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PSC 150E.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

PSC 150E

Summer 2003 (1st Five Week Session)

M-F 10:50-12:20pm

Office Hrs: MTWThF 10-10:50am

Dr. Grey

Office: LA 353

Phone: 243-2105

email: rgrey@selway.umt.edu

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 ideologies— liberalism, conservatism, Marxism, feminism etc.— that have shaped our contemporary political dialogues. We will conclude the course with the "end of ideology" debate.

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, Marx, and Gilman.
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 and post-modern feminism.
3. Complete (and orally defend) 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*

Fac Packet, "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** (30% of course grade), and a 3-page, double-spaced **interpretive essay** (30%) and a **final** (30% 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.

- Making up policy: students must provide a doctor's note, funeral notice, or letter from a coach to make up the midterm, essay, or final.
- If a student elects to take the course as a Pass or No Pass, he or she should be aware that a total of 65pts or lower will be a NP.
- Please see me and UM catalog p. 21 for criteria on Incomplete Grades.

Course Schedule:

- 5/27 Introduction to the Course; Plato's Indictment
Read: Plato, *The Republic*, Book I & II
- 5/28 Plato's Organic Theory of the State
Read: *The Republic*, Books III & IV
- 5/29 Utopianism: Plato's Ideal State & Perfect Justice: Community of Wives, Children & Property
Read: *The Republic*, Book V
- 5/30 Read: *The Republic*, Book VI
Essays (due 5/29): What part(s) of the soul do Thrasymachus and Glaucon appear to personify? Consider how each of them defines justice.
- 6/2 Possibility of the Ideal State: the Ship & Cave Allegories
Read: *The Republic*, Book VII
- 6/3 Decline of the Ideal State; Plato v. Aristotle
Read: *The Republic*, Books VIII & IX
- 6/4 Aristotle: Aristotle's Biological Analysis: Family, Village, Polis
Read: Aristotle, *Politics*, Books I & II

- 6/5 Aristotle's Classification of Constitutions
Read: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book III
- 6/6 Read: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book IV
 Essays (due 6/5): What does Aristotle find wrong about Plato's utopia? Do you agree with his criticisms? Why or why not? See Aristotle's *Politics* Book II
- 6/9 Aristotle on Revolution; Classical Liberalism: Introduction
Read: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book V
- *** June 10th Midterm: Plato & Aristotle ***
- 6/11 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*
- 6/12 Classical Liberalism: Locke & Property Rights; Adam Smith
Read: Packet selections from Locke's *Two Treatises*, and Smith
- 6/13 Essays (due 6/12): What, if anything, is wrong with Locke's case for "natural rights"? Is there anything wrong with his "natural right to revolution?"
- 6/16 Utilitarianism
Read: Packet selections from J.S. Mill's *Democratic Participation; Liberty & the Individual*
- 6/17 J.S. Mill & Reform Liberalism
- 6/18-
 6/19 Conservatism: Edmund Burke & the Critique of Political Idealism
Read: Packet selections on Burke, Wordsworth, and Oakeshott
- 6/20 Essays (due 6/19): Is there a conservative tradition in America?

- 6/23 Radicalism: Marx's Critique of Conservatism & Liberalism
Read: Packet selection from Marx & Engels' *The Communist Manifesto*
- 6/24 Marxism & the "Automatic Historical & Scientific Mechanism"
Read: Packet selection from Marx & Engels' *The Communist Manifesto*
- 6/25 Neo-Marxism: the Orthodox School vs. Revisionists
Read: Packet selections from Bernstein's *Evolutionary Socialism*;
 *Karl Kautsky, * Rosa Luxemburg (*Select
 Readings On Reserve)
- 6/26 Lenin, Stalin & Totalitarianism
Read: Packet selection from Lenin's
 Imperialism etc., and Trotsky's *Permanent Revolution*
- 6/27 Final