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PSCI 550.01: Political Theory Graduate Seminar - Negative & Positive Freedom

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Political Science 550
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Spring 2012
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**Political Theory Graduate Seminar:
Negative & Positive Freedom**

*"The word **freedom** is incompletely descriptive. To understand what freedom means, we must know what it is —freedom **from** or freedom **for**."
Maurice Cranston.*

Course Description:

Classical and contemporary political philosophers often speak of *freedom*, (some even make a distinction between liberty and freedom.) Today political leaders and citizens often use the word freedom. But what exactly does freedom mean? There is considerable debate among theorists, and especially among the writers we will examine this semester over whether freedom or "liberty" should be treated as an **end** (good for its own sake) or a **means** (to other human ends or values.) This seminar we will examine both notions of freedom, considering how the embrace of negative or positive freedom can influence a thinker's position on what properly belongs to the public versus the private sphere, the relationship between society's good and the individual's interest or good, as well as what he/she believes are the sources of oppression and its remedy.

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

1. Distinguish between negative and positive freedom, and recognize how this particular analytical framework underlies contemporary political debate.
2. Develop concise, analytic essays on the assigned readings in contemporary theory. Specifically, the student will consider their own position with respect to different approaches to studying political theory and concepts (i.e. 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 strengths and/or weaknesses.

Course Grading:

PS 550 will be taught as a seminar. Short essays (4 pages, doubled-spaced) will be assigned and critiqued in class (55% 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 (25%) will be a take-home essay examination.

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 the **Friday by 12pm** before you are scheduled to orally present it on the following Monday. 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 **Wednesday May 9th by 12pm**.

Required Tests:

Hayek, *Road to Serfdom* ;

Hayek, selections from *The Constitution of Liberty* (scanned?)

T.H. Green, "Liberal Legislation & Freedom of Contract" (scanned?)

Wendell Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom & Community*

Leo Strauss, *Natural Right & History*

Erich Fromm, *Escape From Freedom*

B.F. Skinner, *Beyond Freedom & Dignity*

Arendt, *The Human Condition*

Berlin, *Essays on Liberty*

Ignatieff, *The Needs of Strangers*

Samuel Fleischacker, *A Third Concept of Freedom*

January 23rd Introduction to the Course: Negative v. Positive Freedom

January 30th ***Liberalism & The Two Concepts of Liberty***

Read: Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*; **Choose one of the recommended readings as well.**

Essays (*due **1/27 by 12pm**): What form of liberty, positive or negative, does Hayek embrace and why? What are the problems, if any, do you find in Hayek's conception of liberty?

Essays (**due 1/27 by 12pm**): The right of property should not be confused with the right to unlimited property. But how, given the argument that Hayek makes in *The Road to Serfdom*, can he prevent the one from turning into the other?

Recommended Readings:

Sunstein, "The Road to Serfdom," *The New Republic*, 20 October 1997

Macfarlane, "On Two Concepts of Liberty," *Political Studies*, vol. 14, no. 1 Fall 1966

Cranston, M. *Freedom*

Gray, J. "The Road From Serfdom," *National Review*, 27 April 1992

Hazlett, T. "The Road From Serfdom: An Interview with F.A. Hayek," *Reason*, July 1992

Kumar, A. "F.A. Hayek: Economics and Politics," *Indian Journal of Political Science*, Jan. 1992

Lundstrom, M. "Is Anti-Rationalism Rational? The Case of F.A. Hayek," *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 1992

Miller, D. "F.A. Hayek: Dogmatic Skeptic," *Dissent*, Summer 1994

February 6th

Theories of Liberty & Public Policy/Law

Read: Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty* see selections⁺.
Colorado v. Connelly 479 U. S. 157 (1986)

Essays (due **2/3 by 12pm**): What role(s) for the state would Hayek's theory of freedom support? Why?

Essays: How do the opinions in *Colorado v. Connelly* (1986) illustrate the tensions between negative and positive freedom? How would you have ruled in the case, and why?

February 13th

Positive Freedom

Read: T.H. Green, "Liberal Legislation," (scanned); **Choose one of the recommended readings as well.**

Essays (due **2/10 by 12pm**): Is private property truly "private"? If so, why? If not, why not?

Essays (due **2/10 by 12pm**): "What we mean by freedom makes sense only when viewed against a background of more and less significant purposes." What does Green mean, and what does his position tell us about the conception of positive freedom?

Recommended Readings:

Anderson, O, "The Feminism of T.H. Green...,"
History of Political Thought, Winter 1991
Bevir, M. "Welfarism, Socialism, and Religion...,"
The Review of Politics, Fall 1993
Etzioni, A. *Rights & the Common Good*
Harris, P., "Moral Progress & Politics: The Theory of
T.H. Green," *Polity*, Spring 1989
Nichols, D. "Positive Liberty: 1880-1890," *Amer. Pol.
Sci. Rev.* , March 1962
Simhony, A. "Was T.H. Green a Utilitarian?,"
Utilitas, May 1995
"T.H. Green: The Common Good Society,"
History of Political Thought, Summer 1993

February 20th * * * * No class, President's Day Holiday

February 27th ***Communitarians, Conservatives (Radical?) & Liberty***
Read: Wendell Barry, *Sex Economy, Freedom &*
Community; ***May choose one of the recommended***
readings as well.

Essays (**due 2/24 by 12pm**): "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 does Barry
mean here? Is he correct? Why, why not?

Essay (**due 2/24 by 12pm**): As one recent critic has
noted: "This language (of communitarian theory)
promise(s) much — a growth of mutual awareness, active
concerned with citizenship, healthy caring neighborhoods,
and heightened civic awareness. . . The problem with this
language, despite its seductive appeal, is that it also relies
upon a remarkably vague and indeterminate concept,
namely, 'community,'" (see Andrew Vincent, *The Nature of
Political Theory*, p. 158). Can Wendell Barry be defended
against this criticism? Why, why not?

Recommended Readings:

W. Barry, *What Are People For*
Lewis Mumford, *The Human Condition*
Reinhold Niebuhr, *Children of Light & Darkness*
Andrew Vincent, *The Nature of Political Theory* (2004)

March 5th

Negative Freedom v. Classical Political Philosophy
Read: Strauss, *Natural Right & History*; **Choose one of the recommended readings as well.**

Essays (**due 3/2 by 12pm**): It's argued that American neo-conservatives are students of Leo Strauss. In what sense, can we say they understand and/or misunderstand Strauss's conception of democratic freedom and rights?

Essays (**due 3/2 by 12pm**): Jeffery Hart lists one variety of conservative thought as "Natural law conservatism," which deduces principles of behavior from the fact of 'human' nature as distinct from other kinds of nature, and on that account resists moral change based on fashion, historical accident, or false analogies between human nature and other kinds. Conservatism of this kind, he thinks, "is found in Aristotle, Aquinas, Burke, and today in *Leo Strauss* (italics added.) In light of your reading, discuss this statement.

Recommended Readings:

Alen Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*
John Diggins, *The Promise of Pragmatism*, 1994
T.S. Eliot, "The Waste Land," *Selected Poems*
C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letter*
Oakeshott, *Religion, Politics, and the Moral Life*
John Gunnell, *Political Theory, Tradition & Interpretation*
Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*
"Strauss, Philosophy, and Politics," (Symposium) *Political Theory*, August 1987
J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*
Herbert Storing (ed.) *Essays on the Scientific Study of Politics*
A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*
Ernest Fortin, "Gadamer on Strauss," *Interpretation*, Jan. 1984
Gadamer, *Truth and Method*

March 12th

Freedom & Critical Theory

Read: Fromm, *Escape From Freedom*; **Choose one of the recommended readings as well.**

Essays (**due 3/9th by 12pm**): "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 3/9th by 12pm**): Fromm, in common with other writers on the left, has a concept of alienation. What is it? What addition to the concept of alienation does he make, and how would orthodox Marxists find it objectionable? Finally, has the concept of alienation become outdated, too blunt for an analytical tool?

Recommended Readings:

Birnback, *Neo-Freudian Social Philosophy*, 1961

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

Fromm, *Man For Himself*

Anatomy of Human Destructiveness

Tucker, *The Marxian Revolutionary Idea*

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

March 19th

Fromm's Humanist Vision of Freedom

Read: Fromm, *Escape From Freedom*

Essays (**due 3/16 by 1pm**): Fromm and Hayek both fear fascism, but they disagree on what causes it. Discuss. How do their respective positions also illustrate the differences in their conceptions of freedom?

Essays (**due 3/16 by 12pm**): Man is rational, says Fromm, not because he always thinks or acts rationally but because he has this need to rationalize whatever he does. (p. 67 hardback ed.; pp. 85-86 paperback ed.) What does Fromm mean? What does it mean (to you) to say that people behave or fail to behave in a rational way?

Recommended Reading:

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

Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd*

March 26th

Political Theory as Empirical Inquiry

Read: Skinner, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*

Essays: (due **3/23 by 12pm**): 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?

Essays: (due **3/23 by 12pm**): If Skinner had his way, we would have no alternative but to choose between science or democratic freedom. Why? Is this a valid choice? Why, why not?

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

- Crowder, G. "Negative and Positive Liberty," *Political Science*, Dec. 1988
- Kristjansson, K. "What Is Wrong with Positive Liberty?," *Social Theory and Practice*, Fall 1992
- Hayman, S. "Positive and Negative Liberty," *Chicago-Kent Law Review*, 1992

April 30th

Analytical Inquiry & Contemporary Theory

Read: M. Ignatieff, *The Needs of Strangers* and see another secondary source below; and Fleischacker's *Third Concept of Freedom* (it will be required for writing the final exam)

Essays (due **4/27 by 12pm**): Ignatieff's argument appears to move between negative and positive freedom. Does his work privilege one conception of freedom over another?

Essays (due **4/27 by 12pm**): John Stuart Mill identified three tasks that should constitute the vocation of political theory: first, theorists should identify the fundamental or ultimate principles that help determine moral standards in our thinking about politics; second, theorists must also engage in some form of empirical inquiry into the conditions necessary for realizing political ideals; third, (and more controversial) the same theorists must persuade others that their vision of politics is the best, and motivate people to take actions that will make the world a reflection of their theory. How well does Ignatieff satisfy all three tasks? Do you agree that theorists should concern themselves with this third task? If so, why; if not, why not?

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).

Final & Field exam are due – **May 9th by 12 pm.**