



Seminar on Politics and Values

VA 466 Fall 2004

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Office Hours: MTRF, 5th Hour (11:45-12:35pm) or drop-in anytime.

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“Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually to slave to some defunct economist. Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the air, are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back.”

– John Maynard Keynes

The purpose of this course is twofold: first, to introduce you to the major thinkers and ideas of political philosophy, and, second, to explore the relevance of political theory for contemporary political issues. It is also intended to help you identify the ideological assumptions implicit in all political debates so that you can avoid the trap Keynes highlights. In short, we will use the thoughts of the past to deal with the problems of the present. The larger objective is to supply you with the ideological and analytical tools to enable you to develop a more coherent and reasoned personal political philosophy.

TEXTS: The following are **REQUIRED** and available for purchase in the Rose-Hulman Bookstore.

A. Alan Ebenstein, *Introduction to Political Thinkers*, 2nd Edition (New York: Harcourt College Publishers) 2002.

B. John Mueller, *Capitalism, Democracy, and Ralph's Pretty Good Grocery* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press) 1999.

C. Dinesh D'Souza, *What's So Great About America* (New York: Penguin) 2004.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Your grade in the course will be based on the following:

A. Class Attendance and Participation (25%): This course will be conducted as a seminar rather than a lecture, so each session will consist of a guided discussion of the assigned readings. Regular attendance and active participation in this class are the *minimum* requirement for getting a good grade in this course *regardless* of your performance on written work.

B. Take-Home Examinations (25% each; 50% total): These will consist of essay questions that ask you to explain, interpret, and analyze the key ideas from the readings and discussion. These will be due on **Monday, October 4** and **Monday, November 15**. You will get the questions one week before the due date.

Research Paper/Course Project (25%): In order to connect the issues we discuss in class to the practical problems of current day politics, everyone will write a research paper (or undertake an equivalent research project) that rigorously explores a topic where both politics and values come into play. Your focus should be on a normative question (“Is it right?”) rather than an empirical issue (“Does it work?”). For example, the question “Did the war in Iraq increase the recruitment of Islamic terrorists?” is an empirical question. “Was the war in Iraq morally justified?” is a normative question. Everyone should meet with me during the week of **September 8th** to discuss your topics. I want a written proposal from everyone by **Friday, September 19th**. The final paper will be due on **Monday, November 1st**. While there is no set length for this paper, you are unlikely to be able to effectively answer an appropriate research question in any less than 10 pages.

COURSE POLICIES: The following policies apply unless otherwise stated.

Cheating: You are expected to abide by the terms of the Institute’s Honor Code, which states that: “Plagiarism is taking the words or ideas of another and presenting them as your own. Cheating is making use of any assistance on an examination, assignment, or other class project (including written reference materials, help from other students, etc.) beyond that authorized by the professor.” Penalties for academic misconduct are at the discretion of the professor and can range from the loss of all credit on an assignment to a formal hearing before the Institute’s Rules and Discipline Committee. It is incumbent upon you to know what constitutes academic misconduct and make sure to avoid it. If you are in any way unsure about what constitutes a violation, please ask me. *Claiming ignorance after the fact is not a valid excuse. Think rationally; the risks outweigh the gains.*

Late Assignments: Extensions for exams or assignments will only be given if you have a legitimate excuse AND you contact me in advance. *All projects that are late will receive a letter grade reduction for each day, including weekend days, which they are late.* You can reach me via e-mail, voicemail, or by dropping a note in either my campus or HSS mailbox. Short of being in a coma, you should be able to reach me if there is a problem. (PLEASE NOTE: I do not accept assignments via e-mail attachments.) I am very accommodating to those who alert me to a problem in advance; I will be far less friendly if you approach me after the fact. *Failing to turn in either of the take-home exams or the research paper will result in an automatic ‘F’ for the course.*

Ideological Perspectives: Being a political scientist, I obviously have strong beliefs about political issues. However, my goal is not to indoctrinate you into my beliefs, but rather to allow you to *think critically* about political issues. The issues we will be exploring are inherently contentious and seldom amenable to objectively right or wrong answers (although there are questions of accurately or inaccurately representing the views of the authors that we will be reading). That being said, *there are good and bad arguments.* You may hold any opinion you wish, but *your arguments must be logically sound and supported by the available evidence.*

More importantly, I can only facilitate the learning process; I cannot force knowledge into your heads. You are all adults fully capable of being responsible students and active learners. That means that *if you do not understand something you need to take the initiative to find out the answer* – raise your hand, talk to me after class, come to my office. I cannot read minds, so it is up to you to try to seek clarity when it is lacking!

Class	Topics	Readings / Assignments
September 2-3	NO CLASS (Professor attending American Political Science Association Conference in Chicago)	Ebenstein, Introduction; & Donald Tannenbaum and David Schultz, "Political Philosophy: Introducing the Challenge"
September 6	Introduction to Course/Political Philosophy	DISCUSS PAPER TOPICS with me during this week.
September 7	Overview of Political Ideologies	Ideologies PowerPoint Slides
September 9-10	Plato	Ebenstein, Chapter 1
September 13-14	Aristotle	Ebenstein, Chapter 2
September 16-17	Augustine and Aquinas	Ebenstein, Chapters 3-4 PAPER PROPOSAL DUE on Friday 9/17
September 20-21	Niccolo Machiavelli	Ebenstein, Chapter 5
September 23-24	Thomas Hobbes	Ebenstein, Chapter 6
September 27-28	John Locke	Ebenstein, Chapter 7
September 30-October 1	Jean Jacques Rousseau	Ebenstein, Chapter 8
October 4-5	Edmund Burke	"Edmund Burke," in Strauss and Cropsey, <i>History of Political Philosophy</i> [Handout] TAKE-HOME MIDTERM DUE on Monday 10/4
October 7-8	John Stuart Mill	Ebenstein, Chapter 9
October 11-12	Karl Marx	Ebenstein, Chapter 10
October 14-15	FALL BREAK	
October 18-19	Friedrich Hayek	Ebenstein, Chapter 11
October 21-22	John Rawls	Ebenstein, Chapter 12
October 25-26	Capitalism and Democracy: Images and Mismatches	Mueller, Chapter 1
October 28-29	Capitalism: Image and Reality	Mueller, Chapters 2-5
November 1-2	Democracy: Image and Reality	Mueller, Chapter 6-8 RESEARCH PAPER DUE on Monday 11/1
November 4	Democracy and Capitalism: Connections and Disconnections	Mueller, Chapter 9
November 5	The Challenge Facing America	D'Souza, Preface and Chapter 1; "Pericles' Funeral Oration" [Handout]
November 8-9	America, the West and the Rest	D'Souza, Chapters 2-4
November 11-12	"America as an Example?" OR "America as an Example!"	D'Souza, Chapters 5-6
November 15		TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAM DUE on Monday 11/15

