

THE MORAL BASIS OF POLITICS

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:40-4 pm, 2 Public Affairs Center

Office hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 2-2:30; Thursdays 4:15-5:15; and by appointment

Course Description. This course will introduce students to the study of political thought by investigating the problematic meanings of and relations between "politics" and "morality." In the present-day United States, as the introductory weeks will highlight, opinion varies widely as to what politics and morality are or ought to be, and as to how they are or ought to be related (if at all). In this respect, contemporary American perspectives on politics and morality tend to differ from the understandings that dominated public life in previous eras, at least officially. The course aims in part to retrieve and consider seriously such previous alternate conceptions of what philosophers sometimes called the righteous, virtuous, or good state. The course also aims in part to consider some of the ways in which such "classical" conceptions of order have come into question in modern states, while at the same time a degree of heightened moral discomfort with present-day politics has arisen. Thus, by the end of the semester, we will return to tensions and quandaries of the contemporary era, hopefully with a more sophisticated understanding of how and why investigating the moral basis of politics leads to questions that neither can be ignored easily nor can be answered easily, at least in terms satisfactory to all.

Course Requirements. A) This course will have a heavy yet quite rewarding reading list. Students will be expected to keep up with the reading throughout the semester. Plan to spend a fair amount of time reading before class and, at times, re-reading after class. In general, texts are to be brought to our meetings so that they may be referred to in lecture and discussion. B) Most course meetings will consist of a mix of lecture and informal discussion. At about every third meeting, however, approximately 40 minutes of the session will be devoted to a relatively formal discussion, as indicated on the following schedule. The day before each formal discussion period, four to five students will be asked to post questions about the readings under examination on an electronic discussion page to be created for this course. During the in-class discussion period, those students will then be responsible for beginning our conversations by elaborating briefly on the questions or problems the readings raised for them. Details about these discussion responsibilities will be given at the beginning of the second week of class. C) Students should also expect to attend class regularly, and to participate actively in the discussions, including ones they do not lead. Attendance will be noted, and grades will be given for participation. The participation grade will reflect in part the student's attendance record. D) There will be three papers of 3-4, 4-6, and 6-8 pages respectively, and a final examination. Grades will be assigned on an 100-point scale and weighted in the following manner: 1st paper (15%); 2nd paper (20%); 3rd paper (25%); final (30%); and participation (10%). For further details on course requirements, see p. 4, below. Note: This entire syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

Readings. The following texts, available at Atticus Books, contain most of the required readings. Note that we will be reading only portions of the books marked with a percentage sign ("%"). In such cases you may want to read in the reserve room, rather than purchase the whole book. Copies of these books, as well copies of other required readings marked by asterisks (*) on the following pages, have been placed on reserve at Olin Library. In addition, packets containing photocopies of the readings marked by asterisks are also available at Atticus Books.

- Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Democracy on Trial* (BasicBooks, 1995)
- %Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (HarperCollins, 1975)
- Confucius, *The Analects*, trans. Chichung Huang (Oxford, 1997)
- %Marcus Tullius Cicero, *On Government*, trans. Michael Grant (Penguin Classics, 1993)
- Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the Body Politic*, trans. Kate Langdon Forhan (Cambridge, 1994)
- Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. David Wootton (Penguin Classics, 1995)
- Thomas More, *Utopia*, trans. Paul Turner (Penguin Classics, 1965)
- John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. James H. Tully (Hackett, 1983)
- Lynn Hunt, ed., *The French Revolution and Human Rights* (Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 1996)
- Isabelle de Charrière, *Letters of Mistress Henley Published by Her Friend* (MLA, 1993)
- Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, (International Publishers, 1948)
- André Gide, *The Immoralist*, trans. Richard Howard (Vintage, 1970)
- %Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (Grove Press, 1968)
- %Charles Taylor, et al, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton, 1994)

SCHEDULE OF COURSE MEETINGS, READINGS, AND ASSIGNMENTS

* Indicates readings on reserve at Olin Library and in the course packet at Atticus Books

1. WHY AMERICANS (SOMETIMES) HATE POLITICS: TWO PERSPECTIVES ON DEMOCRACY

Tues., 9 September	<u>Introduction</u> No reading.
Thurs., 11 September	<u>Democracy: Divided We Fall?</u> Jean Bethke Elshtain, <i>Democracy on Trial</i> , chs. 1-2, pp. 1-63.
Tues., 16 September	<u>The Communitarian Ethic/Discussion</u> Elshtain, <i>Democracy</i> , chs. 3-5 (selections), pp. 65-96, 107-38.
Thurs., 18 September	<u>Democratic Morality: A Theoretical Illusion?</u> Joseph A. Schumpeter, <i>Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy</i> , chs. 20-21, pp. 235-68.
Tues., 23 September *1st Paper Topics*	<u>Realist Modelling/Discussion</u> Schumpeter, <i>Capitalism</i> , chs. 22-23, pp. 269-302.

2. WHAT IS GOOD ORDER? THREE CLASSICAL VIEWS

Thurs., 25 September	<u>The Way of Humanity and the Virtues of Patriarchy</u> Confucius (Kong Fuzi), <i>The Analects of Confucious</i> , Books 1-10, pp. 47-115. Recommended: "Terms," pp. 14-35.
Tues., 30 September *1st Papers Due*	<u>The Wise Ruler and the Way of Righteousness/Discussion</u> Confucius, <i>Analects</i> , Books 11-20, pp. 116-187.
Thurs., 2 October (Rosh Hashanah)	<u>The Virtuous Republic</u> Marcus Tullius Cicero, "On the State" [AKA <i>The Republic</i>] and "On Laws" in <i>On Government</i> , chs. 4-5, pp. 172-220.
Tues., 7 October	<u>The Heroic Orator/Discussion</u> Cicero, "The Philippics: Against Rule by One Man," in <i>On Government</i> , ch. 7, pp. 337-87.
Thurs., 9 October	<u>The Godly Rule</u> *Augustine of Hippo, "The Compatibility of Christianity and Politics" [AKA Letters 91 and 138], in <i>Political Writings</i> , trans. Tkacz and Kries (Hackett, 1994), pp. 202-12. Christine de Pizan, <i>The Book of the Body Politic</i> , pp. 3-57.
Tues., 14 October *2nd Paper Topics*Pizan, <i>Book of the Body Politic</i> , pp. 58-110.	<u>The Prince and the Interdependent Community/Discussion</u> *Allan Bloom, "Introduction: Our Virtue," in <i>The Closing of the American Mind</i> , pp. 25-43.

3. THE MODERN STATE--MORALITY IN QUESTION

Thurs., 16 October (Sukkot)	<u>Political Man</u> Niccolò Machiavelli, <i>The Prince</i> , Letter to Francesco Vettori, Dedication, chs. 1-11, pp. 1-38.
Tues., 21 October *2nd Paper Due*	<u>New Orders/Discussion</u> Machiavelli, <i>The Prince</i> , chs. 12-26, pp. 38-80.

Thurs., 23 October Dangerous States
Thomas More, *Utopia*, introductory letters and Book 1, pp. 25-68.

Tues., 28 October Morality and Human Imagination/Discussion
More, *Utopia*, Book 2, pp. 69-132.

4. ON THE GOOD--WITHOUT ORDERS

Thurs., 30 October Private Conscience and Natural Rights
John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, pp. 21-58.
Lynn Hunt, ed., *The French Revolution and Human Rights*, pp. 35-50.

Tues., 4 November The Rights of Man, and Social Troubles/Discussion
Hunt, ed., *French Revolution*, pp. 51-139.

Thurs., 6 November Invisible Woman
Isabelle de Charrière, *Letters of Mistress Henley Published by Her Friend*, pp. 1-42.
*Carole Pateman, "Feminist Critiques of the Public/Private Dichotomy," in *The Disorder of Women* (Stanford, 1989), pp. 118-40.

Tues., 11 November Ideologies, Class, and History/Discussion
3rd Paper Topics
Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, pp. 3-48.

Thurs., 13 November Middle Class Doubts
André Gide, *The Immoralist*, Preface and Part 1, pp. xi-xv, 3-68.

Tues., 18 November Different Goods?/Discussion
Gide, *Immoralist*, Part 2, pp. 69-171.

Thurs., 20 November Otherness, Violence, and Politics
Frantz Fanon, "Concerning Violence," on *The Wretched of the Earth*, pp. 35-106.

5. CONTEMPORARY POLITICS: IS AN OPEN ETHIC POSSIBLE? DESIRABLE? REALISTIC?

Tues., 25 November The Way of Relativist Social Science/Discussion
3rd Paper Due
Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, eds. Gerth and Mills (Oxford, 1958), ch. 4, pp. 77-128.

Thurs., 27 November THANKSGIVING - HOLIDAY!

Tues., 2 December Enduring Convictions
*M. L. King, "Letter from Birmingham Jail," pp. 289-302.
*Wei Jingsheng, *Courage to Stand Alone* (selections), pp. 3-17, 70-82, 93-5, 129-54, 164-76.
Suggested: Sophia Woodman, "Wei Jingsheng's Lifelong Battle for Democracy," pp. 249-71.

Thurs., 4 December Negotiating Orders/Discussion
Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, pp. 25-73.

Tues., 9 December Review and Conclusion: The Moral(s) of Political Life?
Vaclav Havel, "Politics and Conscience," in *Open Letters: Selected Writings, 1965-1990*, pp. 249-71.
Review: Elshaint, Schumpeter, Bloom, Locke, and Pateman.

Tues., 16 Dec. FINAL EXAMINATION, 2 - 5 pm

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Written Assignments

Course requirements will include three formal, typewritten essays on assigned topics.

First paper (3-4 pages): due Tues., 30 September.

Second paper (4-6 pages): due Tues., 21 October.

Third paper (6-8 pages): due Tues., 25 November.

In addition, there will be a comprehensive, in-class final examination, to be scheduled by the registrar's office during the regular final examination period.

Participation

Students will be expected to participate in class discussions regularly. Grades for participation will be based partly upon my evaluation of students' comments. What I will look for is whether students have a solid understanding of the readings, whether they are able to follow and contribute to class discussion, how intelligent and informed their questions and comments are, and how much effort they are putting into the class. In addition, attendance and completion of the computer requirements (explained below) will count toward the participation grade.

Computer Discussion Requirements

As part of the discussion requirement, students will be expected to post questions and comments on the readings on an electronic discussion page to be designed for this class. The aim of this requirement is two-fold: first, to prime students for in-class discussion by flagging topics and questions that interest or trouble student leaders as they read the texts; and second, to provide a forum for following up and continuing discussion outside of class. To these ends, students will be assigned in groups of 4 to 5 to pose questions and give comments in preparation for particular in-class discussions. In addition, all students will be expected to log on and participate in electronic discussions over the course of the semester. The specific details of this requirement will be outlined during the second week of class.

Grading Policy

Grades will be assigned on an 100-point scale, and weighted in the following manner:

First paper:	15%
Second paper:	20%
Third paper:	25%
Final exam:	30%
Participation:	10%

Office Hours

I will hold regular office hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays in my office, 420 PAC, at the times listed on the first page of this syllabus. My telephone extension there is 2096. Voicemail messages can be left for me at that extension. I can also be available outside of my office hours. Notes can be left for me in my mailbox in the Government Department Office, 116 PAC. E-mail messages can also be left for me at dmcennerney@wesleyan.edu. Please note: in general I will be on campus Tuesdays and Thursdays only. I share an office with another faculty member, who will be using our common office on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Hence, you will not be able to reach me in my office on those days--including by means of mail, voicemail, and e-mail messages. (Though, I will retrieve e-mail messages from home, usually.) If it is necessary to speak to me on some day or time outside my office hours, you may want to contact the Government Department secretary in order to ask her for my home telephone number, which she has my permission to give to you.