

PSC 104 ~ INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY
Fall Semester 2015 * Instructor: James Johnson
Tuesday-Thursday 2:00-3:15 * Gavett 202
Office Hours: Thursday 3:30-5:00 * Harkness 312 (x5-0622)

Teaching Assistant: Mathew Sweeten - msweeten@z.rochester.edu
Harkness 320 - Office Hours: TBA

This is a first course in political theory. I will proceed on the assumption that students have had no prior exposure to the topics we will take up. Although most of the readings are from canonical texts we will work thematically. We will consider various basic political concepts – especially power and freedom – and explore how different political thinkers have, over time, defended differing conceptions for a variety of different reasons and purposes. We will consider various ways - in terms, say, of consent or procedural fairness or consequences. – to justify or criticize political institutions and practices. And we will consider how differing theories of ‘human nature,’ and especially of human knowledge, inform competing conceptions of politics.

The course is, as the title suggests, introductory. It is aimed at first and second years students. Any student beyond the second year needs my explicit permission to enroll.

Grading: There are three take-home exams for the class. They will be weighted equally – each worth one-third - for purposes of determining your final grade. You can anticipate writing about ten pages (typed) for each assignment. In each instance you will have to prepare answers to two or three questions. These will primarily address assigned readings from a particular segment of the course. However, each assignment will presume familiarity with all the previously assigned readings. And in each instance you will have at least one week to complete the assignment.

The Fine (But Very Important) Print:

Policy on Attendance: Class attendance is not optional. If you need to miss class for some reason (e.g., religious holidays, travel for varsity sports, etc.), please let me know. I will take attendance periodically.

Showing up is not enough. I expect that you will come to class prepared – having done the assigned readings and formulated questions, objections, and reactions to them. I will provide plenty of opportunity for you to articulate those questions, objections and reactions.

Policy on Electronic Devices: My policy on electronic devices in class (meaning *any* screen connected to silicon chips) is restrictive. *No cell phones, laptops or tablets in class!* If you have readings, notes etc on your device, download them for reference prior to class.

Statement on Academic Honesty: I operate on the assumption that every student is familiar with and abide by the College policies on Academic Honesty. If you are not familiar with them please go to the Board on Academic Honesty web page and make yourself familiar. You can find that page here: <http://www.rochester.edu/College/honesty/>.

I provide specific instructions for each course assignment. In any event, I take a very dim view of cheating and plagiarism and will refer any and all suspected instances to the Board on Academic Honesty. The easiest way to avoid such unpleasantness is to not succumb to temptations to cheat, plagiarize, bend the rules, exploit loopholes, and so forth. As a default, if you are unsure about whether something is “allowed” ask me.

Policy on late assignments: Except in the most dire circumstances I very much frown upon late assignments. I will deduct one third of a letter grade for every day either the case study or the final paper are late. (This means if your grade would have been a B+, one day late gets you a deduction to B, two days a deduction to B-, etc.). If you anticipate a problem getting an assignment in on time (due to, say, religious holidays, travel for athletic teams, etc.) please speak to me in advance.

Students with Disabilities: If you have a documented disability of any sort that you believe will impact your ability to meet the expectations laid out above I encourage you to speak with me in person as early in the term as is possible.

Required Readings: I have ordered books (marked *) at the University bookstore. It will make life easier if you actually use the editions I have ordered. You will also note that in many weeks I have listed readings in addition to the primary book. These will be available on the course page at Blackboard.

Please note the adjective in the underlined phrase – *required*. I expect you to do the reading and to do it *before* class. I completely understand that the reading is difficult. And I understand that there is a lot of reading. The course will not be easier if you fail to do the required readings.

- * Thomas Hobbes. 1651. *Leviathan*. (MacPherson, ed.) Penguin.
Stephen Holmes (1990) “The Secret History of Self-Interest”
- * Jean-Jacques Rousseau. 1762. *On The Social Contract & Other Political Writings*. (Bertram ed.) Penguin.
Immanuel Kant “What is Enlightenment?”
- * Karl Marx. 1852. *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. International.
Karl Marx. 1859. “Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy” (excerpt)
G.A. Cohen. 2001. “Why Not Socialism?”
- John Stuart Mill. 1859. *On Liberty & The Subjugation of Women*. (Ryan, ed.) Penguin.
Benjamin Constant. 1819. “The Liberty of the Ancients Compared to that of the Moderns”
Isaiah Berlin. 1958. “Two Concepts of Liberty”

- * Friedrich Nietzsche. 1886. *Beyond Good & Evil*. Vintage.
- * John Dewey. 1927. *The Public & Its Problems*. Swallow Press.
John Dewey. 1939. "Creative Democracy: The Task Before Us"
Doherty, Edward. 2013. *Poverty and the Concentration of Poverty in the
Nine-County Greater Rochester Area*. Rochester Area Community
Foundation.
- * James Baldwin. 1963. *The Fire Next Time*. Vintage.
Elizabeth Spelman 1999. "Anger – The Diary"
- * Hannah Arendt. 1963. *On Revolution*. Penguin.
Bernard Harcourt. 2012. "Political Disobedience"
- * Michel Foucault. 1975. *Discipline & Punish*. Vintage.
- * F.A. Hayek. 1978. *Law, Legislation and Liberty, Volume 1: Rules and Order*.
University of Chicago Press.
- John Rawls. 2001. *Justice as Fairness*. Harvard University Press.

Schedule

September

1 Introduction
3 Hobbes

8 Hobbes
10 Hobbes/Holmes

15 Rousseau
17 Rousseau

22 Rousseau/Kant
24 Marx

29 Marx/Cohen

October

1 Catch-Up – *First Assignment Distributed.*

6 *Fall Break - No Class*
8 Mill

13 Mill - *First Assignment Due.*
15 Mill/Constant/Berlin

20 Nietzsche
22 Nietzsche

27 Dewey
29 Dewey/Doherty

November

3 Baldwin – *Second Assignment Distributed.*
5 Baldwin/Spelman

10 Arendt – *Second Assignment Due.*
12 Arendt/Harcourt

17 Foucault
19 Foucault

24 Catch-Up
26 *Thanksgiving – No Class*

December

1 Hayek
3 Hayek

8 Rawls
10 Rawls – *Third Assignment Distributed.*

17 *Third Assignment Due.*