

Introduction to Political Philosophy

GO 102, Fall 2010

Skidmore College

Note: I do not check phone messages and e-mail on weekends.

Office hours: MW 4-5, T, 11:15-12:15 and 1:30-2:30, F 10-11

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This course is an introductory survey of political philosophy organized around classic works by Aristotle, Locke, Rousseau, Marx, and Tocqueville. It is a typical survey in that sense, but several features of the course are unique. First, it introduces the situation of the ancient city-state by means of a Shakespeare drama, *Coriolanus*; this play gives us a fuller and more vivid picture of the problems Aristotle attempts to deal with in his *Politics*.

Second, it examines the interchange between Biblical religion (particularly Christian religion) and political philosophy in a broader manner than usual. While we do make a survey-level examination of Augustine and Aquinas, we also pay particular attention to Biblical texts, and to how Christianity influenced politics in specific contexts, such as in Puritan New England and Medieval Catholic Europe.

Third, the course stresses the difference between the classical and modern modes of political philosophy by means of considering some of Locke's "Aristotelian" critics. In this way the usual debate that introductory courses present between the modern radicalism of Rousseau and the modern liberalism of Locke is supplemented by an older debate between pre-modern republicanism and modern liberalism. As we shall see, a certain set of neither-right-nor-left (but not moderate) thinkers sometimes known as "Porchers" are insisting that this older debate is actually the key to our contemporary discontents.

Modern liberalism gave birth to liberal democracy and to corporate capitalism, both of which decisively shape our lives today. Marx and Tocqueville, each in his own way, attempted to explain the truly new world of liberal modernity better than liberalism itself could. But whereas Marx sought to speed (what he regarded as) modern society's inevitable and desirable overthrow, Tocqueville sought to protect it from (what he regarded as) its own worst tendencies. Our course thus concludes by examining their thought, with an emphasis upon Tocqueville, the "critical friend" of modern democracy (and America) *par excellence*.

Throughout this course, we consider perennial issues: how to adjudicate the competing claims of the poor and the rich, what regime is best for mankind, and whether there are natural principles which ought to govern all politics. The course thus causes us to grapple with some of the most momentous political ideas in their most fundamental formulations, giving us a far more expansive understanding of political thought than that provided by the cramped "liberal vs. conservative" schema. It also prods us to consider how our personal convictions, even those that seem unrelated to politics, might actually be quite shaped by the regime we live in.

This course serves as the foundation for all upper level courses in political philosophy.

Texts:

- William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus* --any non-paraphrased version acceptable
 Aristotle, *The Politics* --the Lord translation required
 The Bible -- any non-paraphrased version acceptable; the NKJV and the RSV are in my judgment the best translations for college use.
- John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* -- any non-paraphrased version acceptable
 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Second Discourse* -- Masters & Masters translation required
 Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* -- edition with the Martin Malia introduction required
 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* --Mansfield & Winthrop translation required
- Harvey Mansfield, *A Student's Guide to Political Philosophy* --required
 Readings Packet (Augustine, Winthrop, McWilliams, etc.) --required, distributed in class
 Film, *Quo Vadis* --on reserve, viewing required by 10/6

Cheryl Glenn and Loretta Gray, *The Hodges Harbrace Handbook, 17th edition* -- Gvmnt. majors must purchase. Others might consider purchasing it since my marks on papers, in conjunction with the Government Department *Writing Requirement* pamphlet, may refer to it; at least one copy will be on reserve in the library, and another may be available at my office or the Gvmnt. Dept. office

SCHEDULE: Shorter reading assignments are usually short because they require more careful study than most. Each reading must be completed by the date it is listed. If there are several readings for a single class, read them in the order indicated.

Part One: The Polis and Classical Political Philosophy

- 1) 9/8 Introduction to Class; Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, Act I, sc.1
- 2) 9/10 *Coriolanus*, Act I, sc. 2 – Act II, sc. 2
- 3) 9/13 *Coriolanus*, entire
- 4) 9/15 *Coriolanus*, re-read Acts II-III
- 5) 9/17 *Coriolanus*, re-read Act IV-V
- 6) 9/20 Aristotle, *Politics I 1-2, III 9, II 1-3, 5 through 1264a10*; Ed.'s intro 1-5
- 7) 9/22 *Politics III 1-5*
- 8) 9/24 *Politics III 6-13*
- 9) 9/27 *Politics III 14-18*; Mansfield, *A Student's Guide to Political Philosophy* 1-22
- 10) 9/29 *Politics I, 3-6, 7 thru 1255b20; IV, 1-2, 7-9*; Ed.'s intro 6-22 and analysis 27-29

Part Two: Biblical Religion and Political Thought

- 11) 10/1 *Genesis* 1-5
- 12) 10/4 *Genesis* 6-22
- 13) 10/6 Christian Moral and Political Teachings:
Matthew 5-7, *Mark* 12:13-17, *Luke* 10:25-37, *Acts* 1-2, 4-5:11, *Romans* 12-13, *Colossians* 3-4:6, *1 Peter*, entire
 Film Assignment: view *Quo Vadis*, on reserve at library

- 14) 10/8 Ernest Fortin, “The Political Thought of St. Augustine”; Augustine, *City of God*, book XV, sections 1-2, 4-5
- 15) 10/11 Aquinas excerpts, p. 357-374(i.e., up through “Obligation of Human Law”) Mansfield 22-29
- 16) 10/13 Aquinas excerpts, remainder; John Winthrop, “On Liberty”; Tocqueville on the Puritans, *Democracy in America*, 27-44
- 17) 10/15 Winthrop, “A Model of Christian Charity”; Pierre Manent, “Europe and the Theologico-Political Problem” (1-9 of *An Intellectual History of Liberalism*)

Part Three: Natural Rights Liberalism, and Its Aristotelian Critics

- 18) 10/18 Machiavelli and the Modern Turn
Mansfield 29-34; Pierre Manent, “Machiavelli and the Fecundity of Evil” (10-19 of *An Intellectual History of Liberalism*)
- 19) 10/20 From Hobbes to Locke
Mansfield, 35-43
Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, **paragraph #s** 123-140
- 20) 10/22 Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, **paragraph #s** 1-21, 25-51, 54-61.
- 21) 10/25 Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, **paragraph #s** 86-90, 123-148, 159-168
- 22) 10/27 Practical Blessings of Natural Rights Liberalism:
Thomas West, excerpts from *Vindicating the Founders*
Anne Phillips, excerpts from *Democracy and Difference*
- 23) 10/29 Theoretical Aristotelian objections: John Calhoun, “Speech on the Oregon Bill,”
François Guizot, quotations
1st PAPER DUE
- 24) 11/1 Contemporary Aristotelian objections I:
Wilson Carey McWilliams, “Democracy and the Citizen” 79-91
- 25) 11/3 Contemporary Aristotelian objections II:
McWilliams, “Democracy and the Citizen” 91-101
Patrick Deneen, “Virtue, Technology, and Wendell Berry” 1-9
“The Alternative Tradition in America,” pt. 1 and pt. 2

Part Four: Two Radical Responses to Liberal Modernity: Rousseau and Marx

- 26) 11/5 Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, 75-76, 91-119, skipping notes
- 27) 11/8 re-read 91-119, this time reading notes
- 28) 11/10 Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, 141-181
- 29) 11/12 Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, 141-181, w/ notes.
- 30) 11/15 Marx & Engels, *Communist Manifesto*, entire
- 31) 11/17 Martin Malia introduction; excerpts, Raymond Aron, Michael Harrington
- 32) 11/19 Marx, “On the Jewish Question”

Part Five: Tocqueville's Response to Liberal Modernity

<i>Democracy in America</i>			(main topics)
33)	11/22	3-15	Introduction
34)	11/29	45-55, 530-532, 61-63 479-482	Dem. Social State; Dogma of Pop. Sovty. Equality v. Liberty
35)	12/1	55-65, 82-90 187-192, 220-235	Townships; Decentralization Good News, Bad News on Amer. Dmcy.
36)	12/3	239-245, 248-250, 403-416	Tyranny of the Majority; The Democratic Mind
37)	12/6	416-426, 469-472 482-492, 500-506	Religion; History Individualism; Associations
38)	12/8	506-524, 599-604 563-576	Acquisitiveness and Restlessness; Ambition Gender Issues and Sexual Morays
39)	12/10	639-645, 661-676	Towards Soft Despotism; the Defense of Liberty

12/13 2nd PAPER DUE by 11:15pm, in my office box.

12/20 Final Exam—6-9pm, same room, i.e, Ladd 307.

Grading: 10% Participation, 10% Quiz Performance, 30% Final Exam, 50% 2 Essays

Final Exam: This will be a comprehensive and mostly essay exam. Please do not ask me to reschedule it unless it conflicts with another final or you have some other Skidmore-approved emergency reason.

Essays: These are formal essays where you are expected to have an identifiable thesis with arguments to support it. They should demonstrate a command of the text at hand, and a thoughtfulness about the claims made therein. I will hand out topics approximately two weeks before the essays are due. These are not research papers and you are not required to read any secondary literature. I want you to engage these authors directly.

Writing that is unacceptable for college-level work will receive a failing grade *regardless* of the quality of the ideas. This means that only a miniscule amount of grammar errors, careless errors, and format errors are permitted, and that each one harms your grade to some extent—consult p. 5 of the *The Writing Requirement in the Government Dept.* pamphlet for grading guidelines. I permit students to rewrite one failing or D level paper during the course of the semester. These are due by 5pm the day prior to the final, and they must be attached to the original essay I graded. *At best*, they will change the grade awarded to a C. There is no difference in grade value between a paper not handed in, and a paper that receives an F.

An essay may be handed in the next session (or 48 hours if in Dec.) later for the loss of about 9% of the grade. Being more than 3 minutes late on due-dates will not only be counted as a tardy, but will get you this same 9% deduction. E-MAILED WORK WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

Participation: Good participation means you contribute fairly regularly to the quality of class time. This can occur in a number of ways: giving good responses to my discussion questions, asking myself or one of your peers for clarification when needed, (politely) arguing against myself or one of your peers, asking useful questions, or even refraining from jumping in when others have established a useful line of conversation that you can add nothing significant to. The participation grade can also reflect your demeanor. For example, the always-silent-but-noticeably-attentive student will receive a C-. The always-silent-but-seemingly-disengaged student will receive an F. I do allow quieter students to increase their grade by submitting reading outlines, according to guidelines set up with me during office hours. There may be outside lecture events that likewise allow the participation grade to be improved. The grade is *not* aided by repeatedly participating without evidence of careful thought or without consideration of the good of the class.

Quiz Performance: There will be a few written quizzes, generally by surprise, and occurring at the very beginning of class. No make-ups, so absences and tardies hurt doubly here. More common will be quiz sessions, in which 3-5 students will be chosen at random to answer a simply factual question and a more conceptual question about the assignment. These also occur at the very beginning of class. The students chosen will receive an A, C, or F for each answer. Particularly strong answers for the conceptual question can additionally help the participation grade. Most factual answers are either wrong or right, F or A.

My basic formula for determining the grade for a quiz session:

A conceptual, C simply factual is a B+

A conceptual, F simply factual is a C+

F conceptual, A simply factual is a C-

Your grade for the session is not usually announced, although you will know when you are factually right or wrong, and I will generally correct wrong, unclear, or lackluster conceptual answers in class. So it should be obvious enough, and you can always ask me after class. Each student will undergo this formal quizzing approximately 4-5 times during the course. While this will usually occur as part of “quiz session,” I may decide to formally quiz a student during any part of a class session. Failed questions *might* go to the next student—if all the selected students “swing” at a conceptual question and do not “hit” an A, it is opened to volunteers; if a volunteer provides an A answer, it will change one of her previous C or F quiz grades to a B or C, or it will allow an overall A+ quiz grade.

General Expectations:

You are expected to read the assignments carefully and reflectively, remaining open to the possibility that what you are reading is right. Your first duty as an attentive reader is to understand what is being said. This means grasping the argument of the author—identifying central claims and seeing how these claims are supported. When you encounter something you strongly disagree with, make sure you first understand the argument. You are expected to give reasons for your opinions.

Commonsense Rules:

You will be attentive in class and display the demeanor of one who is interested in the material and respectful of others.

Cell-phones or similar items, food, gum, tobacco products, make-up, and other personal items will not be on your desk, nor in use—remember to turn cell phones off. *It is extremely rude to “text” or otherwise consult electronic devices during class—you will be asked to leave class if you insult all of us by doing so.*

Refrain from going to the restroom or the water-fountain during class, with only emergencies providing exceptions.

Four Non-Commonsense Rules:

- 1) Laptop computers and recording devices are not to be used in class. Exceptions are made according to Skidmore policy.
- 2) Hats and hoods are not to be worn in class.
- 3) Regular (non-alcoholic, obviously!) beverages may be brought to class.
- 4) I will be utilizing formal address, i.e., “Mr. Smith,” etc., for class purposes. If you refer to another student in class discussion, you will do likewise—e.g., “Contrary to what Mr. Smith said, I noticed that on page five of the reading...etc.” You will refer to me as “Professor Scott” or “Dr. Scott.”

Attendance:

Attendance is mandatory. There is no such thing as an unexcused absence. All absences must therefore be cleared ahead of time. If you must miss class, you remain responsible for all the material covered that day. After two unexcused absences, each subsequent absence will bring your final grade down by one half of a letter grade.

Academic Honor:

I take violations of the honor code very seriously. At minimum, plagiarism will merit a “0” for that assignment, with failure for the course likely. In cases that I deem particularly egregious, I will seek to have you suspended or expelled from Skidmore College.

Reprinted below is the section on academic integrity violations from the Student Handbook.

The Skidmore pamphlet on "The Ethics of Scholarship" defines some of the positive reasons why an academic community needs to observe the highest principles of intellectual honesty. These expectations include the bond of trust among faculty and students, without which there can be no truly educational enterprise; the need for students to embrace the rewarding struggles inherent in challenging intellectual endeavors; the excitement of mastering research and discovery processes in various disciplines; and the rewards of becoming a genuine participant in the larger community of scholars past and present. The academic Honor Code requires students to attend closely to such issues as the following:

1. Plagiarism is representing the work of another person as one's own: for example, the words, ideas, information, data, evidence, organizing principles, or style of presentation of someone else. Plagiarism includes paraphrasing or summarizing without acknowledgment, submission of another student's work as one's own, the purchase of prepared research or completed papers or projects, and the unacknowledged use of research sources gathered by someone else. Failure to indicate accurately the extent and precise nature of one's reliance on other sources is also a form of plagiarism. The student is responsible for understanding the legitimate use of sources; the appropriate ways of acknowledging his or her academic, scholarly, or creative indebtedness; and the consequences for violating the Skidmore Honor Code. The Integrity Board and the Board of Appeals will not regard claims of ignorance, unintentional error, or academic or personal pressures as adequate defenses for violations of the Honor Code. a. Minor plagiarism offenses: for example, failure to acknowledge the source(s) of a few phrases, sentences, or an idea (though not an idea of importance to the thesis or central purpose of the paper or project). b. More serious plagiarism offenses: for example, failure to acknowledge the quotation or paraphrase of a few longer, paragraph-length sections of a paper; failure to acknowledge the source(s) of a major idea or the source(s) of important pieces of evidence or information; or the source(s) for an ordering principle central to the paper's or project's structure. c. Major plagiarism offenses: for example, failure to acknowledge the source (quoted, paraphrased, or summarized) of major sections or passages in the paper or project; the unacknowledged use of several major ideas or extensive reliance on another person's data, evidence, or critical method submitted as one's own; and work borrowed, stolen, or purchased from someone else.

2. Cheating on examinations by giving or receiving unauthorized help before, during, or after an examination. Examples of unauthorized help include collaboration of any sort during an examination (unless specifically approved by the instructor); collaboration before an examination (when such collaboration is specifically forbidden by the instructor); the use of notes, books, or other aids during an exam (unless explicitly permitted by the instructor); looking upon someone else's exam during the examination period; intentionally allowing another student to look upon one's own exam; discussing test items during the exam period; and the passing of any exam information to students who have not yet taken the examination. There can be no conversation while an examination is in progress. Any prohibited or unauthorized interaction (e.g., talking or other communication) between students while an examination is in progress may constitute "cheating," regardless of the content or intent of the interaction.

3. Multiple submission of substantial portions of the same work for credit, without the prior explicit consent of the instructor(s) to whom the material is being (or has been) submitted.

4. Forging another person's signature or name on academic or other official documents (e.g., the signing of a faculty advisor approval, the misuse of attendance sign-up sheets, the mishandling or misappropriation of registration materials or other official documents).

5. The deliberate destruction, damaging, or theft of another's work or working materials (including lab experiments, computer programs, term papers, works of art, or other projects undertaken for academic purposes).

6. The effort to remove uncharged library materials from the library, defacing or damaging library materials, intentional displacement and hoarding of materials within the library for unauthorized private use, and the abuse of reserve-book privileges. These and related offenses constitute an abuse of the College community's central resource for the advancement of learning. The College may treat the failure to return materials to the library in a timely fashion, when other members of the Skidmore community need these materials, as an academic integrity infraction.

7. Computer abuse and fraud includes the abuses defined in these guidelines under "plagiarism," "multiple submission," and "alteration." The College expects members of the Skidmore community to observe the highest standards of academic and social integrity as they use computers for class, office, and individual projects. Such offenses as computer plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, entry into another person's computing directory, data theft or unauthorized alteration, inappropriate use of the electronic mail, and other malicious or dishonest computer activities will be treated as serious infringements of integrity. Consult the "Code of Ethics for Academic Computing at Skidmore College." The College recognizes the following EDUCOM policy statement:

Respect for intellectual labor and creativity is vital to academic discourse and enterprise. This principle applies to works of all authors and publishers in all media. It encompasses respect for the right to acknowledgment; the right to privacy; and the right to determine the form, manner, and terms of publication and distribution. Because electronic information is volatile and easily reproduced, respect for the work is especially critical in computer environments. Violations of authorial integrity, including plagiarism, invasion of privacy, unauthorized access, and trade secret and copyright violations, may be grounds for sanctions against members of the academic community.

