

History of Political Thought: Modernity

Code:	
Term:	Spring
ECTS credits:	6
Lessons per week:	90 + 90 min
Language:	Slovak/Eng.
Instructor:	James Griffith
Form of study:	lecture+seminar

Prerequisites

Introduction to Philosophy, History of Political Thought: Survey, History of Political Thought: Antiquity, J-term Intensive Short Course: Plato

Course Objectives

Here we will survey some of the major political texts of the modern period. In covering these thinkers, we also cover the Renaissance, the English Civil Wars and Restoration, the French Revolution, the rise of modern science, the birth of capitalism, and other issues. Our discussions will thus involve any number of these concerns from a variety of angles.

Contents

Themes and Readings involved

We begin with the Renaissance in Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince*, which can be said to inaugurate the modern understanding of power, especially in how it can be gained and maintained. We then turn to England, and to Thomas Hobbes's monumental *Leviathan*, which introduces us to modern social contract theory, the state of nature, and the modern understanding of the formation of political communities. After these foundational texts, we look again to England but also to France and the changes in the concept of the state of nature as well as social contract theory brought about by John Locke's *Second Treatise of Government* and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *The Social Contract*. Finally, we move to Germany for the end of the modern period. Specifically, we turn to three immensely important essays on the political thought of the Enlightenment, including the mature concept of freedom and the conceptualization of history in

political terms, by Immanuel Kant, “Idea for a Universal History with a Common Purpose,” “What Is Enlightenment?,” and “Perpetual Peace.” In addition, we turn to G.W.F. Hegel for further development of the philosophy of history in a political sense through his *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*.

Obligatory Readings

Primary Sources

Hegel, G.W.F., *Introduction to the Philosophy of History, with an Appendix from The Philosophy of Right*, tr. Leo Rauch (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1988), ISBN: 0-87220-056-6.

Hobbes, Thomas, *Leviathan*, rev. student ed., ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), ISBN: 9780521567978.

Kant, Immanuel, *Political Writings*, ed. H.S. Reiss, tr. H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), ISBN: 9780521398374.

Locke, John, *Second Treatise of Government* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1980), ISBN: 9780915144860.

Machiavelli, Niccolò, *The Prince*, tr. Peter Bondanella (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), ISBN: 0-19-280426-X.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, *The Social Contract and other later political writings*, ed. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), ISBN: 9780524424462.

Secondary Sources

Supplementary Readings and Sources

Evaluation Criteria

40% Writing work – essays (5 -6 short essays (400-500 words), 1–2 should be longer (1000-1200 words))

30% Active participation on classes, class discussions, class preparation

30% Short tests in class

Instructor is expected to provide a midterm evaluation.

Course Evaluation (%)

A – excellent:	100-93%,
B – very good:	92-84%,
C – good:	83-74%,
D – satisfactory:	73-63%,
E – sufficient:	62-51%,
Fx – fail:	50-0%.

Passing a course assumes that student was not absent at more than 4 lessons.