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PSC 550.01: Political Theory Seminar - Negative & Positive Freedom

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Spring 2001
Dr. Grey
LA 353

**Political Theory Seminar:
Negative & Positive Freedom**

"The world 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 (60% of course grade.) Class participation (15% 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 (25% of course grade-for undergrads) will be part of comprehensive exam for graduate students.

Required Tests:

Hayek, *Road to Serfdom*; selections from *The Constitution of Liberty* (on reserve)
T.H. Green, "Liberal Legislation & Freedom of Contract" (handout)
Lippmann, *The Public Philosophy*
Krutch, *The Modern Temper*
Leo Strauss, *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)

Schedule:

January 30th Introduction to the Course: Negative v. Positive Freedom

February 6th ***Liberalism & The Two Concepts of Liberty***
Read: Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*;
Essays (*due 2/5 by 5pm): 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 13th ***Theories of Liberty & Public Policy/Law***
Read: Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty* (on reserve)
Colorado v. Connelly (1986)
Essays (due 2/12 by 5pm): 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 20th

Positive Freedom

Read: T.H. Green, "Liberal Legislation," (handout);

Essays (due 2/13): The right to property should not be confused with the right to unlimited property. So how, given the argument of Green, might we prevent the one from turning into the other without relinquishing a commitment to liberty?

Essays (due 2/13): "What T.H. Green understood, Hayek did not; namely, personal liberty is dependent upon legal rights and social obligations." Discuss

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. "What T.H. Green a Utilitarian?," *Utilitas*, May 1995
"T.H. Green: The Common Good Society," *History of Political Thought*, Summer 1993

February 27th

The Public Philosophy & Liberty

Read: Lippmann, *The Public Philosophy*

Essays (due 2/26 by 5pm): Clearly, for Lippmann the "public interest" and "the people's will" are not the same. Why not? What problems does this distinction pose for democratic theory?

Essays (due 2/26 by 5pm): To cure our ailing democracy, Lippmann recommends that we repair the rupture in "the continuity of the traditions of civility." What does he mean by "traditions of civility?" Would his political prescription take us forward, backward? Is this good or bad?

Recommended Readings:

- John Diggins, "From Pragmatism to Natural Law; Walter Lippmann's Quest for the Foundations of Legitimacy," *Political Theory*, vol. 19, Nov. 1991

John Dewey, *The Public & Its Problems*, (1927)
W. Lippmann, *A Preface to Politics* (1914)
Public Opinion (1922); *A Preface to Morals* (1929)
Stavrolpoulos, P. "Liberal Dilemmas, Conservative Problems. . ."
Australian Journal of Political Science, Nov. 1993

March 6th

Freedom, Individualism, & "the Modern Temper"

Read: Krutch *The Modern Temper*

Essays (due 3/5 by 5pm): 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 13th

Negative Freedom v. Classical Political Philosophy

Read: Strauss, *Natural Right & History*

Essays (due 3/12 by 5pm): Critically examine what Strauss means by "natural right." In what sense, can we say its a positive right?

Essays (due 3/12 by 5pm): 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.

Essays: How does Strauss extricate himself from the commonplace notion that we are all historical beings? Is the idea of the tradition of political thought based on history?

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 17-25 Spring Break

March 27rd

Freedom & Critical Theory

Read: Fromm, *Escape From Freedom*

Essays (due 3/26 by 5pm): "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: 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

April 3rd

Fromm's Humanist Vision of Freedom

Read: Fromm, *Escape From Freedom*

Essays(due 4/2 by 5pm): 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: "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 relativism" 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*

April 10th

Freedom, The Public and The Private

Read: Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pp. 1-175

Essays (due 4/9 by 5 pm): 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: 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
Wolin, *Politics and Vision*

April 17

Arendt cont.

Read: *The Human Condition*, pp. 175-325

Essays (due 4/16 by 5pm): How does Arendt's distinction
between public and private relate to her distinction
between work and labor. . .or does it?

Essays: 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 24th ***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,"* on reserve
- Essays (due 4/23 by 5pm) How might a "post-modern" feminist critique Arendt? What, if anything, would they find useful in Arendt's analysis?
- Essays: 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
- May 1st ***Negative & Positive Liberty Conclusions***
Read: Berlin, "Introduction" and "Two Concepts of Liberty"
Essays (due 4/30 by 5pm): "Berlin's defense of negative liberty leads him into the position of defending the status quo." Comment
- Essays: "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
- May 8th Berlin continued, (or slack day if we are on schedule).
- May 15th Final during class time.