a class that will involve lots of discussion with one another, screens may impede the conversations that will be essential to our experience in the course this semester.

However, I fully recognize that people learn in many different ways, and that you have limited print budgets. So, I would encourage you to reflect on the ways you learn effectively and the ways that learning is more difficult. If you would find it most effective to use a laptop or tablet for course readings and/or for note-taking, please do so, but there will be no phones used in class.

I fully expect you to use devices in class only for tasks related to class, and that your attention is focused as much as possible on the conversations in class and on your peers. Ultimately, I want you to engage with the course material and course sessions in the way that will support your success in the class.

This policy is open to revision as the semester unfolds.

### **Disability Accommodations and Tutoring**

If you have a disability and need accommodations, contact Learning Enrichment and Disability Services located on 2nd floor Pearsons (north side), 608-363-2572, [learning@beloit.edu](mailto:learning@beloit.edu) or make an appointment through [joydeleon.youcanbook.me](http://joydeleon.youcanbook.me). For accommodations in my class, you must bring me an Access Letter from the Director of that office and then we will discuss how to meet your needs. Contact that office promptly; accommodations are not retroactive.

Free peer tutoring is available for most classes. For a tutor, apply by going to your Portal, to the Student Life tab, and then apply using the Tutoring Forms (on left) and Request a Tutor. If you have any questions, contact Learning Enrichment and Disability Services.

### **Writing Advising**

The Writing Center has student writers who are trained tutors ready to work with you collaboratively on any stage of your writing in this class--from brainstorming to final editing. It's a friendly and supportive place, and their goal is to help you to improve your writing and become a better writer. You can make an appointment here: [Writing Center Appointments](#).

### **Policy on Inclusivity at Beloit College**

*Inclusivity* is a demonstration of equity and social justice through awareness, understanding, and respect for the differences in identity, culture, background, experience, and socialization, and the ways in which these forms of difference impact how we live and learn. Inclusivity requires equitable, institution-wide representation and access to resources. In practice, this manifests itself by each individual being aware of, committed to, and responsible for the well-being and care of all students, staff, and faculty.

### **Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism**

Academic misconduct and dishonesty are serious offenses. Such acts violate the trust that forms the foundation of the student-teacher relationship, they rob students of opportunities to learn, and they damage the reputation of the College as a whole. In particular, plagiarism constitutes intellectual theft and is completely unacceptable. I expect that you will follow Beloit's policy on academic honesty printed in the Student Handbook. Any assignments or exams that violate this policy will receive a failing grade. I will also notify the Dean of Students of any cases of academic dishonesty, and she will determine any further penalties.

### **Other course policies and notes**

- If a student has a desired name that is not listed on my course roster, please let me know. Students may also notify me of their preferred gender pronouns. I use he/him/his pronouns.
  - Check your email regularly.
  - I strongly encourage you to come visit my office hours; if the times listed don't work, email me so we can figure out another time to meet.
  - If you are struggling with any aspect of the course, talk to me sooner rather than later so we can work on the ways to best help you. Please also consider requesting a Peer Tutor, working with the Writing Center, or seeking assistance from Learning Enrichment and Disability Services.
  - If a religious holiday that you observe conflicts with an assignment, please let me know in advance so that we may discuss alternate options.
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### **READING SCHEDULE**

*Subject to changes, which will be announced in class and over e-mail. When there are multiple readings listed, please read in the order listed below.*

#### **I. Introduction: What is Modern about Modern Political Theory?**

1/16: Hello and welcome

1/18: What is Modern?, part 1 + Asking Good Questions

- Kyla Wazana Tompkins, "Some Notes On How To Ask A Good Question About Theory That Will Provoke Conversation And Further Discussion From Your Colleagues"
- Chandan Reddy, "Modern," in *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*
- Marshall Berman, "Modernity – Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow" (read pp. 15-23), in *All That is Solid Melts Into Air*

1/20: What is Modern?, part 2

- Lisa Lowe, "The Intimacies of the Four Continents," in *Haunted by Empire*, ed. Stoler

1/23: Machiavelli I

- *The Prince* (1513): Dedication and chaps. 6, 8-9, 15-18 & 25-26

1/25: Machiavelli II

- *Discourses on Livy* (c. 1517) - Bk. I, chaps. 2-3, 11-12 & 57-58; Bk. II, chaps. 2, 6-9 & 26

#### **II. The Social Contract and British Liberalism**

1/27: Hobbes I

- *Leviathan* (1651), Introduction (pp. 7-8), chaps. 1, 3, 5, 6, 46 (paras. 1-21 only)

1/30: Hobbes II

- *Leviathan*, chaps. 10, 13-14

2/1: Hobbes III

- *Leviathan*, chaps. 15-18

2/3: Hobbes IV

- *Leviathan*, chaps. 19 (paras. 1-8 only), 21, 29, 30

2/6: Hobbes V + Contemporary Responses to Hobbes

- *Leviathan*, chap. 20
- Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (1988), pp. 43-50

2/8: Contemporary Responses to Hobbes

- Charles Mills, "Body Politic, Bodies Impolitic." *Social Research* 78 (2011)

2/10: No class (John away at conference)

- **PAPER I DUE**

2/13: Locke I

- *First Treatise* (written c. 1679-1681, published later), chap. 5 all and chap. 6 § 54-55, 61-67, 72 (on Moodle)
- *Second Treatise* (written c. 1679-1681, published later), chap. 1, chap. 6

2/15: Locke II

- *Second Treatise*, chaps. 2-5

2/17: Locke III

- *Second Treatise*, chaps. 7-9

2/20: Locke IV

- *Second Treatise*, chaps. 10-14

2/22: Locke V

- *Second Treatise*, chaps. 15-end

2/24: Contemporary Responses to Locke

- Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (1988), chap. 1 pp. 1-7, 16-18; chap. 4, pp. 82-96
- John Quiggin, "John Locke Against Freedom." *Jacobin*. 2015.

2/27: Mary Wollstonecraft

- *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), excerpts

3/1: John Stuart Mill

- *On Liberty*, chapters 1 and 4 (1859)

3/3

- **PAPER II DUE**
- In-class: Checking in... where have we been, where are we going?
- In-class: intro to Rousseau

Spring Break!

### **III. Rousseau's Revolutionary Contract and Burke's Conservative Response to Revolution**

3/13: Rousseau I

- *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (1754), Letter (all), Preface (all), Part I (pp. 37-48; bottom of 51-60), and Notes (note 9 all, note 10 p. 99, notes 11 and 12 all)

3/15: Rousseau II

- *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, Part II
- *Emile* (1762), excerpts from Chap. 5 (on Moodle)

3/17: Rousseau III

- *On The Social Contract* (1762), Book I all and Books II chaps. 1-2

3/20: Rousseau IV

- *On The Social Contract*, Book II chaps. 3-6, 9-11; Book III chap. 1

3/22: Rousseau V

- *On the Social Contract*, Book III chaps. 4, 8, 11-13, 15-16 and Book IV chaps. 1-2, 8-9

3/24: No class (Advising Practicum)

3/27: Contemporary Responses to Rousseau

- Charles Mills, “Rousseau, the Master's Tools, and Anti-Contractarian Contractarianism,” in *The CLR James Journal* 15 (1): 2009
- Leah Bradshaw, “Rousseau on Civic Virtue, Male Autonomy, and the Construction of the Divided Female,” in *Feminist Interpretations of Rousseau* (2002), ed. Lange

3/29: Edmund Burke

- *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), p. 1-24 (on Moodle)

3/31: Edmund Burke

- *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, pp. 24-36, 43-55

4/3:

- **PAPER III DUE**
- In-Class: Final Paper workshop

#### **IV. German Philosophy, German Critique**

4/5: Immanuel Kant

- Kant, “What is Enlightenment?” (1784)
- Kant, “Toward Perpetual Peace” (1795)

4/7: G.W.F. Hegel

- Hegel, “Lordship and Bondage” in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), read para. 175-196

4/10: Hegel, Modernity, and Slavery

- Frederick Douglass, “To My Old Master” (1855)
- Susan Buck-Morss, “Hegel and Haiti,” *Critical Inquiry* 26 (2000), read pp. 821-822, 842-852, 864-865

4/12: Online class (John away at conference) / Marx I

- Marx, On the Jewish Question (*M-ER*, read 26-46)
- Listen to Wendy Brown lecture on “On the Jewish Question,” available on Moodle (to make up for class)

4/14: No class, work on your final project (John away at conference)

- Annotated Bibliography + Abstract Due

4/17: Marx II – Historical Materialism

- Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (*M-ER* “Marx on the History of His Opinions,” 3-6)
- “Theses on Feuerbach” (*M-ER* 143-145)

- “German Ideology Pt. I,” (*M-ER*, read 146-165)
- Letter to Arnold Ruge, (*M-ER*, “For a Ruthless Criticism of Everything Existing,” 12-16)

4/19: No Classes (Spring Day)

4/21: Marx III – Revolution

- “The Communist Manifesto” (*M-ER* 469-500)
- *Capital Vol. III* (*ME-R* 439-442)

4/24: Marx IV – The Critique of Capital: Alienation

- *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, “Estranged Labor” (*M-ER*, read 70-79)
- *Capital Vol. I* (*ME-R*, read: “Preface to 1<sup>st</sup> German Edition,” 294-8)
- Optional: “Commodities,” 302-12; “The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof,” 319-328

4/26: Marx V - The Critique of Capital: Exploitation and Surplus Labor

- *Capital, Vol. I* (*ME-R*, read: “Buying and Selling of Labour Power,” 336-43; “The Limits of the Working Day,” 361-64 “...Exploitation,” 367-376; “Relative Surplus-Population or Industrial Reserve Army,” 422-31)

4/28: Contemporary Responses to Marx(ism)

- W.E.B. DuBois, “Marxism and the Negro Problem,” excerpt. In *African American Political Thought, 1890-1930* (1996), ed. Wintz
- Frank Wilderson III, “Gramsci’s Black Marx,” *Social Identities* 9 (3), 2003
- **PAPER IV DUE**

5/1: Friedrich Nietzsche

- “On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense” (1873)
- *On the Genealogy of Morality*, “Preface” (1887)

5/3: Looking back, looking forward

- Bring a one-page reflection on the course, answering for yourself the question, “What is modern political theory?”
- In-class peer review for final project

**Tuesday, May 9, 5pm: FINAL PROJECT DUE**