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Spring 2-1-2015

### PSCI 550.01: Approaches to Political Theory

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**University of Montana**  
**Department of Political Science**

Political Science 550  
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Spring 2015  
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**Political Theory Seminar:  
Approaches to Political Theory**

*Course Description:*

Beginning in the late 1950s, many commentators wondered whether political theory (or political philosophy—I shall not distinguish between them), as it had been traditionally practiced and taught, was “in abeyance.” Whether we have reached ‘*the end of political theory*,’ is a question that continues to plague political theorists. Political theory’s impending demise is, however, complicated by the fact that political theorists have never agreed to what it is they do, or should be doing, and their disagreements affect the way they approach political questions. But rather than rehashing an old debate, one that resurrects what John Gunnell has called ‘the myth of the tradition of political theory,” perhaps we ought to consider applying a different conceptual framework for understanding political theory, one that does *not* focus on the causes that political theorists have championed or condemned, or on how political theory has been affected by specific events (real or imagined). Instead, I propose this semester that we raise an even more fundamental question: *what is the purpose of political inquiry?* A fundamental question precisely because what people take to be the purpose of political theory determines what they study, who they study, and how they study it.

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

1. Distinguish between a normative, a scientific/historical, and an analytical approaches, and recognize how political theorists often combine each of these approaches in their work.
2. Develop concise, analytic essays on the assigned readings. Specifically with regards to an analytic perspective, students will consider their own position with respect to different approaches to studying political theory (for instance, what consequences follow when one emphasizes text over context when studying political theory?)
3. Evaluate a political theory in terms of its analytic, empirical, and normative claims, and its strengths and/or weaknesses.

*Course Grading:*

PS 550 will be taught as a seminar. Short essays of **4-5** double-spaced pages (about 6 essays per student) will be assigned and critiqued in class (50% of course grade.) Class participation (20% of course grade) will be evaluated according to each student's contribution to discussions on reading assignments. The final paper (30%) will be **10-12** pages.

In addition, students will be expected to assess the merits and weaknesses of their colleague's essays. To give us time to prepare questions, copies of your essay must be distributed before you are scheduled to orally present it (please see schedule). Late essays will not be accepted. Each Political Science **M.A. graduate student** must also complete a political theory field exam. All students will complete a take-home final. The final & field exams will be **take home** & due on **Tuesday May 12<sup>th</sup> by 5 pm.**

### *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.

### *Required Tests:*

Joseph Wood Krutch, **THE MODERN TEMPER**

Leo Strauss, **NATURAL RIGHT & HISTORY**

B.F. Skinner, **BEYOND FREEDOM & DIGNITY**

Erich Fromm, **THE SANE SOCIETY**

John Gunnell, **POLITICAL THEORY & INTERPRETATION**

Isaiah Berlin, **LIBERTY**

Wendell Barry, **SEX, ECONOMY, FREEDOM & COMMUNITY**

Arendt, **THE HUMAN CONDITION**

M. Ignatieff, **THE NEEDS OF STRANGERS**

\* Classical works of: Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, Machiavelli, Locke, Burke, Rousseau, Hobbes, J.S. Mill, Marx—to be assigned on an individual basis.

John Rawls, **POLITICAL LIBERALISM** selected readings

Quentin Skinner, **VISIONS OF POLITICS**, selected readings

### *January 26th Introduction to the Course: Approaches to Political Theory*

Read: Andrew Hacker, “Capital and Carbuncles: The ‘Great Books’ Reappraised,” *American Political Science Review*, (September 1954): 775-786;

Sheldon Wolin, “Political Theory: Trends & Goals,” *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, vol. 12, 1968.

#### Recommended Readings:

Judith N. Shklar’s *After Utopia: the Decline of Political Faith*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957.

Alfred Cobban, “The Decline of Political Theory,” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 68, no. 3 (September 1953), 321-337

### *February 2<sup>nd</sup> “Classical” & “Theory & Justice-Seeking: Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas*

Review: Plato’s *Republic*, Aristotle’s *Politics*, St Augustine’s *City of God*, St. Thomas Aquinas, *Treatise on Law, Summa Theologica*, Questions 90-97, Rousseau’s *The Social Contract, or Principles of Political Right*, and Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*.

Essays (**due Sunday 2/1 by 12 pm**): Please describe what constitutes ‘justice’ for one of these theorists, and how and where does he suggest we might find a standard of justice? Taking his work as one example, what do it suggest are some characteristics of a justice-seeking approach in classical theory?

February 9<sup>th</sup> **'Modern' Justice-Seeking & Knowledge-seeking: Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Burke, Rousseau, J.S. Mill, Marx**

Review: Machiavelli's *The Prince*, Hobbes' *Leviathan*, Locke's *Two Treatises on Government*, Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, J.S. Mill's *On Liberty*, and Marx's *Communist Manifesto*.

Essays (**due Sunday 2/8 by 12pm**): Please describe *what* constitutes 'knowledge' for one of these theorists, and *how* and *where* does he suggest we might gain political knowledge? Taking his work as one example, what do it suggest are some characteristics of a knowledge-seeking approach in "modern" theory?

Essays (**due Sunday 2/2 by 12pm**): Please describe what constitutes 'justice' for one of these theorists, and how and where do they find this justice? Please identify at what point the theorist shift from questions of 'justice-seeking' to questions of 'knowledge-seeking'?

\*\*\*\*\* February 17<sup>th</sup> **President's Day No Class** \*\*\*\*\*

February 23<sup>rd</sup> **Strauss: the Conservative Justice-seeker?**

Read: Strauss, *Natural Right & History*; **Choose one of the recommended readings as well.**

Essays (**due Sunday 2/22 by 12pm**): What for Strauss is the purpose of political theory? According to Strauss, what is 'historicism' and how has it harmed political theory? What does he identify as genuine "justice-seeking" and what does it assume about meaning & nature of justice?

Essays (**due Sunday 2/22 by 12pm**): It's argued that the Bush administration neo-conservatives are students of Leo Strauss. In what sense, can we say they understand and/or misunderstand Strauss's conception of "natural right"?

Recommended Readings:

Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*

Strauss, *What is Political Philosophy?*, see title chapter

"Strauss, Philosophy, and Politics," (Symposium) *Political Theory*, August 1987

\*\*\*Rothman, Stanley, 'The Revival of Classical Political Philosophy: A Critique,' *The American Political Science Review*, 56 (June 1962), 341-52.

Herbert Storing (ed.) *Essays on the Scientific Study of Politics*

A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*

Ernest Fortin, "Gadamer on Strauss," *Interpretation*, Jan. 1984

Shadia Drury, *The Political Ideas of Leo Strauss* (1988)

Drury, *Leo Strauss and the American Right* (1997);

George Bruce Smith, "Leo Strauss and the Straussians: An Anti-democratic Cult?", *PS: Political Science & Politics*, vol. 3 No. 2 (June 1997);

Seymour Hersh, "Selective Intelligence," *The New Yorker*, 12 May 2003;

David Schaefer, "The Legacy of Leo Strauss: A Bibliographic Introduction," *The Intercollegiate Review*, Summer 1974: 139-148.

March 2<sup>nd</sup>

***Liberal Justice-Seeking***

**Read:** J.W. Krutch, *The Modern Temper*, **Choose one of the recommended reading as well;** and **Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, lecture I all; lecture II all; lecture IV all; lecture VI, §6-7; lecture VIII, §3-5, §13-14**

Essays (due **2/23**): What does Krutch's account of modern art, modern science and modern knowledge suggest about human dignity? Does it make sense, according to Krutch, to speak of individual "freedom" or "rights" or "justice" given what we've learned from *modern* science, history, and philosophy?

Essays (**due 2/23**): Rawls could be characterized as the contemporary theorist and a 'liberal justice-seeker.' How does his form of justice-seeking contrast with, say, a Plato? What aspects of Krutch's account of 'modernism' does Rawls appear to embrace and what does he reject?

**Recommended Readings:**

Cowley, *Exile's Return*, 1959

Diggins, *Up From Communism: Conservative Odyssey In American Intellectual History*, 1975

Frankel, *The Case for Modern Man*, 1955

Grey, "Modern Liberalism & Despair, The Pilgrimage of J.W. Krutch," *American Studies*, Spring 1997

Goodwin, *The Lottery State*

Perry, "The Modern Distemper," *Saturday Review of Literature*, June 1929

Kateb, *Utopia & Its Enemies*, 1963

Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*

Margolis, *Joseph Wood Krutch: A Writer's Life*, 1980

Nash, *The Nervous Generation: American Thought, 1917-1930*, 1970

Slater, "The Negative Secularism of The Modern Temper: Joseph Wood Krutch," *American Quarterly*, Summer 1981

March 9<sup>th</sup>

***Justice Seeking & Empirical Inquiry: Scientific Approach***

**Read:** B.F. Skinner, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*; **Choose one recommended reading below.**

Essays (due **3/2**): Is Skinner a political theorist?, and if he is, what makes him so?

Essays: (due **3/2**): What claims (findings/hypothesis/laws/arguments) does Skinner make that may be called scientific? What claims (etc.) does he make that he calls scientific, but are anything but?

**Recommended Readings:**

J. Weinberger, "Science and Rule in Bacon's Utopia: An Introduction to The Reading of the *New Atlantis*," *American Political Science Review*, vol. 70 (September 1976): 865-85

Steven Smith, "Political Science and Political Philosophy: An Uneasy Relation," *PS: Political Science and Politics*, vol. 33 (June 2000): 189-91

William O'Donohue, and Kyle Ferguson, *The Psychology of B.F. Skinner*, 2001

March 16<sup>th</sup>

**Justice Seeking & Empirical Inquiry cont.**

Read: Fromm, *The Sane Society*; **Choose one of the recommended readings as well.**

Essays (**due 3/9**): "What is good or bad for man is not a metaphysical question, but an empirical one that can be answered on the basis of an analysis of man's nature and the effect which certain conditions have on him." (266 -*Escape From Freedom*) What difficulties are involved in making an "empirical" view of human nature the basis of a political theory?

Essays (**due 3/9**): Both Fromm and B.F. Skinner seek "a science of man," but they mean very different things by it. Discuss with reference to what each thinker hopes such a "science" will achieve for society (for us?)

Recommended Readings:

Richard Ashcraft, "Political Theory and the Problem of Ideology," *The Journal of Politics*, vol. 42, no. 3 (August 1980): 687-705.

Bartlett & Schodall, "Fromm, Marx, and the Concept of Alienation," *Science and Society*, Summer 1963

Fromm, *Man For Himself; Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*

Kariel, "The Normative Pattern of Erich Fromm's *Escape From Freedom*," *Journal of Politics*, vol. 19, 1957

Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*

Schaar, *Escape From Authority: The Perspectives of Erich Fromm*, 1961

Wells, *The Failure of Psychoanalysis: From Freud to Fromm*, 1963

Briggs, "From Slaves to Robots," *New Statesman and Nation*, 23 June 1956

Burston, *The Legacy of Erich Fromm*, 1991

Ellul, *The Political Illusion; The Technological Society*

H.P. "The Insane Society," *Dissent*, vol. 3, Winter 1956

Spitz, "The Appeal to the Right Man," in *Democracy and the Challenge of Power*, 1958

Sykes, "The Americanization of Erich Fromm," *The Hidden Remnant*, 1962

March 23<sup>rd</sup>

**Wendell Berry & Justice-Seeking**

Read: Wendell Berry, *Sex Economy, Freedom & Community*; **Choose one of the recommended readings as well.**

Essays (**due 3/16**): "There are two kinds of freedom: the freedom of the community and the freedom of the individual. The freedom of the community is the more fundamental and the more complex." What Berry understands here, Carter takes for granted.

Essay (**due 3/16**): Both Arendt and Berry associate 'justice-seeking' with identifying a 'genuine' community of citizens. They do not, however, necessarily agree on what constitutes a genuine community. Compare and contrast what for each of them characterizes a genuine community, and what benefits they claim that an individual gains from living in it. Finally, is it

Arendt or Barry who most closely follows the teachings of Aristotle, and explain why.

Recommended Readings:

W. Barry, *What Are People For*

Lewis Mumford, *The Human Condition*

\*\*\*\*\* *March 30<sup>th</sup> – April 5<sup>th</sup>* \*\*\*\*\**Spring Break* \*\*\*\*\*

*April 6<sup>th</sup>*

*Arendt's Justice-seeking Inquiry into Political Theory*

Read: Arendt, *The Human Condition*; Choose one recommended reading below.

Essays (**due Sunday 4/5 by 12pm**): Arendt argues that in the beginning of the modern period, work had displaced both contemplation and action in the hierarchy of men's activities; but by the nineteenth century labour had replaced work as the supreme activity. How did this triumph of *animal laborans* come about according to Arendt?

Essays (**due Sunday 4/5 by 12pm**): What would Quentin Skinner make of Arendt's interpretation of the ancient Greek polis? Would he find that her diagnosis of *modern alienation* is prone to certain analytic &/or empirical weaknesses? Explain

Recommended Reading:

Special Issue on Hannah Arendt, *Social Research*, 1977

Kateb, "Freedom & Worldliness in the Thought of Hannah Arendt," *Political Theory*, Spring 1977

Kateb, *Hannah Arendt*

Canovan, "The Contradictions of Hannah Arendt's Political Thought," *Political Theory*, February 1978

Levin, "On Animal Laborans and Homo Politics in Arendt, *Political Theory*, November 1979

Arendt, *On Revolution*

*Between Past and Future*

*The Life of the Mind*

Young-Bruehl, "Reflections on Hannah Arendt's Life of the Mind," *Political Theory*, May 1982

Whitfield, *Into The Dark: Arendt and Totalitarianism*

Dallmayr, "Ontology of Freedom," *Political Theory*, May 1984

Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*

Raaflaub, "Democracy, Oligarchy and the Concept of the Free Citizen in Late Fifth Century Athens," *Political Theory*, November 1983

Canovan, "A Case of Distorted Communications," *Political Theory*, February 1983



April 13<sup>th</sup>

*Arendt's Justice-seeking Inquiry cont.*

Read: *The Human Condition*

Essays (**due 4/6**): How does Arendt's distinction between public and private relate to her distinction between work and labor. . .or does it?

Essays (**due 4/6**): What do you see as the analytical weaknesses of Arendt's *distinction between public and private*? On the other hand, what do you find are the strengths of her distinction?

Recommended Readings:

Emily Hauptmann, "A Local History of 'The Political,'" *Political Theory*, vol. 32, no. 1 (February 2004): 34-60.

Pitkin, "Justice: On Relating Private and Public," *Political Theory*, August 1981

April 20<sup>th</sup>

*Quentin Skinner & Historical Inquiry in Political Theory*

Read: Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 2004 (available as ebook at UM library webpage) *Regarding Method*, vol. 1, Chaps. 3-4; *Renaissance Virtues*, vol. 2, Chaps. 6-7.

Essays (**due 4/13**): What does Quentin Skinner suggest is purpose of studying political theory? What does he find wrong with the justice-seeking and analytical approaches? Please describe Quentin Skinner's *historical* approach to political theory. What are its strengths and weakness?

Essays (**due 4/13**): Does he avoid blending his historical approach with justice-seeking into his own studies of Machiavelli? What 'analytical' problems to you find in his interpretation of Machiavelli's political ideas?

Recommended Readings:

Q. Skinner, "The Ideological Context of Hobbes's Political Thought," *The Historical Journal*, vol. 9, 1966: 286-317.

Q. Skinner, "Meaning & Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History & Theory*, vol. 8, 1969: 3-53.

Q. Skinner, "Inside Story: Rev. of Isaiah Berlin, 'Against the Current'," *New Statesman*, 9 June 1979, 830-1.

John Dunn, "The Identity of the History of Ideas," *Philosophy*, vol. 43: 85-104.

K.R. Massingham, "Skinner is as Skinner does," *Politics*, vol 16: 124-9.

Kari Palonen, "The History of Concepts as a Style of Political Theorizing: Quentin Skinner's and Reinhart Koselleck's Subversion of Normative Political Theory," *European Journal of Political Theory*, vol.1, 2002: 96-111.

Kari Palonen, *Quentin Skinner, History, Politics, Rhetoric*, Cambridge: Polity-Blackwell Publishing, 2003.

Bhikhu Parekh & R.N. Berki, "The History of Political Ideas: A Critique of Q. Skinner's Methodology," *Journal for the History of Ideas*, vol. 34, 1973: 163-84.



- J.G.A. Pocock, "Reconstructing the Traditions: Quentin Skinner's Historians' History of Political Thought," *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory*, vol. 3, 1979: 95-113.
- Melvin Richter, "Reconstructing the History of Political Languages: Pocock, Skinner and Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe," *History and Theory* vol. 29, 1990: 38-70.
- James Tully ed. *Meaning & Context: Quentin Skinner and His Critics*, Cambridge: Polity, 1988.

April 27<sup>th</sup>

***Analytical Inquiry & the Critical Critic: Isaiah Berlin***

Read: Berlin, "Introduction" and "Two Concepts of Liberty"; Choose one of the recommended readings as well.

Essays (due 4/20): Berlin's contribution to our understanding of freedom, as many have noted, is to demonstrate the error of assimilating liberty to morality, and of supposing that morality forms 'a coherent system.' But while it seems dangerous and paradoxical to attach freedom to a particular 'moral' end, yet it seems trivial and hopelessly incomplete to leave it purely negative.

Essays (due 4/20): What is Berlin's analytical critique of positive liberty? Does his analysis of the two concepts of liberty lead him into the position of defending the status quo? Explain

Recommended Readings:

Zygmunt Bauman, *Freedom*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988.

Crowder, G. "Negative and Positive Liberty," *Political Science*, Dec. 1988

John Gray, *Isaiah Berlin*, Princeton: PUP, 1996.

Kristjansson, K. "What Is Wrong with Positive Liberty?," *Social Theory and Practice*, Fall 1992

S. Hayman, "Positive and Negative Liberty," *Chicago-Kent Law Review*, 1992.

Gerald MacCallum, "Negative and Positive Freedom," reprinted in David Miller's *Liberty*, Oxford: OUP, 1993, pp. 100-122.

Judith Shklar, "Positive Liberty, Negative Liberty in the United States," in *Redeeming American Political Thought*, Chicago: Chicago UP, 1998.

May 4<sup>th</sup>

***Analytical Inquiry & Contemporary Theory: A Moderate Justice-seeking?***

Read: M. Ignatieff, *The Needs of Strangers* & John Gunnell, *Political Theory & Interpretation*; **Choose one of the recommended readings below.**

Essays (due 4/27): While are the key characteristics do you find in Gunnell analytical approach to political theory? What, if any, kind of 'justice' or moral values can be derived from his theory?

Essays (due 4/27): Ignatieff appears to move between all three approaches to political inquiry. How so? Also what kind of 'justice' does Ignatieff appear to be seeking and where does he propose we look for it?

Recommended Readings:

John Gunnell, "Desperately Seeking Wittgenstein," *European Journal of Political Theory*, vol 3, no. 3, (January 2004): 77-98.

Marc Stears, "The Vocation of Political Theory," *European Journal of Political Theory*, vol. 4, no. 4 (October 2005) 325-350.

George Sabine, "What is a Political Theory," *The Journal of Politics*, vol. 1, no. 1 (February 1939): 1-16.

Sheldon Wolin, "Political Theory as a Vocation," *American Political Science Review*, vol. 63, no. 4 (December 1969): 1062-1082.

Judith Shklar, "Review." *Political Theory*, vol. 1, no 15 (February 1987).