

SPRING 2011 TOPICS DESCRIPTIONS GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT

GO 251C: Politics of the American Family

3 credits

Instructor: Natalie Taylor

Liberal democracies, such as the United States, are defined by their limited governments and the ostensibly strict separation between private and public life. Yet, political philosophers and statesmen have always appreciated the importance of the family to the polity. There is a tension between our desire to allow for freedom from government control on the one hand and our desire to foster a healthy political community on the other. On-going public policy debates often concern a group of social and economic issues commonly referred to as “family issues.” This course will examine several of those issues. By considering a number of the so-called family issues, you should gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between the individual, the family, and the political community. As we weigh each of the public policy issues we will also consider the many competing principles, which influence political decision making.

GO 351B: Xenophon’s *Anabasis*

4 credits

Instructor: Tim Burns

A close reading of the *Anabasis*, the classic account of political leadership written by Socrates' student, Xenophon, which recounts the retreat of the army of 10,000 Greeks. Cyrus the Younger has enlisted the Greeks in an attempt to wrest the Persian empire from his brother Xerxes. Cyrus dies in the initial battle at Cunaxa, however, and the Greek generals are betrayed and murdered. Xenophon himself is then chosen to lead the 10,000 out of Babylon. They march through the hostile territories of Assyria and Armenia, to the Black Sea and thence to Thrace and Greece (i.e., from contemporary Baghdad through Kurdish northern Iraq and Turkey, to the Black Sea and thence to Bulgaria and Greece). The *Anabasis* has been read and admired by statesmen, military leaders, and thinkers from Alexander the Great and Cicero to Machiavelli, Montaigne, Rousseau, Shaftesbury, Benjamin Franklin, and George Patton. It is also the basis of numerous films and novels—three of them published in 2008 alone. We will be using the new literal edition of the *Anabasis* translated by Wayne Ambler (Ithaca: Cornell U. Press, 2008).

GO 351B: Shakespeare’s Political Wisdom

4 credits

Instructor: Tim Burns

This course will be devoted to Shakespeare's political wisdom. At least since the time of Aristophanes and Plato, major themes of political theory have been explored through fiction rather than in treatises or tracts. Through a careful reading of five of Shakespeare's plays (*Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Tempest*) we will examine the following themes: the justice of a pre-emptive strike; justice in a republic; the pursuit of happiness in the private realm versus civic life; the longing for the noble or beautiful and its political consequences; religion, commerce, and the destruction of the political; the problematic rule of philosopher-kings; tyranny; the effect of Christian theology on political life.

GO 365: Islam and Politics in the Modern Middle East

4 credits

Instructor: Sumita Pahwa

Starting with the intellectual engagements of Islamic scholars with political modernity in the late nineteenth century, we ask how and why Islam came to play such an important political role in the contemporary Middle East, and investigate its relationship with nation-states, colonialism, democracy and modern governments. We will study the growth of Islamist movements that focus on social welfare, on alternative economic models, on creating Islamic states, and on participating in democratic political orders. We will also discuss Islamic responses to feminism and human rights, Islamic ‘culture wars,’ new Islamic media and televangelists, the rise of jihadism and transnational Islamist networks. We will draw on examples from Egypt, Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and occasionally Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq.

GO 366: Terrorism and the Law

4 credits

A Comparative Study of National Security & Liberty in the War on Terror

Instructor: Scott Mulligan

The principal focus of this course will be to explore various government responses to domestic and international terrorism, especially in the post-9/11 world. This requires an examination of background concepts in domestic and international law and the power of governments worldwide to address terrorism in legal, extra-legal and geopolitical contexts. The aim of the course will be to familiarize students with complex arguments of law, policy and morality in the national security arena, and on the world stage. In particular, students will confront critical questions involving specific, comparative examples of U.S. and international responses to acts of terrorism and explore the future and retrospective impact of these decisions on civil liberties, criminal justice, open government, human rights and international law. In this course, we will consider the practical issues involved in enforcing laws against terrorism and study the interaction of law and policy in the context of protecting society from its enemies while preserving the essential values of liberty within the fabric of the law. In this discussion-based seminar, students will develop advocacy skills in classroom debates, while individual in-class presentations and final research papers will allow students to explore particular related topics in greater depth. Documentary films and other materials will further aid our study and discussion of critically important issues at this exciting intersection of international law, geopolitics and human rights. *Prerequisite: GO103 or permission of the instructor.*