Course Description and Goals

In this course, we will become active participants in an ongoing dialogue about the nature of political concepts, issues, and problems. We will pick up on this conversation in the modern era, defined roughly as the period between the Protestant Reformation and the early 20th century. Many of the works considered here are central to what has become the “canon” of political theory, shaping not only the kinds of questions that we have come to ask with regard to “the political,” but how we go about asking them. In particular, liberalism has been central to the political development of the west, in terms of both governmental structure and political ideology. Yet liberalism’s legacy has been far from unambiguous. In this class we will work toward a deep understanding of liberalism as well as radical democratic, conservative, and socialist challenges to this important paradigm. Theoretical topics covered will include classical social contract theory, or the role of consent in legitimating authority; the emergence of a story about rights and an increasing emphasis on individualism in political theory; attempts to reassert the importance of citizenship, community, and political participation; and the evolution of the theoretical relationship between liberty and equality in the modern period.

In engaging with these thinkers, it will be our goal to: situate political ideas (including our own) in historical context; accurately “translate” these “foreign” texts into familiar language; learn to identify and evaluate differing theoretical approaches to recurring political problems; examine our own hidden assumptions and form conscious judgments regarding collective, political dilemmas; explicate complex theoretical ideas in the written format; and interpret political theory texts in a collaborative setting.

Course Requirements

• Reading and Class Participation (15%)
You are required to thoughtfully read every assignment. When I say that you are required to read, I do not mean that you should mechanically scan every page, but that you should grapple with the ideas. Mark up your text and read with a pen and paper, writing down ideas, questions, quotations, and points of confusion or contention. Read for comprehension rather than completion, pondering every idea rather than looking at every word. This means that you may need to read a section, think about it, read it again, write about it, discuss it, and then read it again. So, “do the reading” means “engage yourself with the ideas of the texts.” The reading load will be quite heavy at times. To stay afloat, plan for a sufficient amount of time to complete the assignment, and read aggressively.
Reading in this way will assist you in the second requirement: Your regular attendance, careful preparation, and active participation are essential. Come prepared for participation by doing the reading, reflecting upon the course material, and bringing to class issues, questions, and passages for discussion. I reserve the right to require you to submit answers to the reading questions if the quality of class discussion falters.

• Written Requirements (3 short papers, 20% each)
You will write three short papers (no less than 5 pages each) interpreting and analyzing a sentence or short passage from one of the major course readings (see schedule below). You should choose a passage that strikes you as particularly important, interesting, or central to the larger work in question, since your analysis should allow you to uncover something interesting or non-obvious about what the author is up to. You are not to provide a summary of the text you’re considering; rather, I will be looking for your contextualized interpretation and analysis of the passage you’ve chosen, clearly stated and thoroughly supported. Since your paper will systematically and convincingly explain to the reader how you make sense of this passage, it will be crucial to conduct textual analysis and cite historical evidence to make your case. I urge you to consult the secondary sources at your disposal at the library in order to make better sense of the text you are analyzing, being careful to use proper citation. (You may use whatever style you are most comfortable with, but use it correctly and consistently.)

For the first paper, due January 25, you will analyze a passage of your choosing from Hobbes’s 
Leviathan or from Locke’s Second Treatise. For the second paper, due February 15, you will choose a passage from Rousseau, Burke, or Wollstonecraft. For the third paper, due March 10, you may choose to address either Mill or Marx. What you do in these papers, in terms of content, is largely up to you. Whatever you choose to write about, make sure that your thesis is clear, that you make good use of textual support, and that your paper is focused and well-organized. Be clear, however, that these papers are not meant to provide summaries of the texts in question. I will be looking for your contextualized interpretation of the passage you’ve chosen, clearly stated and thoroughly supported. If you have questions about this, please come see me.

In terms of evaluation, “A” papers stand out—they are clearly superior in form and content. Papers in the “A” range demonstrate an ability to write elegant prose and have virtually no typographical errors; they contain an easily discernible, interesting, original, clearly-stated argument; they are consistent and logical in content; they make superior use of textual support; they engage the subtleties of difficult arguments through coherent textual analysis; and their organization lends flow and structure to the paper. “A” papers demonstrate a clear and imaginative grasp of the material, draw connections between non-obvious points, and go beyond what has been covered in class.

Papers falling into the “B” range have many of the qualities of an “A” paper, but do not stand out from the crowd in the same way. They are “average” in the sense that they contain a developed and coherent argument, and demonstrate an ability to write decent prose. They are organized logically, and while they may contain some writing errors, they still follow the rules of grammar and punctuation. Additionally, a “B” paper might be superior in form but not in content, or vice versa.
Papers falling into the “C” range have some serious flaw in either form or content. For example, they might display significant errors in grammar, punctuation, or organization, impeding your ability to express your thoughts clearly; or, the central argument might be very difficult or impossible to identify; or the basic claims of the argument might be left unsupported; or the thesis might merely summarize the material. I will rarely assign a grade lower than a C-. Such a grade indicates that the paper is in some way unacceptable, in which case you should come see me as soon as possible.

- Final Examination (25%)
I will distribute 7-10 possible essay questions in advance. Three of these questions will appear, at random, on the final examination. The questions will be cumulative, requiring you to address one of the course’s unifying themes or problems from the point of view of several of the thinkers we will be discussing in class.

**Course Policies**

- Academic Integrity & the Honor Code
  Kalamazoo College follows an Honor Code, and we will follow those guidelines in this class. All work produced in this course must be your own. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, and paraphrases) must be properly acknowledged and documented. Any violation of academic integrity will result in an automatic failure of the assignment in question, and the violation will be reported to the Dean of Students. You will also be expected to behave with honor. You are an important contributing member to a collective academic enterprise, and you owe it to yourself, your classmates, and your instructor to conduct yourself accordingly. We will strive to be curious, open to new ideas, respectful and cooperative, and committed to scholarship. To review the Kalamazoo College honor system in full, see [http://www.kzoo.edu/studev/honorsystem.htm](http://www.kzoo.edu/studev/honorsystem.htm).

- Attendance and Timeliness
  Participation comprises 15% of your overall grade. Obviously, if you are absent, you cannot participate. I also expect that you will arrive on time (and I will make every effort to do the same). Arriving late is disruptive and disrespectful to yourself and to the rest of the class, and it will not be tolerated.

- Late Assignments and Extensions
  You *must* make arrangements with me *ahead of time* if you need to turn in an assignment past the day and time it is due. If you are experiencing *exceptional* circumstances (serious illness or crisis, etc.), please come see me *before* the assignment is due. It is much better that we communicate and reach a solution together than you receive a failing grade for your assignment.
Required Texts*

- Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*
- John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government*
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The First and Second Discourses*
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*
- Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*
- Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*
- John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Writings*
- Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader*

*Although these “classic” texts have been published by many different presses, they are not all created equal. Furthermore, it is important that everyone in the class is “on the same page,” as it were. Conflicting translations and pagination makes our work much more difficult. For these reasons, I urge you to buy the editions of the texts that I have ordered. In some cases, substitutions may be reasonable. Please ask if you have a question about a particular version of a text.*

In addition to these texts, I have placed several books on reserve at Upjohn Library. I encourage you to familiarize yourself with these important sources.

- George Sabine, *A History of Political Theory*
- Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey, *History of Political Philosophy*
- Sheldon Wolin, *Politics and Vision*
- Iain Hampsher-Monk, *A History of Modern Political Thought*
- Peter Laslett, “Introduction” to John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (Cambridge)
- Roger Masters, *The Political Philosophy of Rousseau*
- Schlomo Avineri, *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx*
- C.B. MacPherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*
- Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*
- Susan Moller Okin, *Women in Western Political Thought*

There are many, many more rich and helpful texts available. If you wish to pursue a particular topic, please come see me for further recommendations.
Course Schedule

*When we begin a new author, look for a short set of reading questions to be distributed via the class listserv. It is vital that you check your kzoo email account regularly. These questions are designed to facilitate your reading and thinking about the texts, and in some cases they may serve an important purpose in guiding you through large amounts of reading, but I reserve the right to collect your answers to these questions as I see fit.


Week One
Jan. 4  Introduction  
  ➔ Read syllabus carefully after class!

Week Two

Week Three
Jan. 18  Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chapters I-IX
Jan. 20  Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chapters X-XIX

Part II: Challenges to Liberalism: Democratic Theory and Conservatism

Week Four
Jan. 25  Rousseau, The Enlightenment, and Revolution  
  ➔ Paper I Due
Jan. 27  Rousseau, *The Second Discourse*

Week Five
Feb. 1  Rousseau, *Social Contract*, Books 1 and 2
Feb. 3  Rousseau, *Social Contract*, Books 3 and 4
  *“Declaration Of The Rights of Men and Of Citizens,” 1789, handout.*
Week Six
Feb. 8    Edmund Burke, *Reflections*, TBA
Feb. 10   Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, 79-141

Part III: Liberalism Evolves? “The Individual” and “Rights”

Week Seven
Feb. 15   Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, 142-222
         ➔ Paper II Due
Feb. 17   Mill, *On Liberty*

Week Eight
         Marx, *On the Jewish Question*
         *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*

Week Nine
Mar. 1    Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach*
         *The German Ideology*
Mar. 3    *Wage Labor and Capital*, 203-217
         *Capital, Volume I*, 299-343

Week Ten
Mar. 8    Marx, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*
Mar. 10   Conclusion
         ➔ Paper III Due

Final exam: Time: TBA