

**CAS PO392 Modern Political Theory
Boston University
Spring, 2020**

Learning Outcomes

The learning outcomes of this course pertain to three BU Hub General Education Requirement categories: Philosophical Inquiry and Life's Meaning; Ethical Reasoning; and Critical Thinking. They thus include the outcomes numbered below:

Philosophical Inquiry and Life's Meaning

1. Students will demonstrate knowledge of notable works in philosophical thought, make meaningful connections among them, and be able to relate those works to their own lives and those of others.
2. Students will demonstrate the reasoning skills, and possess the vocabulary to reflect upon, significant philosophical questions and topics, such as what constitutes a good life, right action, meaningful activity, knowledge, truth, and a just society.

Ethical Reasoning

1. Students will be able to identify, grapple with, and make a judgment about the ethical questions at stake in many major contemporary public debates, and engage in civil discussions about them with those who hold views different from their own.
2. Students will demonstrate the skills and vocabulary needed to reflect on the ethical responsibilities that face individuals in their public and private lives, as well as the ethical responsibilities that face those in positions of authority, leadership, and government. What are our responsibilities to the communities to which we belong? To communities identified as "other"? To future generations of humankind? And to stewardship of the Earth? Students will consider issues raised by both historical and contemporary events to address these questions.

Critical Thinking

1. Students will be able to identify key elements of critical thinking, such as habits of distinguishing deductive from inductive modes of inference, recognizing common logical fallacies and cognitive biases, translating ordinary language into formal argument, distinguishing empirical claims about matters of fact from normative or evaluative judgments, and recognizing the ways in which emotional responses can affect reasoning processes.
2. Drawing on skills developed in class, students will be able to evaluate the validity of arguments, including their own.

Assessment of Learning Outcomes

These learning outcomes will be assessed by four possible means: 1) three written in-class essay exams (two 75-minute mid-terms and one 2-hour final); 2) electronic in-class multiple-choice quizzes; 3) electronic in-class multiple choice questions; and 4) discussion conducted by the professor. Assessments by all means will be made by the professor unless enrollment necessitates a grader, in which case assessments would be made by both the grader and the professor.

Class Schedule and Office Hours

Tuesdays & Thursdays, 3:30-4:45 p.m., in STH 541 (room may change)

Professor J. A. Swanson, Department of Political Science, 232 Bay State Road, #311C

Office Hours: Mondays 5:20-6:00 p.m.; also available after classes in the classroom & by appointment

E-mail: jswanson@bu.edu Text/Voicemail: 617-959-4948

Course Description

The field of Western political theory is informed by an historical conversation that began 2500 years ago. Ever since Socrates in the fifth century B.C. redirected philosophical inquiry away from the natural world at large (the focus of pre-Socratic philosophers) toward human beings, and thereby inaugurated *political* philosophy, subsequent philosophers have responded to him and to each other, advancing arguments about the definition and arrangement of political matters. *Modern* political philosophy, the subject of this course, refers to arguments put forth from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries, the beginning of which period is called the “Enlightenment” (for the many scientific discoveries made therein). An objective of this course, then, is to try to understand that conversation, or at least a major part of it informed by the ideas of six philosophers. In order to do that, we need to listen closely—by studying carefully what they wrote.

A second objective is to participate in that conversation. Careful study of the works of political philosophers reveals their relevance to us, for they all answer the perennial human question of how we should live together. How should we conceive of, and organize, our collective life? Each author maintains, directly or indirectly against the others, that his answer is the best. They thus invite us, their readers and citizens of the future, to assess the relative merits of their answers. By doing so, we can see for ourselves that the works of political philosophy are not merely of antiquarian interest—old texts that we can learn about and admire, but are also of importance today—stimulating works that illuminate or challenge current beliefs, practices, and governments.

Accordingly, the course presents an opportunity to deepen and advance our self-understanding as human beings and as citizens. We will consider such questions as: Why do human beings live in political societies? What binds citizens to the state, or motivates them to observe the requirements of community? Is there a unifying principle or foundation of political society? If so, then should citizens willingly sacrifice peace and order to preserve it? In other words, should citizens risk the costs of revolution for the sake of political principles?

In connection with the theme of political unity, we will examine the political arrangements, institutions, and practices advocated by each political philosopher, and thereby encounter versions of the social contract, republican government, communism, and liberalism.

Finally, we will consider legacies of modern political philosophy, such as the moral ideals of economic equality, equal rights and respect, and democracy.

Required Texts (available at Barnes & Noble @ B.U.)

- 1) John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, ed. C. B. Macpherson
- 2) John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. James H. Tully
- 3) Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The First and Second Discourses*, ed./trans. Roger D. & Judith R. Masters
- 4) Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, ed./trans. Judith R. & Roger D. Masters
- 5) *The Federalist Papers*, ed. Clinton Rossiter
- 6) *The Marx-Engels Reader*, second edition, ed. Robert C. Tucker

Format

Most classes will discuss reading assignments and pose questions about the reading and related issues, seeking your response, either verbally or electronically, via TurningPoint. Accordingly, you are expected to come to class having read the assignment for that day and to be ready to participate verbally and/or to use your clicker or ResponseWare App during class. Most of the questions posed will be selected from the sets posted on the PO 392 Blackboard Learn (BBL) site; thus you may (and should) prepare answers in advance of classes to help you participate. *But even if you have not prepared for a class, you should attend!*

Requirements and Grading

Your course grade will be based on the following distribution (percentages are approximate):

- Attendance (10%)
- Verbal participation (10%)
- First 75-minute examination (25%)
- Second 75-minute examination (25%)
- Two-hour final examination (30%)

Attendance, late arrivals, and early departures. Your attendance counts for ten percent of your course grade. Absences will be translated into a letter grade as follows: you are allowed one absence, regardless of the reason, without consequence to your attendance grade; after that, every absence (without a *documented excuse from a professional or a relative*) will lower your attendance grade by a "notch" (e.g., from an A to an A-). After two absences, then, your attendance grade would be A-, after three absences, B+, and so on. If you are late by more than fifteen minutes, or leave more than fifteen minutes early, then that would count as an absence; repeated late arrivals and early departures will be noted and lower your attendance grade. In short, if you show up all the time or miss just one class during the semester, then you would get an "A" for attendance.

Verbal participation. You should come to class prepared to participate, which means having read the pages assigned for that day, as indicated on the Timetable below. *Participation in every class, informed by the reading and also directly responsive to the question posed or issue under discussion, is the standard you should aim to meet. Never volunteering to answer a question, or never demonstrating familiarity with the assigned reading if called upon, cannot meet the minimum standard of trying to participate intelligently.* Nonetheless, if you fall behind on the reading, you should come to class anyway! Remember, you get credit just for your attendance.

Exams. The written requirements for the course are: two 75-minute (one period) examinations and one comprehensive two-hour final examination. You cannot pass the course without taking all three exams, regardless of your grades on two. *All three exams will consist of short answer and/or essay questions; the final exam may also include multiple choice or identification questions. Unless I announce otherwise, **all** material covered—reading assignments, items posted on the Blackboard Learn site, class handouts, lectures, discussions, and videos—may be relevant to exams.* To help you prepare for exams, class Power Point slides will be posted on the Blackboard Learn course site. To accommodate individual disabilities, provisions will be made with authorization from the Office of Disability Services.

Missed Exams

Please do not count on being allowed to make up a missed exam. I will give a make-up exam only if you have documentation from a physician, relative, or legal authority of a serious injury, illness, or situation requiring your absence or attention. Make-up exams may be different from and more difficult than the original, and may not be graded and returned until the end of the semester.

Missed Classes

If you miss a class, do not count on being informed of its contents by me or by your fellow classmates. Listening and taking notes are academic skills and each student's notes are his or her own work (though based on copyrighted material—see below), which he or she may choose to keep to himself or herself. For those who are accommodated and read other students' notes: beware, they may not be comprehensive or accurate! Additionally, neither my office hours nor scheduled appointments should be used for the purpose of making up a missed class, with the exception of a documented excused absence, in which case I will upon request assist you with the missed material to the extent possible. I may not be able to tutor you in the case of multiple absences, however.

Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct

It is your responsibility, as a student of Boston University, to know what kinds of activities constitute plagiarism and academic misconduct. To understand what these activities are and how B.U. sanctions them, please read the CAS Academic Conduct Code:

<http://www.bu.edu/academics/cas/policies/academic-conduct>. *Consultation of secondary sources, including via the web, for summaries of, or commentary about, the assigned works, as a substitute for reading the assignments, is likely to mislead you and disadvantage your performance, and will be considered a violation of the instructions given for the successful completion of this course.*

In addition, the buying, selling, reproduction, and distribution of PO 392 course material provided or prepared by the instructor—such as the syllabus, reading questions, and Power Point lecture slides—as well as notes taken by students in class (because they reflect, however accurately or inaccurately, an agenda and material prepared by the instructor), are forms of academic misconduct inasmuch as such material is copyrighted by either Boston University and/or Professor Swanson. Students enrolled in the course are allowed—but, as noted above, are not obligated—to share with other enrolled students the course material.

Classroom Etiquette Regarding Food, Beverages, and Electronic Devices

- Please do not eat in the classroom
- Please do not drink coffee, soda, or juice in the classroom
- You may drink from bottled water; please recap it after use
- You are allowed your phone in class *only* to participate with your ResponseWare App
- You may **not** call, chat, text, tweet, Instagram, Facebook, email or use it otherwise
- If you are distracted by such use of your phone, then I will ask for your attention
- Please do not use a laptop in class; exceptions may be made for students with disabilities

A Note on University Closings

If the university should officially close on a class day because of bad weather, a terrorism alert, or other circumstances, then please keep to the reading schedule indicated on the Timetable unless I tell you otherwise by a Blackboard Learn e-mail/announcement. If an exam is scheduled on the day of closure, then *assume that it will occur when the class meets next*. Claiming that you were not sure if the exam would take place when classes resumed will not excuse you from your obligation to take the exam.

Changes to the Course and Planning Your Spring Break

I will try to avoid adjusting the schedule and the requirements of the course but may have to (due to university closings, illness, or what we actually accomplish in class) as we proceed. I will try to announce in class and/or by Blackboard Learn e-mail/announcement any changes to the course as much in advance as possible.

Please do not extend your spring break to prevent you from attending class on March 5 or 17.

Professor's Contact and Availability Information

My office location and hours are on the second page of the syllabus; additional hours may be provided. In addition to my regular hours, I can usually stay after class (in the classroom or corridor) to talk, and will respond to requests for appointments. I can receive time-sensitive text messages on my cell phone, 617-959-4948, and can usually answer emails to jswanson@bu.edu within 48 hours. *Please try to ask all substantive questions about the course material in class—not by email—so that the rest of the students can benefit from your question and discussion of the answer.*

Your Availability

Please check your inbox daily for course-related messages. The content of emails will also appear as Announcements on the Blackboard Learn course site.

Timetable for PO 392 Modern Political Theory (Spring, 2020)

Note: Reading assignments that are not from the main required books are posted on, or linked to, our Blackboard Learn site. I may also post on the site, or distribute in class, other items, such as current news articles. Such additional material should be considered *required* reading that may be relevant to exams, unless I announce otherwise. **The assignments below should be read *for the day next to which they are listed*.**

FIRST WEEK

Tuesday, January 21: **Introduction to Course**
Thursday, January 23: **Locke and the Theologico-Political Problem**
 Strauss, "Persecution and the Art of Writing" (15 pages)
 (Posted on BBL; omit p. 26 after 1st para. of section II to p. 29, "A more modest duty")
 Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, Preface and Chapter I (3 pages)

SECOND WEEK

Tuesday, January 28: **The State of Nature, the State of War, and Slavery**
 Locke, *STG*, Chapters II-IV (10 pages)
Rights and Duties of Parents, Children, and Spouses
 Locke, *STG*, paragraphs #57-60, 63-65, 77-84, 86 (7 pages)
Thursday, January 30: **Property, Productivity, and Taxation**
 Locke, *STG*, Chapter V, and paragraphs #54, 85, 120, 121;
 Chapter IX, and paragraphs #138-40, 142 (18 pages)

THIRD WEEK

Tuesday, February 4: **Political Society and Government**
 Locke, *STG*, paragraphs #87-99, 114-119, 122 ; Chapters X-XIV (31 pages)
Thursday, February 6: **Revolution and Resistance**
 Locke, *STG*, paragraphs #171-172, 198; Chapters XVIII-XIX;
 U.S. Declaration of Independence (*Federalist Papers*, pp. 528-29) (24 pages)

FOURTH WEEK

Tuesday, February 11: **Reserve for a make-up class** (e.g., in case of previous snow closure day)
 Otherwise, no class; read assignment for Thursday (*A Letter*, entire)
Thursday, February 13: **Toleration, the True Church, and Government**
 Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, pp. 21-45 (24 pages)
Morality, Intolerance, and the Public Good
 Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, pp. 46-58 (13 pages)

FIFTH WEEK

Tuesday, February 18: No class. B.U. on Monday schedule.
Thursday, February 20: **First Exam**

SIXTH WEEK

Tuesday, February 25: **Nature and History in the Political Philosophy of Rousseau**
 Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, Preface and pp. 101-104 (11 pages)
Second Discourse, First Part and note to p. 121^l (44 pages)
Thursday, February 27: **The Emergence of Civil Society, Corruption, & Despotism**
 Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, Second Part (39 pages)

SEVENTH WEEK**Tuesday, March 3:****The General Will and Sovereignty**Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, Book I (13 pages)**Thursday, March 5:****The Legislator and Forms and Characteristics of Government**Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, Books II and III (48 pages)

March 7-15:

Spring Break

EIGHTH WEEK**Tuesday, March 17:****Mores and Religion**Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, Book IV (25 pages)**Thursday, March 19:****The Founders: Lockean Sympathizers or Civic Republicans?***Federalist Papers*, #1-3, #6, #9, #10 (33 pages)**NINTH WEEK****Tuesday, March 24:****Rethinking the Nature of Union:****Republicanism, Federalism, and Nationalism***Federalist Papers*, #14, #31, pp. 203-204 of #34, pp. 210-213 of #35, #37, #39, pp. 252 ("Security against")-256 ("latter.") of #41 (35 pages)**Thursday, March 26:****The So-Called Separation of Powers and Bills of Rights***Federalist Papers*, #47 (to end of p. 303), #48-49, #51, #70, #78, and pp. 512 ("It has been")-15 ("the substance of the thing") of #84 (40 pages)**TENTH WEEK****Tuesday, March 31:****Introduction to Marx: Dialectical Materialism**

Marx, "German Ideology/Feuerbach," pp. 148-75, 143-45 (31 pages)

Thursday, April 2:**Marx's Critique of Liberalism**

Marx, "On the Jewish Question," pp. 26-52 (27 pages)

ELEVENTH WEEK**Tuesday, April 7:****Second Exam****Thursday, April 9:**

Agenda to be determined

TWELFTH WEEK**Tuesday, April 14:****Capitalism and Revolution**

Engels, pp. 699 ("The new")-717 (18 pages);

Marx, "Communist Manifesto," pp. 473-491 (18 pages)

Thursday, April 16:**Communism, Socialisms, and Christianity**

Marx, "Economic & Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844," pp. 70-101 (32 pages);

"Communist Manifesto," pp. 491-500; "German Ideology," p. 160 (review middle) (10 pages)

THIRTEENTH WEEK**Tuesday, April 21:****Sex, Love, Marriage, and the Family**

Engels, "Origin of Family, Private Property," pp. 734-51 (18 pages)

"German Ideology" question #18 and "Communist Manifesto" questions #11 & #12

Thursday, April 23: **The Late 19th-Century Progressive Rejection of the Founding:
Why the Progressives Didn't Take Rights Seriously**
 John Dewey, "Liberalism and Social Action" (9 pages)
 John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, Introduction (20 pages)
 Woodrow Wilson, "Socialism and Democracy" (3 pages)
 Calvin Coolidge, "The Inspiration of the Declaration" (9 pages)

FOURTEENTH WEEK

Tuesday, April 28: **Hayek's Critique of Social Justice**
 Hayek, *The Mirage of Social Justice*, Chapter 9 and Appendix to Ch. 9
 (45 pages)

Thursday, April 30: **Concluding Remarks**

FIFTEENTH WEEK

Date TBA; 3:00-5:00 p.m.: Final Exam

REVISED TIMETABLE

NINTH WEEK

- Tuesday, March 24:** **Mores and Religion**
Finish Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, Book IV (25 pages)
Start *Federalist Papers* (#1)
- Thursday, March 26:** **The Founders: Lockean Sympathizers or Civic Republicans?**
Federalist Papers #2-3, #6, #9, and #10 (27 pages)

TENTH WEEK

- Tuesday, March 31:** **Rethinking the Nature of Union:
Republicanism, Federalism, and Nationalism**
Federalist Papers #14, #31, pp. 203-204 of #34, pp. 210-213
of #35, #37, #39, pp. 252 ("Security against")-256 ("latter.") of #41 (35 pages)
- Thursday, April 2:** **The So-Called Separation of Powers**
Federalist Papers #47 (to end of p. 303), #48-49, #51, #70 (28 pages)

ELEVENTH WEEK

- Tuesday, April 7:** **Bills of Rights**
Federalist Papers #78 and pp. 512 ("It has been")-15 ("the substance of the thing")
of #84 (12 pages)
- Thursday, April 9:** **Second Exam (on Rousseau and *The Federalist Papers*)**

TWELFTH WEEK

- Tuesday, April 14:** **Introduction to Marx: Dialectical Materialism**
Marx, "German Ideology/Feuerbach," pp. 148-75, 143-45 (31 pages)
- Thursday, April 16:** **Marx's Critique of Liberalism**
Marx, "On the Jewish Question," pp. 26-52 (27 pages)

THIRTEENTH WEEK

- Tuesday, April 21:** **Capitalism and Revolution**
Engels, pp. 699 ("The new")-717 (18 pages);
Marx, "Communist Manifesto," pp. 473-491 (18 pages)
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Why the Progressives Didn't Take Rights Seriously**
John Dewey, "Liberalism and Social Action" (9 pages)
John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, Introduction (20 pages)
Woodrow Wilson, "Socialism and Democracy" (3 pages)

Calvin Coolidge, "The Inspiration of the Declaration" (9 pages)

Hayek's Critique of Social Justice

Hayek, *The Mirage of Social Justice*, Chapter 9
(45 pages)

Hayek on Rights

Hayek, *The Mirage of Social Justice*, Appendix to Ch. 9

FIFTEENTH WEEK

Date TBA; 3:00-5:00 p.m.: Final Exam