

An Introduction to Modern European Political Theory
Whitman College Politics 122
Spring 2016

Professor Megan Gallagher
gallagme@whitman.edu
Office: Maxey Hall 133
Office hours: T 1:30-3:30, W 2-3, and by appointment

M, W, and F, 1:00-1:50
Maxey Hall 202



'Send us your references' from Kate Beaton's *Hark! A Vagrant*

Course description

Political theory asks, and seeks to answer, challenging questions: is there a best form of government? What are political rights and where do they originate? How do we choose between different ideas of justice? What is the relationship between truth and politics? To what degree can or should the state intervene in individuals' lives? Most of us have beliefs and opinions about the best or right answers to these questions. Political theory offers a means of making and evaluating normative claims about politics – and to replace unexamined opinion with reasoned argument.

The readings in this course are oriented around the question, what does it mean to be a political actor? In order to think through this question, we will read a number of major works in the western canon that propose various answers. These answers will necessarily be incompatible and at odds with one another. Our task is to read the texts critically and judge what we, as individuals, find most and least compelling. The approach of the course is contextual and historical; that is, we will examine how particular authors were motivated and constrained by their circumstances, why they raised the questions they did and gave their specific answers. Nonetheless, one aim of the class is to demonstrate that the analytic skills

acquired in engaging these authors and their works can be brought to bear on a wide range of political questions, including those of our own time.

To take on these questions, we will engage in close readings of select texts, beginning in renaissance Florence and ending in twentieth-century America. In that time, the Spanish and British empires rose and fell; the modern state as we know it came into existence; the American and French Revolutions challenged long-standing political truisms; and the purview of political life was forcibly expanded to include women, people of color, colonized nations, and the laboring classes. Our readings will come from a variety of schools of thought, including republicanism, liberalism, and marxism, as well as their critics.

No prior knowledge of the periods or the materials is required. Note, though, that the reading is demanding: it will likely take longer than more expository texts to complete and it will often address ideas at a highly conceptual level. Give yourself adequate time to read in advance of class, as that is the primary activity for this course. The goal of our discussions will be to help you unpack and think through what you have read.

Reading schedule

Week 1

- W 1/20 Machiavelli, *The Prince*, letter to Vettori, dedication, chapters 1-5, in *Selected Political Writings*, pp. 1-18
F 1/22 Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chapters 6-15, in *Selected Political Writings*, pp. 18-49

Week 2

- M 1/25 Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chapters 16-26, in *Selected Political Writings*, pp. 49-80
W 1/27 Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, Book I, chapters 1-5, 9, 10, 16-18, in *Selected Political Writings*, pp. 82-97, 107-113, 121-129
F 1/29 Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, Book II, chapters 1-3; Book III, chapters 1, 3, and 7-9, in *Selected Political Writings*, pp. 161-172, 189-200

Week 3

- M 2/1 Cortés, “Second Letter to Charles V,” read pp. 69-77, skim the rest*
The *Requerimiento**
Las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, pp. 5-25, 31-36
W 2/3 Las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, pp. 42-79
F 2/5 Las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, pp. 96-101, 107-130
Sepúlveda, *Democres Alter, Or, on the Just Causes for War Against the Indians**

Week 4

- M 2/8 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, letter dedicatory, introduction, chapters 1-6, pp. 1-35
W 2/10 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chapters 11, 13-16, pp. 57-63 and 74-106
F 2/12 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chapters 17-22, pp. 106-155

Week 5

M 2/15	No class - Presidents' Day
W 2/17	Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , chapters 23-29, pp. 155-219
F 2/19	Locke, <i>Second Treatise</i> , chapters 1-7, in <i>The Political Writings</i> , pp. 261-309
Week 6	
M 2/22	Locke, <i>Second Treatise</i> , chapters 8-15, in <i>The Political Writings</i> , pp. 309-352
W 2/24	Locke, <i>Second Treatise</i> , chapters 16-19, in <i>The Political Writings</i> , pp. 352-287
F 2/26	Locke, <i>On Toleration</i> , in <i>The Political Writings</i> , pp. 390-436
Week 7	
M 2/29	Rousseau, <i>Discourse on Inequality</i> , in <i>The Basic Political Writings</i> , pp. 27-60 and Rousseau's notes
W 3/2	Rousseau, <i>Discourse on Inequality</i> , in <i>The Basic Political Writings</i> , pp. 60-92 and Rousseau's notes
F 3/4	Midterm paper outline due in class Peer review workshop
Week 8	
M 3/7	Rousseau, <i>Social Contract</i> , Book I, entire, in <i>The Basic Political Writings</i>
W 3/9	Rousseau, <i>Social Contract</i> , Book II, chapters 1-4 and 6-9, in <i>The Basic Political Writings</i>
F 3/11	Rousseau, <i>Social Contract</i> , Book III, chapters 1-7, 9-10, and Book IV, chapters 1-2, 8-9, in <i>The Basic Political Writings</i> Midterm paper due in class
Weeks 9 & 10 No class - spring break	
Week 11	
M 3/28	Wollstonecraft, <i>The Wrongs of Woman: or, Maria</i> , pp. 65-103
W 3/30	Wollstonecraft, <i>The Wrongs of Woman: or, Maria</i> , pp. 103-139
F 4/1	Wollstonecraft, <i>The Wrongs of Woman: or, Maria</i> , pp. 140-178
Week 12	
M 4/4	Tocqueville, <i>Democracy in America</i> , pp. 1-15, 32-44, and 73
W 4/6	Tocqueville, <i>Democracy in America</i> , pp. 106-113, 201-222
F 4/8	Tocqueville, <i>Democracy in America</i> , pp. 146-164 Douglass, "What to the slave is the 4th of July?"*
Week 13	
M 4/11	in-class film screening: Chaplin's <i>Modern Times</i>
W 4/13	Marx, <i>Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts in Selected Writings</i> , pp. 54-79
F 4/15	Marx, <i>Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts in Selected Writings</i> , pp. 79-97
Week 14	
M 4/18	Marx, <i>Capital</i> , pp. 214-240
W 4/20	Marx, <i>Capital</i> , pp. 243-251 and 265-273

F 4/22	Marx and Engels, <i>The Communist Manifesto</i> , pp. 158-176
Week 15	
M 4/25	Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> , chapters 1-2
W 4/27	Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> , chapters 3-4
F 4/29	ImMigration week teach-in: "What Part of 'Illegal' Don't You Understand?" with Professor Aaron Bobrow-Strain (Politics) at 12pm at the GAC Final paper topics distributed
Week 16	
M 5/2	Arendt, <i>The Human Condition</i> , prologue and chapter 1, pp. 1-21*
W 5/4	Arendt, <i>The Human Condition</i> , pp. 175-192, 229-236, and 243-247*
F 5/6	Final paper outline due in class Peer review workshop Exam review
Week 17	
M 5/9	In-class final exam
Exam week	
M 5/16	Final paper due at noon to Maxey 133 and CLEo

Required texts

Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Hackett, 978-0872201774)
 Las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (Penguin, 978-0140445626)
 Locke, *The Political Writings* (Hackett, 978-0872206762)
 Machiavelli, *Selected Political Writings* (Hackett, 978-0872202474)
 Marx, *Selected Writings* (Hackett, 978-0872202184)
 Mill, *On Liberty* (Hackett, 978-0915144433)
 Rousseau, *The Basic Political Writings*, second edition (Hackett, 978-1603846738)
 Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (Hackett, 978-0872204942)
 Wollstonecraft, *Mary and The Wrongs of Woman* (Oxford University Press, 978-0199538904)

* Readings marked with an asterisk will be available via CLEo. It is crucial that you use the listed editions. In addition to the Whitman College Bookstore, inexpensive used copies are widely available online.

Course requirements

Discussion questions (15%): Everyone is responsible for posting two discussion questions on the course site between Monday at 11am and Tuesday at 10pm that relate to Wednesday and Friday's readings. You must also contribute a response to one of your classmates' questions that you find there. You can choose two weeks to skip at your discretion.

Midterm paper (20%): The midterm paper will be due on Friday, March 11, at the beginning of class. Further details will be given in class. An outline will be due in class on Friday, March 4, for a peer review workshop. The outline will constitute 5% of the paper's grade.

Final paper (30%): The final paper will be due on Monday, May 16. An outline will be due in class on Monday, April 2, for a peer review workshop and is worth 5% of the final paper's grade.

Final exam (15%): The final exam will be given during our last class meeting on Monday, April 9.

Participation (20%): Regular attendance is expected, barring illness. There are many ways to participate, from offering your own thoughts, to asking your classmates to expand on or clarify points they have made, to speaking with me in office hours. To earn a full grade for participation, be prepared to join the conversation several times each class.

Late assignments will lose one-third of a letter grade (i.e., an A- becomes a B+) for every day that they are late, including weekends. Assignments not submitted will receive an F. All assignments must be submitted in order to pass the course.

*** The instructor reserves the right to alter any reading or writing assignments during the semester.***

Academic honesty

Integrity is essential to all of the work you do here at Whitman. I take academic honesty very seriously. Anyone found cheating or plagiarizing will automatically fail the related assignment(s). **All issues of cheating and plagiarism will be documented and reported to the Dean of Students.**

The best way to avoid any trouble is simply to ask me any questions you have about what does and does not constitute plagiarism – it can seem like a very confusing subject, but we can get a handle on it rather easily. As described in the Whitman Student Handbook, “plagiarism occurs when you, intentionally or due to your own negligence, use someone else’s words, ideas, or data without proper acknowledgment.” Please see the Handbook for further information and ask me any questions you have as they arise!

Technology

The use of laptops, tablets, and smartphones is *verboten* (forbidden). Readings posted online need to be printed and brought to class.

Classroom decorum

It is to be expected that you will encounter a variety of arguments, opinions, and perspectives over the quarter, a number of which you may disagree with. Polite, reasoned disagreement is welcomed - even encouraged! - but please maintain a respectful tone, particularly when addressing your colleagues.

Accessibility and Disability Support Services

If you wish to discuss academic accommodations, please contact me early in the semester. You will need to obtain an accommodation letter from Rebecca Frost, the Director of Academic Resources. You can find out more about Whitman's Disability Support Services at their [website](#).

Academic resources on campus

[Center fOr Writing and Speaking \(COWS\)](#)

[Whitman Workshop Wednesdays](#)