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PSC 550.01: Political Theory Seminar - Approaches to Political Theory

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Spring 2004
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**Political Theory 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.) 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 forms 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 interests, 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 analytical framework influences contemporary political discourse.
2. Develop concise, analytic essays on the assigned readings in contemporary theory. Specifically with regards to an analytic perspective, the student will consider their own position with respect to different approaches to studying political theory (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 534 will be taught as a seminar. Short essays (6-7 per student) 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.

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** before you are scheduled to orally present it.) Late essays will not be accepted. The final will be a take-home essay examination.

Required Tests:

Hayek, *Road to Serfdom* ;

Hayek, selections from *The Constitution of Liberty* (on reserve)

Andrew Schmookler, *The Illusion of Choice*

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

Krutch, *The Modern Temper*

Leo Strauss, *Sex, Natural Right & History*

Erich Fromm, *Escape From Freedom*

Arendt, *The Human Condition*

Berlin, *Essays on Liberty*

Selected readings on Arendt & post-modern feminism (on reserve)

January 27th Introduction to the Course: Negative v. Positive Freedom

February 3rd ***Liberalism & The Two Concepts of Liberty***

Read: Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*;

Essays (*due 2/30 by 2pm): 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?

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 10th

Theories of Liberty & Public Policy/Law

Read: Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty* (on reserve)
Colorado v. Connelly (1986)

Essays (due 2/6 by 2pm): 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 17th

Positive Freedom

Read: T.H. Green, "Liberal Legislation," (handout);
Essays (due 2/13): Is private property truly "private"?
If so, why? If not, why not?

Essays (due 2/13): "What we mean by freedom makes sense only when viewed against a background of more and less significant purposes." What does Green mean, and is he correct?

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 24th

Capitalism, Choice & Liberty

Read: Andrew Schmookler, *The Illusion of Choice*

Essays (due 2/20): "No wonder we think we are getting what we want. We have been taught to want what we get." When speaking of *government*, however, Schmookler insists that it's only legitimate when the consent of the governed is given "freely." Can these two statements be reconciled?

Essays (2/20): "Freedom requires order." Discuss Schmookler's statement.

March 2nd

Freedom, Individualism, & "the Modern Temper"

Read: Krutch *The Modern Temper*

Essays (due 2/27): What does Krutch's account of modern art, modern science and modern knowledge suggest about human dignity? Does it make sense to speak of individual "freedom" and "rights" in the *modern* world?

Recommended Readings:

Cowley, *Exile's Return*, 1959

Diggins, *Up From Communism: Conservative Odyssey In American Intellectual History*, 1975

Frankel, *The Case for Modern Man*, 1955

Grey, "Modern Liberalism & Despair, The Pilgrimage of J.W. Krutch," *American Studies*, Spring 1997

Perry, "The Modern Distemper," *Saturday Review of Literature*, June 1929

Kateb, *Utopia & Its Enemies*, 1963

Margolis, *Joseph Wood Krutch: A Writer's Life*, 1980

Nash, *The Nervous Generation: American Thought, 1917-1930*, 1970

Slater, "The Negative Secularism of The Modern Temper: Joseph Wood Krutch," *American Quarterly*, Summer 1981

March 9th

Negative Freedom v. Classical Political Philosophy

Read: Strauss, *Natural Right & History*

Essays (due 3/5): Apparently, present administration policy-makers in international relations are students Leo Strauss. In what sense, can we say they understand and/or misunderstand Strauss's conception of democratic freedom?

Essays (due 3/5): 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*

Niebuhr, *Children of Light/Children of Darkness*

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 16th

Freedom & Critical Theory

Read: Fromm, *Escape From Freedom*

Essays (due 3/12th): "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 3/12th): Fromm, in common with other writers on the left, has a concept of alienation. What is it? 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 23rd

Fromm's Humanist Vision of Freedom

Read: Fromm, *Escape From Freedom*

Essays (due 3/19): Does it make sense to you to distinguish between interests and *real* interests? Would you join with Fromm in establishing a *rational* political system? (Or is the separation of interests from real interests elitist, and therefore unacceptable? Explain.

Essays (due 3/19): "Freud's relativist position. . . assumes that psychology can help us to understand (what's behind) value judgments but cannot help in establishing the validity of value judgments themselves." In observing as

much, Fromm seems to have put his finger on our modern predicament. What problems does this "modern predicament" pose for the social critic (including Fromm) who wishes to defend positive freedom?

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 27th-April 4th Spring Break

April 6th

Freedom, The Public and The Private

Read: Arendt, *The Human Condition*

Essays (due 4/5 by 3pm): Arendt is critical of Marxism, yet how does her indictment of modern society parallel Fromm's? Is her diagnosis of modern alienation prone to the same analytic &/or empirical weaknesses?

Essays (due 4/5): Arendt argues that in the beginning of the modern period, work had displaced both contemplation and action in the hierarchy of men's activities; but by the nineteenth century labour had replaced work as the supreme activity. How did this triumph of *animal laborans* come about according to Arendt?

Recommended Reading:

Special Issue on Hannah Arendt, *Social Research*, 1977

Kateb, "Freedom & Worldliness in the Thought of Hannah Arendt," *Political Theory*, Spring 1977

Kateb, *Hannah Arendt*

Canovan, "The Contradictions of Hannah Arendt's

Political Thought," *Political Theory*, February 1978

Levin, "On Animal Laborans and Homo Politicus in
Arendt, *Political Theory*, November 1979
Arendt, *On Revolution*
Between Past and Future
The Life of the Mind
Pitkin, "Justice: On Relating Private and Public,"
Political Theory, August 1981

April 13th

Arendt cont.

Read: *The Human Condition*

Essays (due 4/9 by 2pm): How does Arendt's distinction between public and private relate to her distinction between work and labor. . .or does it?

Essays (due 4/9): How does Arendt's distinction between public and private related to her indictment of negative freedom. . .or does it?

Recommended Readings:

Young-Bruehl, "Reflections on Hannah Arendt's Life of the Mind," *Political Theory*, May 1982

Whitfield, *Into The Dark: Arendt and Totalitarianism*

Dallmayr, "Ontology of Freedom," *Political Theory*, May 1984

Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*

Raaflaub, "Democracy, Oligarchy and the Concept of the Free Citizen in Late Fifth Century Athens,"
Political Theory, November 1983

Canovan, "A Case of Distorted Communications," *Political Theory*, February 1983

April 20nd

Post-Modern Feminism & End of Political Philosophy?

Read: Mary Dietz, "Hannah Arendt & Feminist Politics," in *Feminist Interpretations & Political Theory*, eds. Shanley & Pateman*; Rosemarie Tong, *Feminist Thought*, "Postmodern Feminism;" *Feminists Theorize the Political, eds. Judith Butler & Joan Scott,* on reserve

Essays (due 4/16) How might a "post-modern" feminist critique Arendt? What, if anything, would they find useful in Arendt's analysis?

Essays (due 4/16): Can feminist political theory avoid assuming "a privileged epistemological perspective" or a generalizable "female" freedom in society? Explain. If not, what are the consequences?

Recommended Readings:

Michele Barrett, *Women's Oppression Today: Problems in Marxist Feminist Analysis*

Ann Bookmann & Sandra Morgan, *Women & the Politics of Empowerment*

Nancy Chodrow, *The Reproduction of Mothering*

Zillah Eisenstein, *The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*

Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*

Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature*

Susan Okin, *Women in Western Political Thought*

Hanna Pitkin, "Food & Freedom in *The Founder*," *Political Theory*, 12, 1984

April 27th-

May 4th

Negative & Positive Liberty Conclusions

Read: Berlin, "Introduction" and "Two Concepts of Liberty"

Essays (due 4/23): "Berlin's defense of negative liberty leads him into the position of defending the status quo." Comment

Essays (due 4/23): "Absolute negative liberty, like absolute positive liberty, ends up destroying that which it prizes most—liberty."

Recommended Readings:

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

Final – Due Thursday, May 13th at 3:10pm.