**History of Political Thought IV: Contemporary**

**Autumn 2015**

**Tuesdays, 10:35-12:05; Thursdays, 10:35-12:05 (Group 1) & 13:00-14:30 (Group 2)**

**Bratislava International School of Liberal Arts—Bratislava, Slovakia**

**Instructor:** James Griffith

**Contact Information:** [griffith@bisla.sk](mailto:griffith@bisla.sk)

**Office Hours:** Mondays, 11:00-13:00

**Course Description**

Here we will examine the history of political thought from Marx to, more or less, today. With Marx, Mill, and Schmitt, we have representatives of major political concepts and movements from the left, from liberalism, and from the right, respectively. Historically speaking, this trajectory will take us from the French and Industrial Revolutions to World War I—that is, from the birth of what we might call mass sociopolitical organization to mass disillusionment with how that sociopolitical organization had occurred. Shifting to the mid-twentieth century, we will focus on the development of weapons of mass destruction, represented both by the effects of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 5 and 9, 1945, respectively. In that, interestingly, there is very little philosophical reflection on this moment in the Western tradition, we will turn to a film written by Duras and directed by Resnais. This also opens us onto the question of atomic technology and the Cold War, and as discussed by Heidegger and Blanchot. We then turn to Foucault’s analysis of the developments of control and power in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* before turning to a defense of liberalism in Rawls. Habermas, in his way, will further this defense in the wake of German reunification, while Deleuze will offer an indirect critique of this defense. We then close with a philosophical consideration of 9/11 through Derrida.

Over the course of the term, then, we will see changes in the concepts of the nation-state; of the individual; of political organizations and conceptualizations which may or may not exceed the state form; the development of superpowerful states; the relationship of freedom and security and/or control; the connection between property, money, power, and technology; the determination of what constitutes terror and for what if any political reasons it is deployed and so named—and by whom.

**Texts**

Blanchot, Maurice, *Friendship*, tr. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), ISBN: 978-0804727594.

Deleuze, *Negotiations 1972-1990*, tr. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), ISBN: 978-0231075817.

Derrida, Jacques, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, vol. 1, ed. Michel Lisse, Marie-Louise Mallet, and Ginette Michaud, tr. Geoffrey Bennington (Chicago : The University of Chicago Press, 2009), ISBN: 978-0226144283.

Duras, Marguerite, *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, tr. Richard Seaver (New York : Grove Press, 1961), ISBN: 978-0802131042.

Foucault, Michel, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, tr. Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, Inc., 1978), ISBN: 978-0394417755.

Habermas, Jürgen, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, tr. William Rehg (Cambridge: MA, The MIT Press, 1996), ISBN: 978-0262082438.

Heidegger, Martin, *Philosophical and Political Writings*, ed. Manfred Stassen (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2003), ISBN: 978-0826415113.

Marx, Karl, *Selected Writings*, ed. Lawrence H. Simon (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1994), ISBN: 978-0872202184.

Mill, John Stuart, *The Basic Writings of John Stuart Mill* (New York: The Modern Library, 2002), ISBN: 978-0375759185.

Rawls, John, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), ISBN: 978-0231052498.

Schmitt, Carl, *The Concept of the Political*, tr. George Schwab (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), ISBN: 978-0226738864.

**Course Requirements and Grade Distribution**

60%: Two *papers*, each worth 30% of the final grade. *1000-1750 words* for each paper. Topics will be dealt with as the term progresses.

20%: Each student will give one *presentation* of *750-1000 words* in the term. There will be one presentation per class. In these presentations, the student will do three things:

1. Summarize the text, or at least the portion of the text on which you will focus.
2. Compare the text with at least one other from either that week or a previous week’s reading.
3. Ask three or four detailed questions as concerns the text. By “detailed” we mean that a question itself is insufficient. Rather, the question must be supported with textual evidence and/or developed beyond the inquiring sentence itself. These can be framed in terms of seeking out a larger meaning, looking for clarification, challenging some other text or texts we have read, using those other texts to challenge the text at hand, etc.

10%: *350-word summaries* of the material read over the course of the previous week will be due at the end of class every week **except the week during which a student gives a presentation**.

7.5%: *Class Participation* is encouraged and expected. Attendance does not qualify as participation.

2.5%: *Attendance* is mandatory. I will allow two unexcused absences for the term. Lateness of more than 15 minutes qualifies as an absence.

**Other Issues and Concerns**

Academic Integrity

In this context, “academic integrity” primarily refers to plagiarism. Plagiarism is the taking of anyone’s previously written work and attempting to pass it off as new and/or your own. This includes not citing material that should be cited, even if you are not directly quoting a given source. It is a serious offense and BISLA’s Plagiarism and Cheating Policy will be followed strictly if it occurs. This policy can be found in the Moodle folder for this course. *NB:*This document also has helpful strategies for avoiding plagiarism.

Expectations in the Classroom

You are all adults and should expect to be treated that way, by everyone in the classroom. You are also expected to treat others like adults. If you have questions, you need to ask them, in and out of class. If you are busy with other aspects of your life, they cannot interfere here—in other words, turn off your cell phones and other such devices, including WiFi access. If you have to use the bathroom, you do not need to ask me, but bear in mind how distracting that can be for others. If you have something to say that does not pertain to the discussion, wait until after class. In short, act like the adult you are and respect the classroom environment.

Writing Expectations

To be able to write clearly means you are thinking clearly. Thus, even your Text Questions should reflect a clarity of thought, a clarity of questioning. This does not mean that you are expected to write publishable papers. What it means is that you are expected to think about the sentences and paragraphs you write, whether they express your thoughts clearly and accurately, and if there may be better ways of expressing those thoughts.

If you are having trouble finding the right words, sentences, or paragraphs—or discover you are having trouble when you thought you were not—you should come see me and/or consult the Writing Tutors.

**\*\*\*\*\*This syllabus is subject to change.\*\*\*\*\***

**Course Schedule**

Week 1—Thursday, September 17 **Introduction**

Week 2—Tuesday, September 22 **read:** Marx, “Alienated Labor” & “Theses on Feuerbach”

Marx & Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, intro.

Thursday, September 24 **read:** Marx & Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, sect. I

**bring to class:** Summary

*STUDENT PRESENTATION #1*

Week 3—Tuesday, September 29 **read:** Marx & Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, sects. II-IV

Thursday, October 1 **read:** Mill, *On Liberty*, ch. I

**bring to class:** Summary

*STUDENT PRESENTATION #2*

Week 4—Tuesday, October 6 **read:** Mill; *On Liberty*; ch. II, pp. 17-37

Thursday, October 8 **NO CLASS**

Week 5—Tuesday, October 13 **read:** Mill; *On Liberty*; ch. II, pp. 37-56

Thursday, October 15 **read:** Mill; *On Liberty*; ch. III, pp. 57-66

**bring to class:** Summary

*STUDENT PRESENTATION #3*

Friday, October 16 **read:** Mill; *On Liberty*; ch. III, pp. 66-76

Week 6—Tuesday, October 20 **read:** Mill, *On Liberty*, ch. IV

Thursday, October 22 **read:** Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, chs. 1 & 2

**bring to class:** Summary

*STUDENT PRESENTATION #4*

Week 7—Tuesday, October 27 **read:** Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, chs. 3 & 4

Thursday, October 29 **read:** Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, ch. 5

**bring to class:** Summary

*STUDENT PRESENTATION #5*

Week 8—Tuesday, November 3 **read:** Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, chs. 6 & 7

Thursday, November 5 **read:** Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, ch. 8

**bring to class:** Summary

*STUDENT PRESENTATION #6*

Week 9—Tuesday, November 10 **watch in class:** *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (dir.: Alain Resnais,

1959)

**submit:** Paper #1

Thursday, November 12 **read:** Duras, *Hiroshima Mon Amour*

**bring to class:** Summary

*STUDENT PRESENTATION #7*

Week 10—Tuesday, November 17 **read:** Heidegger, “Discourse on Thinking”

Blanchot, “Marx’s Three Voices” & “The Apocalypse Is

Disappointing”

Thursday, November 19 **read:** Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, Part One:

**bring to class:** Summary

*STUDENT PRESENTATION #8*

Week 11—Tuesday, November 24 **read:** Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, Part Five

Thursday, November 26 **read:** Rawls; *Political Liberalism*; Pt. I, Lecture 1, pp. 3-11

**bring to class:** Summary

*STUDENT PRESENTATION #9*

Week 12—Tuesday, December 1 **read:** Rawls; *Political Liberalism*; Pt. I, Lecture 1, pp. 11-28

Thursday, December 3 **read:** Rawls; *Political Liberalism*; Pt. I, Lecture 1, pp. 29-40

**bring to class:** Summary

*STUDENT PRESENTATION #10*

Week 13—Tuesday, December 8 **read:** Rawls; *Political Liberalism*; Pt. I, Lecture 1, pp. 40-46

Habermas, “Citizenship and National Identity,” pp. 491-

507

Thursday, December 10 **read:** Habermas, “Citizenship and National Identity,” pp. 507-

515

Deleuze, “Postscript on Control Societies”

**bring to class:** Summary

*STUDENT PRESENTATION #11*

Week 14—Tuesday, December 15 **read:** Derrida; *The Beast and the Sovereign*, vol. 1; 2nd Sem., pp.

32-49

Thursday, December 17 **read:** Derrida; *The Beast and the Sovereign*, vol. 1; 2nd Sem., pp.

49-62

**bring to class:** Summary

*STUDENT PRESENTATION #12*

Week 15—Tuesday, December 22 **submit:** Paper #2