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PSC 250E.01: Introduction to Political Theory

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University of Montana
Department of Political Science

PSC 150E

Summer 2010 (1st Five Week Session)

M-Th 11:30-1:20pm

Office Hrs: Tues/Thurs 1030-11:30am

Or by appointment after class.

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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:

Plato, *The Republic*

Aristotle, *The Politics and the Constitution of Athens*

Marx & Engels, *Communist Manifesto*

Fac Packet A, "Western Political Theory"

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

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 p. 21 for criteria on Incomplete Grades.

Course Schedule:

5/24	Introduction to the Course; Philosophy v Politics & Plato’s Indictment <u>Read:</u> Plato, <i>The Republic</i> , Book I & II
5/25	Plato's Indictment cont.; Organic Theory of the State <u>Read:</u> <i>The Republic</i> , Books III & IV
5/26	Utopianism: Plato's Ideal State & Perfect Justice: Community of Wives, Children & Property; Possibility of the Ideal State: the Ship & Cave Allegories <u>Read:</u> <i>The Republic</i> , Book V, VI, VII
5/27	Decline of the Ideal State; Plato v. Aristotle <u>Read:</u> <i>The Republic</i> , Books VIII & IX Essays (due 5/27): What part(s) of the soul do Thrasymachus and Glaucon appear to personify? Consider how each of them defines justice.
5/31	* * * * * Memorial Day Holiday * * * * *
6/1- 6/2	Aristotle: Aristotle's Biological Analysis: Family, Village, Polis; Classifications of Constitutions <u>Read:</u> Aristotle, <i>Politics</i> , Books I, II, III, IV
6/2- 6/3	Aristotle on Revolution; Classical Liberalism: Introduction <u>Read:</u> Aristotle, <i>Politics</i> , Book V Essays (due 6/3): What does Aristotle find wrong about Plato’s utopia? Do you agree with his criticisms? Why or why not? See Aristotle’s <i>Politics</i> Book II

- *** June 7th Midterm: Plato & Aristotle ***
- 6/8 Classical Liberalism: Locke on Natural Rights, the Social Contract Theory, and Revolution
Read: FAC PAC vol. I selection from Hobbes' *Leviathan*, Locke's *Two Treatises*
- 6/9 Classical Liberalism: Locke & Property Rights; Adam Smith
Read: Packet selections from Locke's *Two Treatises*, and Smith
- 6/10 Smith cont./ Utilitarianism
Read: Packet selections from J.S. Mill's *Democratic Participation; Liberty & the Individual*
 Essays (due **6/10**): What, if anything, is wrong with Locke's case for "natural rights"? Is there anything wrong with his "natural right to revolution?"
- 6/14 Utilitarianism cont./ J.S. Mill
- 6/15 J.S. Mill & Reform Liberalism
Read: Packet selections from J.S. Mill's *Democratic Participation; Liberty & the Individual*
- 6/16 Conservatism: Edmund Burke & the Critique of Political Idealism
Read: Packet selections on Burke, Wordsworth, and Oakeshott
- 6/17 Radicalism: Marx's Critique of Conservatism & Liberalism
Read: Packet selection from Marx & Engels' *The Communist Manifesto*
 Essays (due **6/17**): Is there a conservative tradition in America?
- 6/21 Marxism & the "Automatic Historical & Scientific Mechanism"
Read: Packet selection from Marx & Engels' *The Communist Manifesto*
- 6/22-6/23 Neo-Marxism: the Orthodox School vs. Revisionists
Read: Packet selections from Bernstein's *Evolutionary Socialism*;
 *Karl Kautsky, * Rosa Luxemburg (*Select Readings On Reserve)
- 6/24 Final