GONZAGA-IN-FLORENCE SYLLABUS - SPRING 2016

Course: Modern Political Thought (Pols 331)
Credits: 3 credits
Instructor: Dr Bernard Gbikpi, PhD (gbikpi@gonzaga.edu)

Study Abroad, 502 E. Boone Ave. Spokane, WA 99258-0085 – (800) 440-5391 – www.gonzaga.edu/studyabroad - studyabroad@gonzaga.edu

OFFICE HOURS: By appointment
SCHEDULE: MONDAY 3:35 – 6:30 pm

PREREQUISITES: None

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course introduces the students to some important authors in the history of political thought, focusing on those whose works have underpin the rise of liberalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. The authors are Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Hume, Montesquieu, Burke, Paine, James Mill, Constant, and John Stuart Mill. They were dealing with notions such as liberty and equality, consent and contract, and their embodiment in institutions through notions of check of powers and representation, notably.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
The course is intended to be a course of introduction to modern political thought. It goes through one of the major works of each of these authors, and aims at having students able to restate a political thinker’s argument and to discuss it. The important expected outcome of the course is that students have a firm knowledge of the author’s theory through the thorough consideration of one key notion of his.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
Students should be able to critically address key concepts of the authors studied, and be familiar with the main interpretations of, and disputes about, them. Students should also be able to compliment the class texts intelligently without summarizing or rehashing them and to make cogent connections between those modern political thinkers and the 21st century political actuality and political thought.

TEACHING METHOD
Each session consists in two parts: a) a general discussion led by one or two students on a group of chapters from the author of the day). The discussions are lead on the basis of question(s) that the students will have had in advance. All the students are required to hand their written answers to the questions at each discussion session. b) a lecture by the teacher on the next author.

TEACHING COMMITMENT
I aim at obtaining serious and joyous interactive discussions in class on the basis of everybody’s actual knowledge of the reading of the day. In my experience, such readings and discussions are an effective pedagogical tool for learning and practicing political thought, its methods, its concepts, and Machiavelli’s political thought in particular. Not the least, when successful, each class becomes an agreeable time and nice record for everybody. On my behalf it requires well prepared courses and thorough comments of all the students’ written pieces. On the students behalf it requires the reading of the assigned texts, their written review and their active discussion.

DECORUM
Cell-phones, e-mail boxes, and web browsers must be off as we are in class for encountering and exchanging with “real” people.
ATTENDANCE POLICY
Students are presumed to have sufficient maturity to recognize their responsibility for regular class attendance. Gonzaga University’s standard policy on absences stipulates that the maximum allowable absence is two class hours (100 minutes) for each class credit. My course being a three credit course and being scheduled to meet for 3 hours each class the maximum allowable absence is two classes in the semester. The grade given for exceeding absences is a “V”, which has the same effect as “F” (Fail) and is counted in the GPA. This outcome can be appealed to the Dean. Please, I need you to give me the precise reason for any of these two absences. For any absence that is not due to illness or extraordinary event the participation grade for the missed class will be 0.

COURSE GRADING
Weekly readings’ questions count for 30% of the total grade.
Oral participation counts for 30% of the total grade.
The mid-term exam and the final exam contribute each to 20% of the total grade. They consist in two parts: a take-home review paper and an essay in class.
Steadiness in your involvement in all aspects of the course and all over the semester is the only A strategy.

THE WEEKLY QUESTIONS
Students are required to hand every week written answers to the questions they will have had for each reading. Answers to the questions are due to me at the beginning of the class.

ORAL PARTICIPATION
Oral participation consists in participating to the discussion. It basically consists in “voicing” the issues and arguments the reading has triggered in you and to react to each other’s argument.
Participation grading
The point on participation (FP) is granted if you have expressed your opinion on any point of the argument (HP) and engaged somebody else’s argument (HP).

MID-TERM AND FINAL EXAM
They consist in two parts. The first is a take-home proper review paper of an author’s piece. The second part is an in-class essay that elaborates upon the argument(s) contained in the author’s piece.

THE REVIEW PAPER
The review paper is a thoughtful account of the assigned piece of writing you have read. The point of the review is to analytically restate the argument(s) and the contents of the reading, to discuss it, and to propose a research question and bibliographical sources for further research. Your review paper should have the following structure:
1) Report the complete bibliographical reference of the piece you are reviewing: author, year of publication of the actual reading and (year of the original publication), “title of the book’s chapter(s),” title of the book, place of publication, publisher, page numbers.
2) The issue and main argument(s): a. What is the issue discussed in the writing? b. Formulate the argument (or what is the author trying to convince us of?) into a few sentences.
3) How does the author lead the argument? or what the demonstration consists in? That section of your review includes two parts: a) a description in one paragraph the structure of the article; (the article includes n sections: an introduction (pp.); section 1 entitled (pp.); section 2 entitled (pp.); etc… b. an account of each section’s content. If the reading is not divided into sections, identify by yourself sections and entitle them. The scope of this exercise is to follow and restate the author’s reasoning step by step.
4) We aim to make a critical assessment of the argument in two parts that are strengths and weaknesses. Indicative questions toward such assessment are: Does the argument convince us? Is
only part of it convincing? Why? Is it cogent/logical? Do we think it helps us understanding something fundamental about the issue at stake? Is there any particular assumption that is important for the argument that we think should be strengthened? Are the empirical facts reported by the author relevant, accurate? Are they any alternative or counter-arguments mentioned by the author her/himself? Does the author use particular words or concepts or other authors that are particularly important for his/her argument/demonstration? How does s/he use them? Is s/he consistent in her/his use of them?

5) **Further research**: Write down a research question that you are genuinely curious about and that stems from the author’s argument. A research question should reflect an underlying tension and should force to weigh evidence and compare different opinions. State your thesis that is what kind of argument you hope to make through your research question. Identify and indicate at least two bibliographical sources that are likely to address your question. The places to start with in order to find such sources are the lecture notes, the introductory chapters of the book under study, and the textbooks. Say why you think the sources in question are apposite. Fully report their bibliographical references.

**NB**: Specific questions for writing the assessment and/or the research question may also be assigned by the instructor.

A template of a review paper is available for you on Blackboard.

**Review paper grading**

**Full point (FP)**: the work well addresses each point of the review.

**¾ of the point (3/4 pt)**: some point of the review is addressed wrongly, superficially or not at all.

**Half point (HP)**: many points of the review are addressed wrongly, superficially or not at all.

**¼ of the point (1/4 pt)**: there are more points of the review addressed wrongly, superficially or not at all than points that are well addressed.

**0 point**: The work was not done

**THE ESSAY**

The essay should be structured like the review paper but with your argument, that is: a title of yours; the issue and argument of your essay; an outline of it; the unfolding of your argument along entitled sections; a conclusion that reassesses your point and that provides bibliographical clues for further reflection. It should include a bibliography.

**Essay grading**

The essay will be evaluated along the clarity of its argument, the clarity of its structure, the consistency of its follow-up, its engagement with the literature of the field, and the perspectives it opens for further reflection.

**Final Grades Conversion**

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<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Conversion</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>92.5 – 100</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>90.0 - 92.4</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>3.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>87.5 – 89.9</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>3.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>82.5 – 87.4</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>80.0 – 82.4</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>2.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>75.5 – 79.9</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>2.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>72.5 – 77.4</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>2.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>70.0 – 72.4</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>1.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>67.5 – 69.9</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>1.3</td>
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Exceeding absences: V = Failing 0.0
ACADEMIC HONESTY
Academic honesty is essential to education and represents the bond of trust between the university, the instructor and the student. Academic dishonesty is any action by which a student seeks to claim credit for the intellectual effort of another person or uses unauthorized materials or fabricated information in any academic exercise. It includes unauthorized assistance in tests and examinations; intentionally impeding or damaging the academic work of others; submitting another person’s work as your own, or providing work for this purpose; submitting work of your own that has been substantially edited and revised by another person, or providing such an editing and revision service for others; submitting material from a source (books, articles, internet sites) without proper citation and bibliographic reference; paraphrasing material from a source without appropriate reference and citation; submitting substantially the same piece of work in more than one course without the explicit consent of all the instructors concerned; assisting other students in any of the above acts; plagiarism, defined as claiming intellectual property on somebody else's work, in other words as cultural theft. Written assignments will be submitted to the plagiarism detection procedures of TurnItIn.com., activated on Blackboard. Students who are academically dishonest will receive “0”, zero on the work in question or a failing grade for the course as a whole, depending on the importance of the work to the overall course grade and the judgment of the instructor. A plagiarized assignment/paper, research project, etc will be graded 0 (zero) and sent to the Main Campus accompanied by a report.

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATION FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES
Documented learning disabilities or other medically certified problems that need special accommodation for any of the student's expected academic performances will be treated with due attention.

REQUIRED READINGS
- Readings and material for students’ presentation are available on Blackboard
  - David Hume, 1994, Political Essays, ed. Knud Haakonssen, Cambridge, CUP, 0521466393 paperback (complete essay Of the Original Contract)
Gonzaga-in-Florence – Spring semester 2016 - Pols 331: Modern Political Thought (3 credits) Prof. Bernard Gbikpi


**TEXTBOOKS** (available ay GIF library) are notably:

**OTHER ONLINE RESOURCES AT:**
- [http://www.iep.utm.edu/](http://www.iep.utm.edu/) (The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy)
- [http://oll.libertyfund.org/](http://oll.libertyfund.org/) (The Online Library of Liberty)

**BIBLIOGRAPHIC DATABASES**
- Academic Search Complete
- JSTOR

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* COURSE OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE

January 11, 2016

**Introduction**

- Liberalism and modern political thought – Format of the course

**First Part: Natural rights and social contract theory**


January 18, 2016


January 25, 2016

- **Students’ Presentation** Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government* (1690) - Chapters I to XIX with a focus on chapter II (“Of the State of Nature”), III (“Of the State of War”), V (“Of Property”), VII (“Of Political and Civil Society”), IX (“Of the Ends of Political Society and Government”), XV (“Of Paternal, and Political, and Despotical Power, considered Together”), and XIX (“Of the Dissolution of Government”)

- **Lecture** on Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin and Foundation of Inequality Among Men* (1755) and *The Social Contract* (1762)

February 01, 2016

- **Students’ Presentation** Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin and Foundation of Inequality Among Men* (1755) (excerpts); *The Social Contract* (1762) Book 1 and 2 with a focus on chapter VI of Book 1 (“On the Social Compact”)

- **Lecture** on David Hume, *Of the Original Contract* (1748)

February 08, 2016

- **Students’ Presentation** David Hume, *Of the Original Contract* (1748), Hume’s arguments for refuting the idea of an original contract - Arguments about the basis of consent - The two kinds of moral duties

- **Lecture** on Edmund Burke (1729-97), *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790)

February 15, 2016

- **Students’ Presentation** Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) - Inheritance as the principle of improvement - The science of government is a practical science based on experience - Prejudice as a tool for reforming and maintaining at the same time - Society is an association between the living and the dead – Explaining the French Revolution

- **Lecture** on Thomas Paine *The Rights of Man* (1791-92)

February 22, 2016

- **Mid-term exam**

February 29, 2016


**Second Part: Constitution, Representation and Liberty**

- **Lecture** on Montesquieu *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748)

March 14, 2016

- **Students’ Presentation** Montesquieu *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748), Book 11, chapter 6 (Political liberty and the Constitution of England); Book 19, chap.27
(How the laws contribute to form the Manners, Customs, and Characters of a Nation)


**March 21, 2016**

- Students’ Presentation James Mill, *Essay on Government* (1819) The end of power – How to prevent abuse of power – The representative system as the only security against abuse of power from government

- Lecture on Benjamin Constant, *The Liberty of the Ancients Compared with That of the Moderns* (1819).

**March 30, 2016**

- Students’ Presentation Benjamin Constant, *The Liberty of the Ancients Compared with That of the Moderns* (1819) The description of the two liberties – Harms in not seeing their difference – Focus on the liberty of the moderns (individual and political liberty)


**April 04, 2016**

- Students’ Presentation John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (1859) - Chapter one: *Introductory*, i.e.: Liberty and authority in old times – In modern times – Tyranny of society – The principle of self-protection – Liberty - Chapter Two (excerpts): "Of the liberty of thought and discussion": Four reasons for freedom of thought - The procedure for fair discussion – Chapter Three (excerpts): "Of individuality, as one of the elements of well-being": How freedom and variety of situations allow individuals to discover what is best for them - The dangers of uniformity

- Debate for general assessment of the course

**April 11, 2016**

- Preparation to final exam

**April 18, 2016**

- Final exam