

Department of Government
Skidmore College
Spring 1994

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Government 103

BASIC PROBLEMS IN POLITICS

307 Ladd

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:40-2:00 pm

Office hours: Wednesdays 9:30-11:30 am, and by appointment

This course will introduce students to the study of comparative politics, international relations, and political theory by examining problems or antimonies thought to be central to those subfields of government since the Second World War. We will begin with comparative politics and the problem of revolution and stability, then turn to international relations and the problem of war and peace, and end with political theory and the problem of freedom and "totalitarianism." We will also consider one recent work in political economy. The course will attempt to familiarize students with some of the more important political events and processes of the modern era, as well as with the strengths and weaknesses of some of the more influential ways of interpreting and analyzing those events and processes. The course will focus largely on Europe, though this focus will be neither exclusive nor uncritical.

The readings will be basic, yet demanding. There are no prerequisites for this course, except a willingness to learn to read, write, and speak critically about political life beyond the United States. Course meetings will consist of mix of lecture and discussion. Students will be expected to keep up with the reading, attend class regularly, and participate actively in discussion. Attendance will be noted; significant (more than two or three) unexcused absences will result in a loss of course credit. Noteworthy contributions to discussion will result in extra credit.

There will be two midterms and a comprehensive, scheduled final examination. Grades will be assigned on an 100-point scale and weighted in the following manner: 1st midterm--25%; 2nd midterm--35%; final examination--40%.

The following books, available at The Skidmore Shop, contain most of the required readings. Discussion will be easier with the specific editions listed below, but if you already own a different edition, buying another is not necessary--with one exception. It would be best to purchase the 2nd edition of the Goldstone collection.

Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (Vintage, 1989)

Jack A. Goldstone, ed., *Revolutions: Theoretical, Comparative, and Historical Studies*, 2nd ed. (Harcourt Brace, 1993)

Robert F. Kennedy, *Thirteen Days: A Memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Mentor, 1969)

John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (Hackett, 1978)

Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (Penguin, 1977)

Vaclav Havel, *Power of the Powerless: Citizens against the State in Central-Eastern Europe* (M.E. Sharpe, 1985)

In addition to these books, multiple copies of other required readings, marked by asterisks (*) have been placed on reserve at the Library.

SCHEDULE OF COURSE MEETINGS, READINGS, AND ASSIGNMENTS

* Indicates readings on reserve at the Library

I. REVOLUTION AND STABILITY: EUROPEAN POLITICS AND THE MODERN WORLD

- Tues., 25 January Introduction
No reading.
- Thurs., 27 January The Europe Question
Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, ch. 1, pp. 3-30.
- Tues., 1 February Old Regime France
*Gordon Wright, *France in Modern Times: From the Enlightenment to the Present*, 4th ed., chs. 1-4, pp. 3-40.
- Thurs., 3 February The French Revolution
*Wright, *France in Modern Times*, chs. 5-7, pp. 41-82.
- Tues., 8 February The Classic Analyses: Marx, Tocqueville, and Weber
Jack A. Goldstone, ed., *Revolutions: Theoretical, Comparative, and Historical Studies*, 2nd ed., ch. 1, pp. 21-36.
- Thurs., 10 February The Russian Revolution
*Mary McAuley, *Politics and the Soviet Union: An Introductory Analysis*, pp. 21-79.
- Tues., 15 February Contemporary Approaches: Modernization
Goldstone, *Revolutions*, ch. 2, pp. 37-54.
- Thurs., 17 February Contemporary Approaches: Structuralism & Neopatrimonialism
Goldstone, *Revolutions*, chs. 3-4 (selections) and Introduction, pp. 64-99, 1-17.
- Tues., 22 February First Midterm Examination
No reading assigned.

II. WAR AND PEACE: NATION-STATES AND WORLD POWER

- Thurs., 24 February Analyzing International Relations

*John Spanier, *Games Nations Play*, chs. 1-2, pp. 3-36.

Tues., 1 March

European Wars: A Leadership Model

*John G. Stroessinger, *Why Nations Go to War*, chs. 1-2, pp. 1-52.

Thurs., 3 March

European Wars: A Political-Economy Model

Paul Kennedy, *Great Powers*, ch. 6, pp. 275-343.

Tues., 8 March

Cold War and World Order

Paul Kennedy, *Great Powers*, ch. 7 (selection), pp. 347-395.

Thurs., 10 March

Almost the End: The View from the Top

Robert F. Kennedy, *Thirteen Days: A Memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis*, pp. 13-78.

--Spring Break!--

Tues., 22 March

Preserving the Peace, or the Dark at the End of the Tunnel?

Robert F. Kennedy, *Thirteen Days*, pp. 78-130.

Paul Kennedy, *Great Powers*, ch. 7 (selection), pp. 395-437.

Thurs., 24 March

Outside the (Western) World

*Edward Mortimer, *Faith and Power: The Politics of Islam*, selections, pp. 80-89 and 296-322.

Tues., 29 March

Regional Hegemony and the Multipolar World

*Mortimer, *Faith and Power*, pp. 322-371.

Recommended: Goldstone, *Revolutions*, ch. 4 (selection), pp. 128-146

Thurs., 31 March

Second Midterm Examination

No reading assigned.

III. FREEDOM AND TOTALITARIANISM: IDEOLOGIES AND THE WORLD OF CITIZENSHIP

Tues., 5 April

The Liberal Ideal of Freedom

John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, pp. 1-52.

Thurs., 7 April

Individuality, Society, and Progress

Mill, *On Liberty*, pp. 53-113.

Tues., 12 April

Conservative and Socialist Reactions

*Selections from Edmund Burke, Joseph de Maistre, and Michael Oakeshott in *Ideals and Ideologies: A Reader*, pp. 133-146 and 154-162.

Marx, *Communist Manifesto*, [Part I: Bourgeois and Proletarians] in Goldstone, *Revolutions*, ch. 1 (selection), pp. 20-29 [review].

*Marx, *Communist Manifesto* [Part II: Proletarians and Communists], pp. 22-31.

Thurs., 14 April

The Sociology of the Modern State

*Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, pp. 77-128.

- Tues., 19 April The Ultra-Modern State?
Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, pp. 21-134.
- Thurs., 21 April Humanity and Citizenship
Arendt, *Eichmann*, pp. 135-61, 206-19, and 253-79.
- Tues., 26 Apr. Civilizing Society
Vaclav Havel, et al, *Power of the Powerless*, pp. 7-41.
Recommended: Goldstone, ch. 4 (selection) pp. 165-180.
- Thurs., 28 Apr. Politics and Conscience
Havel, *Power*, pp. 41-99.
- Tues., 3 May Review and Conclusions
No reading assigned.