

POLS*3230 F25 Modern Political Thought

Credit Weighting: 0.50**Pre-/Co-Requisites:** POLS*2000 or
PHIL*2280**Restrictions:** N/A**INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION****Name:** Theresa Lee**Email:** tmlee@uoguelph.ca**Office Location:** MacKinnon 512**GENERAL DETAILS**

This course examines thinkers designated as modern in the history of Western political thought, covering a time span of about two centuries that began in the late seventeenth century. The period was marked importantly by the birth of modern liberalism, which remains the normative mainstay of political structures and practices in the Western world today. Against this background, the course focuses on three thinkers from this period – John Locke (1632-1704), John S. Mill (1806-1879) and Karl Marx (1818-1883). The course also aims to provide instances of concrete connection between the history of political thought and its continuing role in shaping today's politics.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The course is informed by the following objectives (formerly known as University Learning Objectives):

1. Literacy

Insightful thinkers are usually powerful writers who are able to use their writing very effectively. In addition to studying the content of the thought itself, you will be analyzing how complex arguments are constructed. Course assignments aim to provide you with the opportunity to become an effective communicator by way of more precise use of language, both in oral and written forms.

2. Numeracy

The contemporary world is inundated with all kinds of statistical information. Although the course is not about how statistical information is compiled, it provides the normative grounding for understanding why the interpretation and use of numbers matter.

3. Understanding Forms of Inquiry

The course attempts to achieve this objective in two ways. First, you will be introduced to modern political thought as a distinctive way of thinking about politics. Second, the contrasts among the three thinkers are explored to appreciate how different critical standpoints yield different views of what is at stake in the realm of politics.

4. Sense of Historical Development and Global Understanding

The primary objective of the course is the in-depth study of selected major texts that contributed to the birth of modern liberalism. In addition, this text-based study aims to account for why and how these works continue to have impact in the contemporary world.

5. Moral Maturity

Political theory is importantly a critical inquiry into the relationship between the individual and the collective. The course attempts to contribute to the development of moral maturity through the practice of responsible citizenship by way of critical thinking.

6. Aesthetic Maturity

Political thinkers do not simply offer us a diagnosis of what goes wrong. They also postulate about "what can be," which requires the use of the imagination. To engage the imagination productively is to be creative and yet responsive to the reality of times. These are qualities that contribute to aesthetic maturity.

7. Depth and Breadth of Understanding

By focusing on a number of texts in their entirety, the course enables you to have an in-depth understanding of the political thinkers under study, while being exposed to a broad spectrum of modern political thought.

8. Independence of Thought

You will be reading texts written in a critical language that constantly challenges our political assumptions and perhaps complacency. You are encouraged to treat the course as an ongoing dialogue with thinkers you may or may not agree with. This intellectual exercise aims at the development of the independence of thought carried out by an informed and critical mind.

METHOD OF ASSESSMENT

Quote and Comment (in-class exercise) -- 15%

General class participation -- 5%

Midterm Quiz -- 20%

Essay -- 25%

Final Examination (on campus during exam period) -- 35%

REQUIRED READINGLocke, John. *Second Treatise of Government*, edited by C. B. Macpherson. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1980.Marx, Karl. *Selected Writings*, edited by Lawrence H. Simon. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1994.Mill, John S. *On Liberty, Utilitarianism and Other Essays*, edited by Mark Philp and Frederick Rosen. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.**Department of Political Science**

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