

Spring 2-1-2012

PSCI 250E.01: Introduction to Political Theory

Ramona Grey

University of Montana - Missoula, ramona.grey@umontana.edu

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**University of Montana
Department of Political Science**

**PSCI 250E
Spring 2012
MWF 9:10-10**

TAs: Ms McCutcheon & Mr. Curtis

Dr. Grey
Office: LA 352
Phone: 243-2721
Email: ramona.grey@umontana.edu
Office Hrs: MWF 10-11

Introduction to Political Theory

Course Description:

Introduction to Political Theory (PSC 250) 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 moral philosophy and continue with an examination of the major political philosophies— liberalism, conservatism, Marxism, feminism etc.— that have shaped our modern political discourse. 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"?

Texts:

Plato, *The Republic*

Aristotle, *Politics*

Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*

Marx & Engels, *The Communist Manifesto**

FAC PAC A: Western Political Theory; FAC PAC B Political Ideas on Women

*In addition, short articles will be placed on reserved in the library.

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 the ideologies of utopianism, classical and reform liberalism, utilitarianism, conservatism, feminism, Marxism, as well as contemporary variations such as neo-Marxism and totalitarianism.
3. Provide an interpretative, critical essay on a dystopian novel, examining how the ethical ideas of Plato are embraced, perverted and/or negated. (See attached Paper Guidelines)

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), the *final* (35% of course grade.) In addition, each student must complete on time an *analytical essay* of Huxley's *Brave New World* (35% of course grade.)* Please see attached for instructions on the Huxley paper.

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

Students with disabilities may request reasonable modifications by contacting me. The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). "Reasonable" means the University permits no fundamental alterations of academic standards or retroactive modifications. For more information, please consult <http://www.umt.edu/disability>

Course Schedule:

- 1/23 Introduction to the Course
Read: Plato, *The Republic*, Book I & II
- 1/25- Plato's Indictment
1/27 Read: Plato, *The Republic*, Books III & IV
- 1/30- Plato's Organic Theory of the State
2/1 Read: *The Republic*, Book V
- 2/3- Utopianism: Plato's Ideal State & Perfect Justice: Community of Wives
2/6 Children, and Property
Read: *The Republic*, Book VI
Recommend: Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*
- 2/8- Possibility of the Ideal State: the Ship & Cave Allegories
2/10 Read: *The Republic*, Book VII
- 2/13 Decline of the Ideal State
Read: *The Republic*, Books VIII & IX
- 2/15 Plato v. Aristotle
Read: Aristotle, *Politics*, Books I & II
- 2/17 Review & Discussion of Plato
- ***** February 20th Monday, President's Day Holiday. . .no class *****
- ***** February 22nd Wednesday *****Midterm Part I: Plato's *Republic* *****
- 2/24 Aristotle: Politics As Science
Read: Aristotle, *Politics*, Books I & II
- 2/27- Aristotle's Biological Analysis: Family, Village, Polis
2/29 Read: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book III
- 3/2 Aristotle's Classification of Constitutions
Read: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book IV
- 3/5- Aristotle on Revolution
3/7 Read: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book V

++Reading Huxley, *Brave New World*

3/9 Review & Discuss Aristotle

***** **March 12th Monday, Midterm Part II: Aristotle's *Politics*** *****

3/14 Classical Liberalism: Introduction

3/16 Classical Liberalism: Hobbes, Locke on the State of Nature & Social Contract Theory
Read: FAC PAC vol. A, selections from Hobbes & Locke.

3/19 Classical Liberalism: Locke & Revolution
Read: FAC PAC, vol. A section from Locke's *Two Treatises on Government*

3/21 Classical Liberalism: Locke & Property Rights
Read: FAC PAC, vol. A section from Locke

3/23 ***Paper discussion & writing tips (Friday)***

3/26 Classical Liberalism: Smith & "the Automatic Social Mechanism" of the Free Market
Read: FAC PAC, vol. A sections from Smith

3/28-
3/30 Utilitarianism & John Stuart Mill
Read: FAC PAC vol. A, selections from J.S. Mill's *Democratic Participation; Liberty & the Individual*

***** ***Huxley Paper Due Friday March 30th*** *****

***** **March 31st - April 9th Spring Break**

4/9 Reform Liberalism
Read: FAC PAC A selection from T.H. Green

4/11-
4/13 Conservatism: Edmund Burke & the Critique of Political Idealism
Read: FAC PAC vol. A., selections from Burke and Oakeshott

4/16 Conservative Feminism
Read: FAC PAC vol. B selections from Genesis, Aristotle, Pluarch, Paul, Augustine, Aquinas, Bacon, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche

4/17 Liberal Feminism
Read: FAC PAC vol. B selections from Wollstonecraft, J.S. Mill, Darwin, De Beauvoir, Friedan

4/20-
4/23 Radicalism: Marx's Critique of Liberalism & Conservatism
Read: FAC PAC vol. A. selections from Engels' *Socialism: Utopian & Scientific*

4/25 Radicalism: Marxism & the "Earthquake Theory" of Revolution
Read: FAC PAC vol. A selection from Marx's & Engels *The Communist Manifesto*

4/27-
4/30 Neo-Marxism: the Orthodox School vs. Revisionists
Read: FAC PAC vol. A selections from Bernstein's *Evolutionary Socialism*; Karl Kautsky, Rosa Luxemburg, selections from Lenin's *Imperialism*;

5/2 End of Ideology Debate
Read: FAC PAC vol. A. selections from Fukuyama's *End of History*

***** Final is Tuesday May 8th at 10:10 am-12pm *****

Guidelines for Essay

"Brave New World: Politics & Society in the Year 2012?" (35% of course grade)

Format: essay should comprise **5-6** typed, double-spaced pages; please use 11-10 pt. font.

I. Purpose

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

II. Content

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

Provide only a cursory description of the content of Huxley's *Brave New World*. Assume that the reader is familiar with the plot of the book. (No more than one paragraph.) Provide clear thesis, indicated what themes, thinkers, and works will be used for analysis.

B. Analysis (55% of essay value)

This part of the paper should constitute the major portion of your work. Look for the *ideas* that Huxley draws upon in terms of the political theories covered in class. **Some suggested questions to consider for starting the paper:** Can you identify radical, conservative, and/or liberal ideas in his model community? (To what degree does Huxley mock Plato's notions of ethical truth and justice?)

Also consider: What are the underlying assumptions about human nature? What is the role of the state? And what role does political ideology (Fordism?) play in Huxley's novel? What is the value system of the society? (Look at, for instance, the education system of the different classes: what are they taught, if anything, regarding the party doctrine, slogans, and history?) What are the sources of discontent among the inhabitants? (* These questions are only a suggested list to help you get started, but do not feel confined to only them.)

C. Conclusion: (30% of essay value)

Does Huxley convince the reader that this dystopia is possible or inevitable? Do you see things in our present society that might lead to Huxley's *Brave New World*? And if not, why not?

D. Planning

Part B should comprise the major portion of your paper. Devote no more than a paragraph to Part A, and two paragraphs to Part C.

II. Style (5% or 4 pts of paper value)

A. Additional Reading

You may want to do some additional reading to substantiate your positions for parts IB and IC. However, this is not necessary. You will probably be better served by reviewing lecture and discussion notes, not to mention reading Huxley's work carefully.

B. 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.umt.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.