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PSCI 250E.01: Introduction to Political Theory

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University of Montana
Department of Political Science

PSC 250E
Summer 2014 (1st Five Week Session)
M-Th 11:30-1:20pm
Office Hrs: M-Th 1:20-2
Or by appointment

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Introduction to Political Theory

Course Description:

Introduction to Political Theory (PSC 150E) familiarizes students with the basic issues and ethical considerations that preoccupy the political theorist, including the origins of government and society, the nature of justice, and the distinction between private interest and the "public good." We will begin by considering the tension between politics and philosophy and continue with an examination of the major political theories that have shaped our contemporary political dialogues.

Course Objectives: upon successfully completing the course work, the student should be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the political and ethical values associated with Plato, Aristotle, Locke, Hobbes, Bentham, J.S. Mill, Burke, and Marx.
2. Identify major themes and ideas associated with theories of utopianism, classical and reform liberalism, utilitarianism, conservatism, Marxism, feminism as well as contemporary variations such as neo-Marxism.
3. Complete an analytical, interpretive essay, examining some aspect of the thinker's ideas regarding the good life, revolution, natural rights, or legitimate authority.

Texts:

Ed. R. Grey, *Political Theory & the Human Predicament*, 2014 edition

Grading:

The work of the course consists of reading all assignments, attending lectures—students who ask questions usually have good lecture notes, completing a **midterm** (20% of course grade), and a 3-page, double-spaced **interpretive essay** (35%) and a **final** (35% of course grade). Student must be prepared to engage in **discussion and attend regularly** (10% of course grade). Caution: three points will be deducted after the first absence. Excused absences will require the appropriate documentation.

- Exam make-up policy: students must provide a doctor's note, funeral notice, or letter from a coach to make up the midterm, essay, or final.
- Please see me and UM catalog for criteria on Incomplete Grades.

Course Schedule:

- 5/26** * * * * * **Memorial Day Holiday** * * * * * * * * * *
- 5/27 Introduction to the Course; Philosophy v Politics & Plato's Indictment
Read: *Political Theory & the Human Predicament*: Introduction & Chapter 1: Plato, *The Apology*
- 5/28 Plato's Indictment cont.; Organic Theory of the State
Read: Chapter 2: Plato, *The Republic*
- 5/29 Utopianism: Plato's Ideal State & Perfect Justice: Community of Wives, Children & Property; Possibility of the Ideal State: the Ship & Cave Allegories
Read: Chapter 2: Plato, *The Republic*
- 6/2 Decline of the Ideal State; Plato v. Aristotle
Read: Chapter 3: Aristotle, *The Politics*
 Essays (due **5/29**): What part(s) of the soul do Thrasymachus and Glaucon appear to personify? Consider how each of them defines justice.
- 6/3 Aristotle: Aristotle's Biological Analysis: Family, Village, Polis, Classifications of Constitutions
Read: Chapter 3: Aristotle
- 6/4 Aristotle on Revolution; Aristotle v. Machiavelli
Read: Chapter 4: Machiavelli, *The Prince*
 Essays (due **6/4**): What does Aristotle find wrong about Plato's utopia? Do you agree with his criticisms? Why or why not? See Aristotle's *Politics* Book II
- 6/5 Machiavelli cont.; Hobbes, Locke on Natural Rights, the Social Contract Theory, and Revolution

*** * * Monday, June 9th Midterm: Plato & Aristotle * * * ***

- 6/10 Hobbes, Locke on Natural Rights, the Social Contract Theory, and Revolution
Read: Chapter 5: Hobbes, *Leviathan*; Chapter 6: Locke, *Two Treatises on Government*
- Essays (due **6/9**): What, if anything, is wrong with Locke's case for "natural rights"? Is there anything wrong with his "natural right to revolution?"
- 6/11 Locke cont.; Adam Smith & the Automatic Social Mechanism
Read: Chapter 7: Hume & Smith selections
- 6/12 Utilitarianism: Bentham
Read: Chapter 11: Bentham, *Principles of Morals*
- 6/16** * * * * **June 16th: class will begin at 11:45am** * * * *
 J.S. Mill & Reform Liberalism
Read: Chapter 12: J.S. Mill, *On Liberty*
- 6/17- Edmund Burke & the Critique of Political Idealism
 6/18 Read: Chapter 9: Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*
- 6/19 Mary Wollstonecraft & J.S. Mill: A Feminist Critique
Read: Chapter 10: Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*; Chapter 12: J.S. Mill, *The Subjection of Women*
 Essays (due **6/19**): Is feminism a distinct political philosophy or a hybrid of existing political theories? Consider the questions/issues Wollstonecraft and J.S. Mill raise in your response.
- 6/23 Marx's Critique of Conservatism & Liberalism
Read: Chapter 13: Marx & Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*
- 6/24 Marxism & the "Automatic Historical & Scientific Mechanism"
Read: Packet selection from Marx & Engels' *The Communist Manifesto*
- 6/25 Neo-Marxism: the Orthodox School vs. Revisionists/Final Review
- 6/26 Final**