PSCI 181 – Modern Political Thought

Instructor: Gabriel Salgado

Course Description:

Who has power and why? Are there limits to that power and what should they be? These questions will guide our reading of canonical works in modern political thought, spanning from early modernity through the end of the 19th century. We will read thinkers including Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and Marx, among others, who explored topics such as the relationship between individuals and society, the role of government, and the meaning of liberty and justice. We will discuss how their works both explicitly and implicitly addressed questions of power, and how these have shaped subsequent debates in political theory. The course has two main objectives: to build a greater familiarity with influential works in modern political thought and to develop a critical method for engaging these works. In addition to understanding the various arguments put forth in the readings, I want you to practice posing your own questions to them. How, and to what extent, can you make a text respond to the issues you are interested in? My hope is that you leave the course not just having read political theory but having theorized politics yourself.

Course Mechanics and Expectations:

Readings: All of the readings for the course will be available online for free through Perusall. Perusall is an app connected to Canvas that allows you to highlight and comment on texts. You will be able to see my annotations, as well as those made by other students in your group (more on that below). Instead of using a discussion board, I want you to make a minimum of three short comments (1-2 sentences each) either on the text itself or in response to someone else in your group's annotation.

Groups: You will all be randomly assigned to small groups of 3-4 students. Throughout the semester, this group will provide a smaller space for you to work through the readings. In Perusall you will be able to view and respond to the annotations others in your group made to readings. You will also have some time each synchronous session to meet and talk with your group in breakout rooms. The point is for you to develop a conversation with your group through the Perusall annotations and breakout rooms over the course of the semester. Each group will choose one week when they will give a short (15 minutes) presentation on their annotations and how it connects to conversations they've had in prior weeks.

Synchronous class sessions: We will still be having a weekly, online, synchronous seminar during some portion of the originally scheduled time (Wednesdays 5 pm – 8 pm ET). However, my hope is to cut that session down from 3 to about 2 hours every week. To do so, I will be pre-recording my lectures and posting them before each seminar session (exact times TBD). As I will be recording and posting my lectures ahead of time, our synchronous sessions are meant as a time for you to discuss your thoughts and questions about the readings. Active participation is a crucial component of this course. We'll have to be creative about what this looks like over Zoom, especially accounting for the various technological issues that will arise over the course of the semester. Participation may take the form of writing in the chat, responding to polls, working with your group in breakout rooms, and more traditional discussion via audio/video.

Please complete all required readings, make your annotations in Perusall, and view the lecture before the synchronous session on Wednesdays.

Assignments and Grading:

40% Essays: 2 essays, 1500 words each, exploring a theme across two thinkers from the course. Further details and grading rubrics will be made available before the first essay is due.

35% *Final Project:* You will have the option of either doing a creative final project along with a 1500-word reflection, OR a more traditional 3000-word research paper on a topic of your choosing.

25% *Participation:* 5% for your group presentation, 10% for synchronous participation, 10% for asynchronous participation (via Perusall).

Class Schedule and Readings:

9/2 Bennett, "Modernity and its Critics"; Muthu, "Introduction" in *Empire and Modern Political Thought*; Video clip from Monty Python and the Holy Grail.

9/9 Machiavelli, *The Prince* (all)

9/16 Machiavelli, *Discourses* (selections)

9/23 Vitoria, *On the American Indians* (all)

9/30 Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Part 1 selections)

10/7 Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Part 2 selections)

  Paper #1 due 10/11

10/14 Locke, *Second Treatise* (Part 1 selections)

10/21 Locke, *Second Treatise* (Part 1 selections)

10/28 Rousseau, *Second Discourse* (all)

  Paper #2 Due 11/2

11/4 Rousseau, *Social Contract* (Books I & II)

11/11 Rousseau, *Social Contract* (Books II & IV)

11/18 Mill, *On Liberty* (all)

12/2 Marx, *The Communist Manifesto* & other selections

12/9 Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality* (Preface, Essays 1 & 2)

  Final Project/Paper Due 12/16