

History of Political Thought: Contemporary

Code:	
Term:	Spring/Fall
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, Plato's *Republic*, History of Political Thought: Modernity

Course Objectives

Here we survey some of the important moments and texts in Western political thought from the nineteenth, twentieth, and our own centuries. While these texts are in many ways too diverse to find a specific or particular theme, several will appear in multifarious ways over the course of the term. Such themes will include but not be limited to who or what constitutes a free person, or a person in general, and how; in what way or for what reasons we might understand ourselves or others to be free, or not; and how to engage the other in an ethicopolitical context.

Contents

Themes and Readings involved

In the first half of the course, we will look at works by nineteenth-century philosophers via Marx and Engels's *Communist Manifesto*, Mill's *On Liberty*, and Nietzsche's *Anti-Christ*. From Marx and Engels, we get a classic explanation of what will come to be known as leftist political thought, while Mill will give us one of the most important defenses of classical liberalism, along with its limits. Nietzsche, as always, stands apart, but his critiques of Christian ethics are immensely powerful and important. We then move into the

twentieth century, via Schmitt's *Concept of the Political*, Arendt's *On Revolution*, the first volume of Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, and Rawls's *Political Liberalism*. Schmitt's famous, or infamous, essay is an important milestone in rightist political thought, though its influence expands beyond that sector of political philosophy. Arendt's classic study of revolutions helps us understand one of the phenomena that marks the modern world, while Foucault's text gives us a new set of interpretive categories for our world and Rawls articulates a new defense of liberalism. Finally, we enter the twenty-first century through Butler and her essay on who is allowed to be mourned, as seen in a post-9/11 context.

Obligatory Readings

Primary Sources

- Arendt, Hannah, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), ISBN: 978-0143039903.
- Butler, Judith, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2004), ISBN: 978-1844670058.
- Engels, Friedrich, and Karl Marx, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, tr. Samuel Moore and Friedrich Engels (1888).
- Foucault, Michel, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction*, tr. Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, Inc., 1978), ISBN: 978-0394417755.
- Mill, John Stuart, *On Liberty* (1869).
- Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Twilight of the Idols* and *The Anti-Christ*, tr. R.J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin Books, 1968), ISBN: 978-0140445145.
- 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.

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.