

GVPT 241: Introduction to Political Theory

Summer Session I (6/1/09-7/12/09)

Class Hours: Mondays & Wednesdays 12:30pm-3:50pm

Classroom: 1111 Tydings Hall

Instructor: Sung-Wook Paik

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Course Description

This is a course designed to provide students with a survey of the history of western political thought. Throughout the course, we will read selections from their seminal works of Aristotle, Locke, Rousseau, Federalists, and J.S. Mill focusing on a key aspect of political theory: the constitution of good political orders. In contemporary context, constitutions are generally understood as an exogenous system of laws which controls human actions and outlooks. One of the goals of this course is to demonstrate the insufficiencies of this narrow viewpoint. A theory of constitutionalism cannot be hermetically sealed off from broader political and social practices taking place outside the legal realm. Constitutions not only constrain politics, but also create and empower actual institutions that are necessary for maintaining a regime. Furthermore, the argument will arrive at a full circle when we understand how constitutions are an integral part of political education: comprehensively shaping the identities and characters of citizens. Through this course, we will examine how each thinker combines an account of human nature, institutional design, and political education in offering a unique vision of constituting good political orders.

Broadly speaking, the objective of GVPT241 is three-fold: (1) to enhance critical thinking in engaging philosophical texts; (2) to provide necessary skills in expressing and defending one's thoughts coherently both in writing and discussion; and, last but certainly not least, (3) to foster the capacity of public reasoning and justification as responsible citizens in a democratic regime.

Required Texts

There are five required texts for the course, available for purchase at the University bookstore. Although you may choose to use a different edition/publisher for each of the texts listed below, I strongly insist that you use the Reeve edition (Hackett Publishing) for Aristotle's *Politics* and the Masters edition (Bedford/St. Martin's) for Rousseau's *Social Contract*.

Aristotle, *Politics* (Hackett Publishing)

John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* (Hackett Publishing)

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, On the Social Contract (Bedford/St. Martin's)
Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, Federalist Papers (Signet Classics)
John Stuart Mill, On Liberty and Other Essays (Oxford University Press)

Occasionally, I will assign additional readings (marked with an asterisk "*" in the course outline). These readings are *required* and will be made available at the BSOS Copy Center located at the first floor of Tydings Hall.

There are also two recommended books listed below. These extra materials will not be referenced directly in class, but will provide guidance for understanding some of the main themes of the course. Students, however, are *NOT required* to purchase these books.

Sheldon Wolin, Politics and Vision, Expanded edition (Princeton University Press)
John Rawls Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy (Harvard University Press)

Course Requirements and Grading Standards

Students are expected to attend class regularly, complete all of the assigned reading before class, actively participate in class, and turn in assignments on time. The final grade will be determined by the following distribution:

Class participation and Attendance	20%
Quizzes	20% (5% each)
Midterm Exam (Take-home)	30%
Final Paper	30%

Class participation and Attendance (20%): Students will be expected to come to class well-prepared. You should have read the assigned material carefully, preferably more than once, taken notes, and formulated your own thoughts and questions. In addition, you should participate frequently and thoughtfully to the class discussion. Considering how class only meets twice a week, attendance is absolutely crucial. Unexcused absences will detract from your ability to actively participate in class, and will be assessed accordingly. **Three or more unexcused absences will result in a failing grade.**

Quizzes (20%): There will be five, unannounced quizzes to test your comprehension of the reading material for the week. The questions for the quizzes will be straightforward and factual. Your responses will be evaluated on the basis of whether you provide an accurate description of the text with a degree of detail. It is not sufficient to simply get the general idea. **Each quiz is worth 5% of your final grade for a total of 20%.** (Quizzes will be graded according to the following formula: A=5, B=4.2, C=3.4, D=2.6, F=0; No plus or minus on the quizzes.) Students who have taken all five quizzes will be able to drop their lowest quiz grade. Or, you may choose to take a 'free pass' on one of the five quizzes in case of an absence.

Midterm exam—Take-home (30%): The midterm will be a take-home, open-book exam. The questions will be distributed in class on Wednesday, June 17; that is, one week prior

to the due date. Further instructions and guidelines will be announced along with the questions. The midterm exam is due at the **beginning of lecture on Wednesday, June 24**. Electronic submissions will NOT be accepted. Late submission will result in a penalty of half a letter grade per day late.

Final Paper (30%): The final paper will assess your understanding of and ability to analyze materials from the books and lectures. Papers should thoughtfully advance a thesis based on independent thinking with accuracy and clarity. A list of sample topics will be distributed in class roughly a week prior to the due date. Topics will **cumulatively** draw upon various themes dealt throughout the course. Alternatively, you may write on a topic of your choice that is relevant to the class materials with my approval. The paper will be due **Thursday, July 9**. Email submissions are accepted. Late papers will be penalized half a letter grade per day late.

Your course grade will be assessed on an absolute scale according to which: 90-100=A, 80-89=B, 70-79=C, 60-69=D, 0-59=F. There will be NO CURVE.

Other Issues and Policies

1. Academic Integrity: UMCP has a nationally recognized Code of Academic Integrity, administered by the Student Honor Council. This Code sets standards for academic integrity at UMCP for all undergraduate and graduate students. As a student you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, or plagiarism. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Student Honor Council, please visit: <http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/students.html>.

2. Accommodations: The University and your instructor will provide appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities. *Students with disabilities of any sort should inform the instructor of their needs at the beginning of the semester*. The instructor will then consult with the department chair and/or Disability Support Service to determine and implement appropriate accommodations. The instructor will make every effort to accommodate such needs in accordance with University policies.

Students will not be penalized because of observances of their religious beliefs, and will be given the opportunity to make up within a reasonable time any academic assignment that is missed due to individual participation in religious observances. *It is the student's responsibility to inform the instructor of any intended absences for religious observances in advance*. Notice should be provided as soon as possible, but no later than the end of the schedule adjustment period, July 18.

Course Outline

Class 1: Monday, June 1

-- General Introduction: Political Theory and Constitutionalism

-- What is a Constitution?—Some Basic Questions

Reading: *Norman Jacobson, “Political Science and Political Education,”
American Political Science Review, Vol. 57, No. 3 (Sep, 1963): 561-569.

Class 2: Wednesday, June 3

- The Good Life in Imperfect Political Communities
- Constituting Citizens: Relationship between Virtue and Law
- Moderating Conflict: Class and the Mixed Regime

Reading: Aristotle, *Politics*, bks. 1, 3-4.

Class 3: Monday, June 8

- The Fragility of Political Environment: Understanding Constitutional Change
- Constitutionalism as Education and/or Political Socialization

Reading: Aristotle, *Politics*, bks. 5-7.
(Tips: For Book 7, focus primarily on chs. 1-3 and ch. 13 and skim the rest.)

Class 4: Wednesday, June 10

- Locke and the Liberalism of Rationality
- Self-ownership, Property, and Political Membership
- Political Society and the Physics of Consent

Reading: Locke, *Second Treatise*, chs. 1-8.

Class 5: Monday, June 15

- The Constitutional Design of Limited Government
- The Educative Function of Higher Law
- Constitutional Authority: Legislative Supremacy vs. Executive Prerogative

Reading: Locke, *Second Treatise*, chs. 9-15, 18-19.

Class 6: Wednesday, June 17

- Origins of Inequality: Amour-propre and the Loss of Authenticity
- Dependence as Corruption
- General Will: Restoring Autonomy, Moralizing Obedience

Reading: *Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, selections;
Rousseau, *Social Contract*, bks. 1-2.

NOTE: Take-home Midterm to be distributed in class.

Class 7: Monday, June 22

- The Conditions of Popular Sovereignty
- Constituting Citizens: The Educative Role of Civil Religion
- Ambiguous Legacy: Strong Democracy or Totalitarianism?

Reading: Rousseau, *Social Contract*, bks. 3-4.

Class 8: Wednesday, June 24

- Madison's Critique of Pure Democracy
- Counteracting Factions: Representation and the Extended Republic
- On the Social Basis of the American Regime: The Role of the Propertied

Reading: *Federalist Papers*, # 1, 9-12, 14-15, 35, 39.

NOTE: Midterm exam is due.

Class 9: Monday, June 29

- The Constitutional Design of the Commercial Republic
- Structure as the Best Safeguard of Freedom

Reading: *Federalist Papers*, #47-51, 56-57, 62-63, 70, 78, 84.
* Thomas Jefferson, *Political Writings*, selections.

Class 10: Wednesday, July 1

- "Man as a Progressive Being": Liberty and Human Progress
- On the Educative Function of the Freedom of Discussion
- Creative Individuality against Collective Mediocrity

Reading: Mill, *On Liberty*, ch. 1 & 3;
Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, chs. 1-2.

NOTE: Sample paper topics for the final paper to be distributed on Thursday, July 2 via course mailer.

Class 11: Monday, July 6

- Elitism and Political Education
- Popular Sovereignty and Universal Suffrage: Necessary but Insufficient
- Institutionalizing Individuality: On (Unequal) Representation

Reading: Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, chs. 3-8, 10.

Class 12: Wednesday, July 8

- When do Constitutions Fail?
- Concluding Discussion

Reading: *Mark Brandon, "Constitutionalism and Constitutional Failure," in Sotirios Barber and Robert George eds., *Constitutional Politics: Essays on Constitutional Making, Maintenance, and Change* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001): 298-313.

NOTE: Final Paper is due Thursday, July 9.