

Modern Political Thought

Vanguard University of Southern California

Class

Semester: Spring 2019
Room: Scott 130
Time: Wednesdays, 2:30-5:30

Instructor

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Course Description

"The state," "human rights," "personal liberty," "progress," and "liberty" – these things prove our ability to master our own nature and make the very best of human power. But like all expressions of power, the modern project enjoys an ambiguous legacy. According to the history of ideas, these things were justified with the rejection of political wisdom, a sense of human purpose, and a view of our intrinsic dignity. The Enlightenment brought mass-education; but this, according to some critics, led to much social corruption; revolutions sought the end of grave injustices, yet they frequently ended in violent disaster. Today, we greatly enjoy the successes of the modernity's trial and error, but we cannot ignore the critics who point out the general aimlessness and despair of modern life. Even as it affects us in what we view as negative ways, we still make sense of political and social life on the basis of purely modern assumptions. As more generations pass, the stronger those assumptions become – and they increasingly narrow our moral and spiritual outlook. In this course, we will free ourselves from those assumptions (as far as we can) by studying the great thinkers who engineered our world, and learn to see them with critical assessment rather than blind acceptance. We will study the early groundwork for a scientific approach to government; we will consider the criticism and defense of Enlightenment liberalism; and we will look at the reactions against the successes of modernism, in both violent revolution and the quiet administration of a "planned society." Lastly, we will consider the possibility of revising – if not rejecting – modernism, and recovering the ancient way of thinking about human nature in relation to politics. Though we will confront many somber and sometimes frightening ideas, we will always keep one perennial question in view: *Quid sit Deus?*

Required Texts

Students are required to have hard copies (not digital versions) of the following texts, in order of reading:

- Hobbes, Thomas. *The Essential Leviathan*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2016.
Locke, John. *Second Treatise on Government*. Mineola: Dover Publications, Inc., 2002.
Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Discourse on Inequality*. Translated by Maurice Cranston. London: Penguin Classics, 1984.
Burke, Edmund. *The Evils of Revolution*. London: Penguin Books, 2009.
Mill, John Stuart. *On Liberty*. Mineola: Dover Publications, Inc., 2002.
Nietzsche, Fredrick. *Beyond Good and Evil*. Trans. Walter Kauffman. New York: Random House, 1989.

Course Requirements and Grading

- **Participation and Reading Questions (20%).** Come to class every day and be prepared to discuss the texts based on the weekly reading questions. Inability to answer the questions indicates not reading, and it will cost a participation point. Not having the book will cost two participation points.
- **Essay I (20%).** This is an essay on the first part of the course. There will be a prompt.
- **Essay II (30%).** This is an essay on the second part of the course. There will be a prompt.
- **Final Exam (30%).** This is a comprehensive exam on the texts and general themes of the class. There will be a study guide.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism, or the use of someone else's text without quotes and proper citation, is considered a violation of the university's standards of academic integrity and will be grounds for serious disciplinary action. A first offense will be an F on the assignment; a second offence will be an F in the class and a referral to the Dean.

Disabilities

The Disability Services Office (DSO) offers resources and coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process between you, your instructor and the DSO. If you have not yet established services through the DSO, but have a temporary or permanent disability that requires accommodations (this can include, but is not limited to, mental health, attention-related, learning, vision, hearing, physical or health impairments), you are welcome to contact the DSO at 714-619-6550 or disabilityservices@vanguard.edu.

Course Outline

Week 1 – January 16	Thomas Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , Introduction and Chapters I-VI
Week 2 – January 23	Thomas Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , Chapters VII-XVI
Week 3 – January 30	Thomas Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , Chapters XVII-XXXI
Week 4 – February 6	John Locke, <i>Second Treatise on Government</i> , Chapters I-X
Week 5 – February 13	John Locke, <i>Second Treatise on Government</i> , Chapters XI-XIX
Week 6 – February 20	Jean-Jacques Rousseau, <i>Discourse on Inequality</i> , Introduction and First Part
Week 7 – February 27	Jean-Jacques Rousseau, <i>Discourse on Inequality</i> , Second Part
Week 8 – March 6	Edmund Burke, <i>The Evils of Revolution</i>
Week 9 – March 13	Edmund Burke, <i>The Evils of Revolution</i>
Week 10 – March 27	John Stuart Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> , Chapters 1-3
Week 11 – April 3	John Stuart Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> , Chapters 4-5
Week 12 – April 10	Fredrick Nietzsche, <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> , Parts One-Three
Week 13 – April 17	Fredrick Nietzsche, <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> Parts Four-Seven
Week 14 – April 24	Fredrick Nietzsche, <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> , Parts Eight-Nine
Week 15 – May 1	Winston Churchill, “Mass Effects in Modern Life” and “Fifty Years Hence”

Final Exam – Wednesday, May 8, 1-3pm
