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Spring 2-1-2010

### PSC 250E.01: Introduction to Political Theory

Ramona Grey

University of Montana - Missoula, [ramona.grey@umontana.edu](mailto:ramona.grey@umontana.edu)

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**University of Montana**  
**Department of Political Science**

**PSC 250E**  
**Spring 2010**  
MWF 10:10-11

TAs: Ms Pettit & Ms Lawson

**Dr. Grey**  
Office: LA 352  
Phone: 243-2721  
Email: Ramona.grey@umontana.edu  
Office Hrs: MWF 11-12

*Introduction to Political Theory*

**Course Description:**

Introduction to Political Theory (PSC 150) 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 the *public* and the *private*. We will begin by considering the tension between politics and 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 ideology" 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, nor as good (as Plato suggests), then how does one avoid being labeled an ideologue? Lastly, what does it mean to you when someone says that "today it is no longer possible to construct a genuine political philosophy"?

**Texts:**

Plato, *The Republic*

Aristotle, *Politics*

B.F. Skinner's *Walden Two*

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 utopian novel, examining how the ethical ideas of western political thinkers, including Plato, are embraced and/or negated. (See attached Paper Guidelines)

**Grading:**

The work of the course consists of reading all assignments, participating in discussions 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 a *critical essay* of Skinner's *Walden Two* (35% of course grade.)\* Please see attached for instructions on the Skinner 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:**

- 1/25 Introduction to the Course  
Read: Plato, *The Republic*, Book I & II
  
- 1/27- Plato's Indictment  
1/29 Read: Plato, *The Republic*, Books III & IV
  
- 2/1- Plato's Organic Theory of the State  
2/3 Read: *The Republic*, Book V
  
- 2/5- Utopianism: Plato's Ideal State & Perfect Justice: Community of Wives  
2/8 Children, and Property  
Read: *The Republic*, Book VI  
Recommend: Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* ; Charles Fourier, *Social Organization*
  
- 2/10- Possibility of the Ideal State: the Ship & Cave Allegories  
2/12 Read: *The Republic*, Book VII
  
- \* \* \* \* \* **February 15<sup>th</sup> Monday, President's Day Holiday. . .no class** \* \* \* \* \*
  
- 2/17 Decline of the Ideal State  
Read: *The Republic*, Books VIII & IX
  
- 2/19 Plato v. Aristotle  
Read: Aristotle, *Politics*, Books I & II
  
- 2/22 Review & Discussion of Plato
  
- \* \* \* \* \* **February 24<sup>th</sup> Wednesday** \* \* \* \* \* **Midterm Part I: Plato's Republic** \* \* \* \* \*
  
- 2/26 Aristotle: Politics As Science  
Read: Aristotle, *Politics*, Books I & II
  
- 3/1- Aristotle's Biological Analysis: Family, Village, Polis  
3/3 Read: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book III
  
- 3/5 Aristotle's Classification of Constitutions  
Read: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book IV
  
- 3/8- Aristotle on Revolution  
3/10 Read: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book V

3/12 Classical Liberalism: Introduction

3/15 Review & Discuss Aristotle

**\*\*\*\*\* March 17<sup>th</sup> Wednesday, Midterm Part II: Aristotle's *Politics* \*\*\*\*\***

3/19 Classical Liberalism: Hobbes, Locke on the State of Nature & Social Contract Theory  
Read: FAC PAC vol. See section from Hobbes' *Leviathan*, Locke's *Toleration and Treatise on Government*; **FAC PAC vol.A**, selections from Hobbes & Locke.

3/22 Classical Liberalism: Locke & Revolution  
Read: FAC PAC, vol. A section from Locke's *Two Treatises on Government*

3/24 Classical Liberalism: Locke & Property Rights  
Read: FAC PAC, vol. A section from Locke

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

**\*\*\*\*\* March 29<sup>th</sup>- April 4th Spring Break . . . . .**

**++Reading Skinner's *Walden Two***

4/5- Utilitarianism & John Stuart Mill  
4/7 Read: FAC PAC vol. A, selections from J.S. Mill's *Democratic Participation; Liberty & the Individual*

4/9- Conservatism: Edmund Burke & the Critique of Political Idealism  
4/12 Read: FAC PAC vol. A., selections from Burke, Wordsworth, Oakeshott

4/14 Conservative Feminism  
Read: **FAC PAC vol. B** selections from Genesis, Aristotle, Pluarch, Paul, Augustine, Aquinas, Bacon, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche

**\*\*\*\*\*Skinner Paper Due Wednesday, April 14th \*\*\*\*\***

**\*\*\*\*\* No Class Friday April 16<sup>th</sup> due to UG Conference \*\*\*\*\***

4/19 Liberal Feminism  
Read: FAC PAC vol. B selections from Wollstonecraft, J.S. Mill, Darwin, De Beauvoir, Montagu, Friedan

4/21- Radicalism: Marx's Critique of Liberalism & Conservatism  
4/23 Read: **FAC PAC vol. A**. selections from Engels' *Socialism: Utopian & Scientific*

4/26 Radicalism: Marxism & the "Earthquake Theory" of Revolution  
Read: FAC PAC vol. A selection from Marx's & Engels *The Communist Manifesto*

4/28- Neo-Marxism: the Orthodox School vs. Revisionists  
4/30 Read: FAC PAC vol. A selections from Bernstein's *Evolutionary Socialism*; \*Karl Kautsky, \* Rosa Luxemburg (\*Select Readings On Reserve)

- 5/3 Neo-Marxism: Lenin, Stalin  
Read: FAC PAC vol., A selections from Lenin's *Imperialism*; \*George V. Plekhanov (\*On Reserve)
- 5/5 End of Ideology Debate  
Read: FAC PAC vol. A. selections from Fukuyama's *End of History*
- 5/7 Review for Comprehensive Final  
Read: Lecture notes & review selected readings.

\*\*\*\*\* **Final is Monday, May 10<sup>th</sup> at 10:10 am-12pm** \*\*\*\*\*

### Guidelines for Essay

#### **"Walden Two: Politics & Society in the Year 2010?"** (35% of course grade)

Format: essay should comprise **5-6** typed, double-spaced pages; please use 12-10 pt. font.

#### I. Purpose

A. Objective: Provide **an analytical essay** comparing and contrasting the ideas/themes found in B.F. Skinner's *Walden II* with the political theories we have covered in the course. An interpretive essay is not a book review or an editorial. A good essay supports its analysis with direct references to the novel, showing the extent to which Skinner borrows, satirizes, and/or negates the ideas of other western political thinkers.

#### II. Content

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

Do not provide more than a cursory description of the content of Skinner's *Walden II*. Assume that the reader is familiar with the plot of the book. (No more than one paragraph.) Provide a clear **thesis**, indicating what themes, theorists, and/or works will be used in your analysis.

##### B. Analysis (60% of essay value)

This part of the paper should constitute the major portion of your work. Look for the *ideas* that Skinner draws upon in terms of ideologies covered in class. Can you identify radical, conservative, and/or liberal ideas in his model community? (To what degree does Skinner mock conservative, or liberal or socialist notions of justice?)

Also consider: Also consider: What are the underlying assumptions about human nature? What is the role of the state? And what role does political ideology (science?) play in Skinner's novel? What is the value system of the society? (Look at, for instance, the education system: what and how are people taught? What are the sources of discontent, if any, 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 Skinner convince the reader that this utopia is desirable **or** possible? Do you see things in our present society that might lead to Skinner's *Walden II*? And if not, why not? We are looking for your ability to come to logical conclusions concerning the "real world" of society and politics.

D. Planning

Part B should comprise the major portion of your paper. In other words, do not spend 2 1/2 pages on analysis and 3 1/2 pages on your conclusion. Conclusion should not consist of more than a paragraph or two.

II. Style

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 assigned reading material, not to mention reading Skinner'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.)

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.