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PSCI 250E: introduction to Political Theory

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**University of Montana
Department of Political Science**

PSC 250E
Spring 2015
MWF 9:10-10 Sec 1

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Introduction to Political Theory

Course Description:

Introduction to Political Theory (PSC 250E) familiarizes students with the basic concepts and issues that preoccupy the political theorist, including the origins of government and society, the nature of justice, and the meaning of political legitimacy. We will begin by considering the tension between politics and philosophy and continue with an examination of the major political thinkers from Plato to Marx, who have influenced the way we think about human nature, justice, the good life, government, freedom, citizenship, etc. We will conclude with the "end of political theory" debate.

At the outset, let us consider some basic questions about the relationship between political philosophy and ideology. First, is there a political theory that is not an ideology, or a theorist that is not an ideologue? If ideology is not the same as political philosophy or as good (as Plato suggests), then how does one avoid being labeled an ideologue? Lastly, what does it mean to you when someone says: "today it is no longer possible to construct a genuine political philosophy"?

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 classical and modern thinkers, including Plato, Aristotle, Locke, Burke and Marx.
2. Identify major themes and ideas associated with the ideologies of utopianism, classical and reform liberalism, utilitarianism, conservatism, feminism, Marxism, as well as contemporary variations such as neo-Marxism.
3. Provide an interpretative, critical essay on a dystopian novel, examining how the ethical ideals of Plato are embraced, perverted and/or negated. (See attached Paper Guideline.)

Texts:

R. Grey (editor) **POLITICAL THEORY & THE HUMAN PREDICAMENT: AN INTRODUCTION TO MAJOR POLITICAL THINKERS**, San Diego: Cognella Publishing, 2013 (ISBN 978-1-62131-525-4); can be purchased on-line at: <https://students.universityreaders.com/store/>.

C.P. Gilman, **HERLAND**

Grading:

The work of the course consists of reading all assignments, participating by raising questions and attending lectures —students who ask questions usually have good lecture notes, completing the scheduled ***two-part midterm*** (30% of course grade), and the ***final*** (35% of course grade.) In addition, each student must complete on time **an analytical essay** of Gilman, *Herland* (35% of course grade.)* Please see attached for instructions on the *Herland* paper.

Late papers will receive a grade reduction for every day it's late.

Academic Misconduct

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or disciplinary sanction by the University of Montana. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code, which is available for review online at: <http://life.umt.edu/VPSA/name/StudentConductCode>.

Accessibility and Students with Disabilities

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction by supporting collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students. If you have a disability that requires accommodation, please present the instructor with a letter from Disability Services for Students (DDS), Lommasson Center 154 (243-2243), indicating the existence of a disability and suggested accommodations.

The instructor has attempted to make all course materials accessible. If you find course material that has barriers to accessibility, please notify the instructor as soon as possible so the oversight can be corrected as quickly as possible.

Tentative Course Schedule:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1/26- | Introduction to the Course & Political Theory |
| 1/28 | <u>Read:</u> <i>Political Theory & the Human Predicament</i> : Introduction & Chapter I, Plato, <i>The Apology</i> |
| 1/30- | Plato's Socrates: Who is the just individual? |
| 2/2 | <u>Read:</u> Chapter II: Plato, <i>The Republic</i> , Books I- II |
| 2/2- | Plato's Organic Theory of the State |
| 2/6 | <u>Read:</u> Chapter 2: Plato, <i>The Republic</i> , Books II-IV |
| 2/9- | Utopianism: Plato's Ideal State & Perfect Justice: Community of Wives |
| 2/11 | Children, and Property
<u>Read:</u> Chapter 2: Plato, <i>The Republic</i> , Book III, V, VII
<u>Recommend:</u> Sir Thomas More's <i>Utopia</i> |
| 2/13- | Possibility of the Ideal State: the Ship & Cave Allegories |
| 2/18 | <u>Read:</u> Chapter II, Plato, <i>The Republic</i> , Book VI, VII |
| ***** <i>Monday February 16th, President's Day Holiday. . .no class</i> ***** | |
| 2/20 | Decline of the Ideal State
<u>Read:</u> Chapter 2, Plato, <i>The Republic</i> , Books VIII |
| 2/23 | Plato v. Aristotle
<u>Read:</u> Chapter 2: Aristotle, <i>Politics</i> , Book II |
| 2/25 | Review & Discussion of Plato |
| ***** <i>Friday, February 27th Midterm Part I: Plato's Republic</i> ***** | |
| 3/2 | Aristotle: Politics As Science |

Read: Chapter 2: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book I

3/4 Aristotle's Biological Analysis: Family, Village, Polis
Read: Chapter 2: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book II; Book III (pp. 130-135)

3/6 Aristotle's Classification of Constitutions & the Best Practical State
Read: Chapter 2: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book III (pp. 135-143; 145-148), Book IV (pp. 142-144); Book IV (pp. 148-152)

3/9- Aristotle on Revolution
3/11 Read: Chapter 2: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book IV (pp. 152-155); Book V

++Reading Gilman, Herland

3/13 Review & Discuss Aristotle

******* Monday March 16th Midterm Part II: Aristotle's Politics *******

3/18 Machiavelli: Political Realist or Idealist?
Read: Chapter 4: Machiavelli, *The Prince*

3/20 Essay Discussion of *Herland* essay

3/23 Hobbes, Locke: the State of Nature & Social Contract Theory
Read: Chapter 5: Hobbes, *Leviathan*; Chapter 6: Locke, *Two Treatises on Government* (pp. 229-235; pp. 240-251)

3/25 Classical Liberalism: Locke & Revolution
Read: Chapter 6: Locke, *Two Treatises*, (pp. 252-263)

3/27 Classical Liberalism: Locke & Property Rights (pp. 235-240)
Read: Chapter 6: Locke, *Two Treatises*

***** Herland due Friday March 27th *** See last page of syllabus *******

******* March 28th - April 5th Spring Break *******

4/6 Classical Liberalism: Hume, Smith & "the Automatic Social Mechanism" of the Free Market
Read: Chapter 7: Hume & Smith; Chapter 8: Rousseau, *The Social Contract*

4/8 Utilitarianism: Bentham, James Mill & John Stuart Mill
Read: Chapter 11: Bentham, *Principles of Morals*

4/10 Discussion of Utilitarian Ethics: its limitations?

4/13 John Stuart Mill & Reform Liberalism
Read: Chapter 12 J.S. Mill, *On Liberty* (pp. 453-482)

4/15- Edmund Burke & the Critique of Political Idealism
4/17 Read: Chapter 9: Burke, *Reflections*

- 4/20- Anti-Feminist Thought v Feminist Political Theory: Mary Wollstonecraft &
4/22 J.S. Mill
Read: Chapter 3: Aristotle, *History of Animals*, Book IX (pp. 164-165); Chapter 10: Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men & A Vindication of the Rights of Women*; Chapter 12: J.S. Mill, *The Subjection of Women* (pp. 482-498)
- 4/24- Marx's Critique of Liberalism & Conservatism
4/27 Read: Chapter 13: Marx, *Economic & Philosophical Manuscript* (pp. 509-515)
- 4/29 Marx & the "Earthquake Theory" of Revolution
Read: Chapter 13: Marx, *The Communist Manifesto* (pp. 515-544)
- 5/1- Neo-Marxism: the Orthodox School vs. Revisionists
5/4 Recommend: Bernstein's *Evolutionary Socialism* (1899); Karl Kautsky, *The Class Struggle* (1899); Rosa Luxemburg, selections from *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks* (1970); Lenin's *Imperialism* (1917)
- 5/6 End of Political Theory?
Recommend: Bell, *The End of Ideology* (1962) & Fukuyama, *End of History* (1992)
- 5/8 Review for Comprehensive Final
Read: Lecture notes & review selected readings.

- **** **Final is Tuesday May 12th at 10:10 am-12:10pm in LA11** *****

Guidelines for Essay: "Herland: Our land?" (35% of course grade)

I. Purpose

A. **Objective:** Provide an **analytical essay** comparing and contrasting the ideas/themes found in *Herland* with the political theories we have covered in the course. An interpretive essay is not a book review or an editorial. A critical essay supports its analysis with direct references to the novel, showing the extent Gilman borrows, satirizes, and/or negates the ideas of other western political thinkers.

II. Content

A. Description & Thesis (10% of essay value)

We do not want more than a cursory attempt at describing the content of Gilman's *Herland*. Assume that the reader is familiar with the plot of the book. (No more than one paragraph.)

III. Analysis (70% of essay value)

This part of the paper should constitute the major portion of your work. Look for the ideas that Gilman draws upon in terms of the ideologies covered in the class. Can you, for instance, identify radical, conservative, and/or liberal ideas in her model community? (i.e. what extent does Gilman borrow from Plato's notion of justice?)

Or you *might* examine her underlying assumptions about human nature, "male" & "female" natures. Is there a class, caste, or elites in this society? What is the

role of their political leaders (what legitimizes their authority). Does this utopia dispense with state coercive power? Explain. What is the character of their economic system and the nature of social relationships in Gilman's utopia? What is the value system of the "Herlander" society? Consider, for instance, the political socialization process of the women: what they are taught, if anything, regarding gender roles, history, community etc.

What are the sources of Jeff, Van, and/or Terry's discontent in Herland? Why does Gilman introduce these male figures? Do these characters correspond to any thinkers examined in this course? Why, why not?

IV. Conclusion: (20% essay value)

Finally, does Gilman's brand of *feminism* offer us a unique contribution to political philosophy or is it merely a hybrid political theory? Explain

V. Format

a. Quotations

All quotations or paraphrasing in your work from any material must be enclosed in quotation marks and properly cited as to their origin. See a writing manual for consistent format. **Plagiarism:** *Representing another person's words, ideas, data, or materials as one's own* is a violation of the university code of conduct and will result in a grade of F on the paper, please see:
<http://life.umd.edu/vpsa/documents/StudentConductCode>

c. Bibliography

You should include a complete bibliography for all outside books used for this paper.

d. Editing:

Be sure to edit and proof your final copy! Points will be deducted for grammatical and spelling errors.

Please attach grading sheet (next page)

Please Attach To Your Paper
PSC250E: Introduction to Political Theory
Spring 2015

Description & Thesis – 10% (3.5 points)

- Clear and coherent thesis statement
- Relevant to materials presented in lectures and throughout course materials

Analysis – 55% (20 points)

- Strong supporting evidence of the thesis
- Relevant information is clearly presented
- Fully developed arguments
- Credit is given to outside sources, where appropriate

Conclusion - 30% (7.5 points)

- Conclusion: a clear restatement of the answer to the central question

Format, Mechanics & Bibliography - 5% (4 pts)

- Format: 5-6 typed, double-spaced pages, 10-12 point font
- Grammar: Neatness, spelling, grammar, punctuation, and organization
- Bibliography: Follows Chicago/Turabian citation style guidelines

TOTAL: (35 points)

Additional Comments:
