

University of Montana

ScholarWorks at University of Montana

University of Montana Course Syllabi

Open Educational Resources (OER)

Fall 9-1-2001

PSC 353E.01: Modern Political Theory

Ramona Grey

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

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/syllabi>

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Grey, Ramona, "PSC 353E.01: Modern Political Theory" (2001). *University of Montana Course Syllabi*. 7034.

<https://scholarworks.umt.edu/syllabi/7034>

This Syllabus is brought to you for free and open access by the Open Educational Resources (OER) at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in University of Montana Course Syllabi by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.

University of Montana
Political Science Department

PSC 353E
Fall 2002?
MWF

Dr. Grey
Office: LA 353
Phone: 243-2105
Office Hrs.

Modern Political Theory

Course Description:

This semester we will examine the following questions with regard to several political theorists.

- (1) What is "classical" about classical political thought? What is "modern" about modern political thought? Is there one, two, or more traditions of political thought?
- (2) What difficulties are involved in making a view of human nature the basis of a political theory?
- (3) Should political theory concern itself with establishing standards of human conduct?
- (4) Does labeling a political argument or theorist (say, "conservative," "liberal," or "radical") help us to understand it or him?

This course will be conducted as a seminar with some lecturing.

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

1. Recognize the differences between modern and classical theory regarding the purpose of political inquiry, the origins of the state, and nature of a "good life."
2. Identify and assess the various tests or criteria (such as relevance, significance, or ethical considerations) that can be used to establish the value of a theoretical argument or theorist.
3. Present and orally defend (and if necessary revise) a series of interpretive, analytical essays which examine a thinker's ideas about human nature, justice, social obligation, and political legitimacy.
4. Orally critique an essay in terms of its analytical clarity, accuracy in its interpretation of the readings, and the logic of its conclusion.
5. Develop a coherent position with regards to ethical idealism and political realism, elitism and democratic doctrine, individualism and communitarianism etc. The goal of the course work, overall, is to encourage students not only to learn about modern thinkers, but to learn how to think theoretically about politics.

To achieve the above objectives— Course Grading:

This course will be taught as a seminar. Each student will submit and orally defend in class 3-4 critical essays (45% of course grade), not to exceed four double-spaced pages. The essays will be assigned weekly and are due *no later* than the class period before you are scheduled to orally defend it. (For topics, see below.) If you are absent the day we are scheduled to discuss your essay, you will not get credit for it. At least one essay will be revised and resubmitted. In addition, each student will complete a take-home final (45% of course grade.) Finally, each student will be graded on class *participation* and attendance (10% of course grade.) This includes being prepared on a **daily** basis to discuss the readings and the essays. *It does not honor a writer ...to read him or her without seeking to challenge him or her.*

Cautionary note: if you are absent more than 3xs, three attendance points will be deducted for every absence thereafter. Excused absences require a medical note for illness, injury, family emergency, or letter from instructor for field trips, ASUM service, music/drama performances, intercollegiate athletics, military service. Instructor will also excuse absences for reasons of mandatory public service.

Required Texts:

Hobbes, *Leviathan*
Locke, *Second Treatise On Government*
Rousseau, *The Social Contract*
Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*
James Mill, *An Essay on Government* (see packet)
J.S. Mill, *On Liberty*
Marx and Engles, *The Communist Manifesto* & Masc. works (see packet)

Course Schedule:

8/30- Introduction to the Course
9/3 Political Theory: the Search for Standards, Rules and Laws
Read: Hobbes, Leviathan, "Dedication of Godolphin,"
"Introduction"

9/6 Labor Day- No Class

9/8 Thomas Hobbes's View of Human Nature
Read: Hobbes, Leviathan, Part I (Chaps. I-IV)

9/10 Hobbes' Social Contract Theory
Read: Leviathan, Part I (Chaps. XI-XVI)

9/12 Hobbes & the "Natural Man"
Essays (due 9/10): Consider Hobbes' analysis of human nature—
is it brutish man or brutish conditions? How does an emphasis on one or the
other affect the theorist's vision of the predicament?

9/15 Leviathan: The Seat of Power
Read: Leviathan, Part II

9/17 Hobbes & Constitutionalism
Essays (due 9/15): Does Hobbes' theory of constitutionalism
rest upon a "moralist" or a "realist" view of law? Or both?

9/20 Hobbes' Critics
Read: Leviathan, Part II

9/22- Hobbes' "Political Science"
9/27

- 11/1 James Mill: Leadership of the Middle Rank cont.
- 11/1- John Stuart Mill & Liberty
 11/8 Read: On Liberty, Chaps. 1-2
 Essay (11/3): "Mill's opposition to unbridled majority rule, far from being anti-democratic, is of the very essence of democracy."
- 11/10 John Stuart Mill's Liberalism
 Read: On Liberty, Chaps. 3-4
 Essays (due 11/5: "Mill's is not so much a defense of liberty, as a defense of politics." (2)
- 11/10- Edmund Burke's Conservatism
 11/12 Read: Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, pp. 83- 167.
- 11/15 Read: Burke, pp. 167-253.
 Essays (due 11/12): "Burke's attack on abstractions (such as the 'rights of man') leads him to defend what is most expedient (or against what is 'right') or to conjure up other abstractions to stand for those he rejects."
 (2)
- 11/17 Burke cont.
 Read: Burke, pp. 253-377.
 Essays (due 11/15): "If every political theorist is in his heart of hearts a utopian, then Burke is that rare exception."
- 11/19- Socialism Bkgd; Marx's Critique of Conservatism
 11/22 Read: Marx's *Communist Manifesto* {Packet}
 Essays (due 11/19): What would Marx find wrong with the conservative's analysis of history?
- November 24-28th Thanksgiving Break
- 11/29- Marx's Social Criticism & Dialectics
 12/1 Read: Marx & Engels selections {Packet}
- 12/3 Marx & Engels' Theory of Revolution
 Read: Marx & Engels selections {Packet}
- 12/6 Marx & Engels Radicalism
 Essays (due 12/3): "It is only because of the belief in the inevitability of progress that Marx thought it possible to dispense with ethical considerations."
- 12/8 "What is to be done?"
 Neo-Marxism: Classical & Revisionism
 Read: * Kautsky, Bernstein, Luxemburg (on reserve under PSC 150)

Essays (due 12/6): "The validity of Marxism as a political doctrine stands or falls on its assertion that the proletariat is the historical force which will bring about socialism."

12/10 End of Political Theory?

Essays (due 12/8): Does labeling a political argument or theorist ("conservative," "liberal," or "radical") help us to understand it or him?

* * * * *Final Due December 13th by 5 p.m. ***