

## Dissident Political Thought

Professor Flagg Taylor  
GO 323, Fall 2011  
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Office Hours: M/W 10-12; T/TH 1-3

### Course Description:

We will examine the writings of some of the key figures in twentieth century political thought. Our attention will be primarily directed to their reflections on the nature of “ideological tyranny” or “totalitarianism” and its effects on the human personality and human relations. This theme will provide an avenue into more general themes that resonate throughout a broad tradition in political philosophy: the questions of justice, tyranny, and political responsibility.

### Required Texts:

*The Great Lie*, Flagg Taylor ed. (ISI Books)  
*The Passing of an Illusion*, François Furet (Chicago)  
*The Communist Manifesto*, Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels (Signet Classics)  
*The Captive Mind*, Czeslaw Milosz (Vintage)  
*The Solzhenitsyn Reader*, Edward Ericson & Daniel Mahoney eds. (ISI Books)  
*The Garden Party and Other Plays*, Václav Havel (Grove Press)  
*Nineteen Eighty Four*, George Orwell (Signet Classics)  
**\*\*Cheryl Glenn and Loretta Gray, *The Hodges Harbrace Handbook*, 17<sup>th</sup> edition (Wadsworth Cengage Learning)\*\***

Note: All other required readings will be hand-outs.

### Course Outline:

Introduction: What is totalitarianism? The continuing relevance of dissident political thought (9/8)

- Introduction to *The Great Lie*

### I. Foundations of Ideological Tyranny

- A. The Revolutionary Passion and Marxism
  - Furet, ch. 1 (9/13)
  - *The Communist Manifesto* (pts. I & II); Intro. by M. Malia (9/13)
- B. Leninism and the Spell of October
  - Furet, ch. 3 (pp. 62-77), ch. 4 (pp. 93-99) (9/15)
  - Lenin, “Fright at the Fall...” and “How to Organize Competition” (HAND-OUT) (9/15)
  - Leszek Kolakowski, “The Fortunes of Leninism” from *Main Currents of Marxism* (HAND-OUT: I have included the whole chapter, but sections 4, 5, 6, and 8 are required, the rest is optional) (9/15)
- C. From Marx to Stalin
  - Furet, ch. 5 (pp. 125-150) (9/20)
  - Kolakowski, “The Marxist Roots of Stalinism” (ch. 10 of *TGL*) (9/20)

## II. The Seduction

- A. Arthur Koestler, *Anti-Fascism, and World War II*
- Koestler, “The God that Failed” (HAND-OUT) **(9/22)**
  - Furet, ch. 7 (pp. 216-225), ch. 8 (pp. 233-238) **(9/27)**
  - Furet, chs. 9 & 10 (entire) **(9/27)**

**\*\*FILM: KATYIN\*\***

- B. Czeslaw Milosz, *The Captive Mind* (chs. 1-3) **(9/29)**
- TCM (chs.4-7) **(10/4)**
  - TCM (chs 8-9) **(10/6)**
  - Selected poems: “Dedication”; “Mid-Twentieth Century Portrait”; “Child of Europe” (HAND-OUT) **(10/6)**

## III. Humanity on Trial

- A. Furet, ch. 12 (pp. 451-477), ch. 13 (pp. 479-487) **(10/11)**
- B. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn & Hannah Arendt
- *The Gulag Archipelago*, in *TSR*, pp. 216-253 **(10/11)**
  - *The Gulag Archipelago*, in *TSR*, pp. 253-307 **(10/13)**
  - “Our Muzzled Freedom” (ch. 9 of *The Great Lie*) **(10/18)**
  - Arendt, “Ideology and Terror: A Novel Form of Government” (ch. 8 of *The Great Lie*) **(10/18)**
- C. George Orwell, *1984*
- Parts I-II **(10/20)**
  - Part III **(10/25)**
  - Kolakowski, “Totalitarianism and the Virtue of the Lie” (HAND-OUT) **(10/25)**

**\*\*FILM: VÁCLAV HAVEL GOES ON VACATION\*\***

## IV. Living in Truth

- A. Charter 77 and the Meaning of Dissent
- Charter 77 Declaration (HAND-OUT) **(10/27)**
  - Jan Patočka, “What Charter 77 is and what it is not” (ch. 26 of *TGL*) **(10/27)**
  - Václav Benda, “The Parallel Polis” (ch. 27 of *TGL*) **(10/27)**
  - Martin Palouš, “Jan Patočka vs. Václav Benda” (ch. 30 of *TGL*) **(10/27)**
  - Václav Havel, “The Power of the Powerless” (chs. 3 and 28 of *TGL*) **(11/1)**
- B. Crisis of Human Identity
- Havel, *The Vanek Plays*: “Audience”, “The Unveiling”, and “Protest” **(11/3, 11/8)**
  - *The Lives of Others*, a film by Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck **(11/10)**
  - Furet, ch. 13 (pp. 487-end) **(11/10)**

## V. Civilizational Crisis

- A. Havel
- “Politics and Conscience” (ch. 17 of *TGL*) **(11/15)**
  - *Letters to Olga* (chs. 18 & 31 of *TGL*) **(11/17)**

- B. Solzhenitsyn and Leo Strauss
  - We have ceased to see the Purpose (ch. 32 of *TGL*) (11/22)
  - “German Nihilism” (ch. 13 of *TGL*) (11/22)
- C. Jan Patočka
  - “Is Technological Civilization Decadent and Why?” (ch. 16 of *TGL*) (11/29)

## VI. The Legacy of Totalitarianism and The Lie

- A. Alain Besançon
  - “Moral Destruction” (ch. 33 of *TGL*) (12/1)
- B. Chantal Delsol
  - “Traces of a Wounded Animal” (ch. 35 of *TGL*) (12/6)
- C. Pierre Manent
  - “The Return of Political Philosophy” (ch. 34 of *TGL*) (12/6)

12/8 TBA

**Final Exam: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 15, 1:30-4:30**

### Course Requirements:

Class Participation, 5%  
 Essay #1 (5-6 pages), 30%  
 Essay #2 (5-6 pages), 35%  
 Final Exam, 30%

### *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.

### *Final Exam:*

This will be a comprehensive, essay exam taken during the exam period.

### *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.

You will be attentive in class and always display the demeanor of one who is interested in the material and respectful of others. You will take your share of responsibility for the quality of class time, coming prepared to discuss the assignments thoughtfully.

**No laptops are permitted in class unless you have a medical problem that prevents you from taking notes by hand.**

*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 one unexcused absence, 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.

## Academic Policies

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.

8. Software piracy: The College forbids the unauthorized duplication or use of copyrighted software. Even if a program does not contain copy protection to prevent unauthorized duplication, it is illegal to copy commercial software for your own use or use by others. Likewise, knowingly accepting or using copies of "pirated" software violates the Skidmore College Honor Code.
9. Unauthorized collaboration (closely related to plagiarism or cheating): Student collaboration on projects, papers, or other academic exercises regarded as inappropriate by the instructor(s). Although the most common faculty assumption is that work submitted for credit is entirely one's own, standards on appropriate and inappropriate collaboration vary widely among individual faculty members and each discipline. Students who want to confer or collaborate with one another on work receiving academic credit (for example, homework assignments, lab reports, exam preparations, take-home exams, research projects, essays) should be certain of the instructor's expectations and standards.
10. The misrepresentation or purposeful mishandling of material or fabrication of information in an academic exercise, academic process, or assignment (for example, the falsification of experimental or computer data, the construction of false documents or the misleading alteration of documents, the false or misleading citation of sources, the purposeful mishandling or misappropriation of registration materials).
11. Altering material without the instructor's knowledge and consent in negotiation for a higher grade.