P.Sc. 2004 Spring Semester 2010
Survey of Western Political Thought
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Office hours: 11-12 MW, Ketchum 134B

COURSE SYLLABUS

Course Description

For over two thousand years, some prominent theorists have thought systematically and comprehensively about the question: what is ***the best form of government for human beings***? What is the purpose of government *most fitting* for humans? What kind of talents, skills and practical knowledge are required for *good governing?* To know the best form of government, these thinkers first determined what was best for human beings generally, or 'universally.' Not surprisingly, political theorists came up with often quite different answers. However, they all agreed that the main issues related to good government were the ideas of **the public good, freedom, equality, and justice.**

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Since the American and French Revolutions at the end of the 18th century, more nations than ever before (with of course many exceptions) agree that the best form of government is democracy, based on constitutionally protected sovereignty of the people, individual rights and a free society.

In the case of the United States of America, the first modern 'republic' or democracy, the basic guiding principles and purpose of government are succinctly expressed in the first parts of the **'Declaration of Independence' of 1776**. Additionally, the brief **'Preamble' to the Constitution** of 1787 states the general aim of the new form of federal government.

The "Declaration" has long been considered the most succinct statement of what are still said to be **the 'highest values'** of U.S. democracy, namely individual rights and freedoms.
Briefly, it proclaims the ***self-evident truth*** of *equal rights*, among them the *rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.* Governments, deriving their ***just powers*** from the *consent* of the people, are supposed to *secure* these rights. The people have the *right to 'alter or abolish' any governments* not securing such rights. Government must be founded on such *principles and organized power* that are *most likely* to 'effect' the people's *Safety and Happiness.*

The **Preamble** to the Constitution, supporting the truths of the **Declaration,** includes all the necessary aims and **purposes of a government intended to 'secure the blessings of liberty**,' and states:

'We the People of the United States, in order to form a more *perfect Union*, establish *Justice,* insure *domestic Tranquility*, provide for the *common defense*, promote the *general Welfare*, and secure the *Blessings of Liberty* to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this CONSTITUTION for the United States of America.

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As a nation, the union of the United States and its form of government are *Constituted* on the basis of these 'self-evident truths,' and these various purposes. **In fact, the Preamble states all the important ingredients of a free government, namely a united people, domestic peace, national security, the pursuit of general welfare for the people, and the establishment of justice. Only if those goals are pursued will the 'blessings' of liberty be secured. These are also the main themes and questions that great political thinkers have explored over centuries.** *Thus, by studying the historical background of these key issues we should*

better understand the nature of the constitutional system under which we live.

To facilitate our understand, a number of **key questions** will guide us through our studies this semester. To make our task simpler, we will relate all of these questions to what concerns us all, democracy and its development over time.

1. What **unites people** so they can form a **political community**? What does 'citizenship' in a democracy mean?
2. What are **rights,** and what **forms of freedom** can we distinguish? What is the difference between **individual** freedoms and rights, and the **political freedom** of a united people to govern itself?
3. What kind of government best 'secures' the blessings of Liberty? **How is good government defined in democracy?**
4. How is the **'general Welfare'** of a democratic people determined, and how is it best realized?
5. **What is justice in a democracy**, and how is it best guaranteed, given the fact that it is required to **secure the blessings of Liberty?**

In addition to looking at some of the historically important theories dealing with these key issues, we will conclude the semester by reading two contemporary theories of **justice in democracy**. This will show us that questions of justice and its relation to freedom and good government continue to be the central issues and questions today. Throughout, our final purpose is to better understand the very foundations of free government and a just society.

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Required Readings

1. **Benjamin Constant**: The Liberty of the Ancients compared to that of the Moderns (1819) *(available online)*
2. **Aristotle:** The Nichomachean Ethics
3. **Machiavelli**: The Prince
4. **John Locke**: Two Treatises of Government: The Second Treatise
5. **Hamilton, Madison, Jay**: The Federalist Papers
6. **Karl Marx**: The Communist Manifesto (*available online*)

7. **Michael Walzer**: Spheres of Justice
8. **Michael Sandel**: Justice: What's the Right Thing to do?

The selected readings from these texts are given below for the assigned dates on the semester calendar.

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Course requirements

NOTE: 80% of your final grade will consist of your performance required by the lecture part of the course. The other 20% of your grade is determined by fulfilling the *additional requirements* set by your recitation instructor (you will receive a separate recitation syllabus).

The 80% lecture part of the course has the following separate requirements:

1. Midterm examination,(60 minutes), 30 points
2. Final Examination,(90 minutes), 45 points

3. Two short (500 words, or approx. 3pages) papers, 10 points each, to be assigned in the recitation sections.
4. Attendance: 5 points

The examinations will consist of 'multiple choice' and 'short answer' and identification questions. We will discuss the precise format and coverage in a review session before the exams.
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Central Issues and questions raised by the assigned authors:

Benjamin Constant (1819): Freedom has long been a central aim of communities. But what are the main differences between 'ancient' and 'modern' liberties? What are the causes of these differences? What are the unique characteristics of freedom and government in modern democracies?

Aristotle (around 330BC): What are the characteristics of a good citizen? What are their 'virtues?' What holds a community of free citizens together? What does A. mean by 'citizen friendship?' Is equal freedom compatible with justice? Are his ideas still relevant for modern democracy?

Machiavelli (1513): what if any are the differences between what guides the lives of individuals in a community and the necessary requirements of governing a state? What are the skills required for governing? What are the consequences of M.s views for just government in a democracy?

Locke (1692): The American revolutionaries claimed that Locke was the main theorist for explaining the nature of equal 'individual rights.' What are the origins of pre-political, 'natural' rights, and the requirements of just and free government? Why do humans

need government? Why does the enjoyment of individual rights in civic society require reasonable individuals, and how are they created? What are the origins of private property, and what are its social results?

The Federalist Papers (Madison and Hamilton, 1787):
The advocates of the new US constitution of 1787 thought they established a new kind of 'republic' or popular government which could avoid the mistakes of all earlier republics. They created a new form of 'representative republic,' with a system of 'checks and balances' and separation of powers (to guarantee just power), and a free society of multiple groups or factions united as one people. How does a democracy governed by such a constitution as 'fundamental law' function?

Karl Marx (1840s): M. argues that the economic system of capitalism, based on private ownership of property defended by Locke and the Americans, prevents equal freedom and justice for all. After the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, M. claims that 'communism' will establish equal freedom and justice, and a true democracy.

M.Walzer (contemporary): Spheres of Justice
Walzer argues that modern democracy cannot have one idea of justice for all of its various activities. Instead, different principles of justice apply to different concerns, like distribution of political office, citizenship rights, ownership of property and money, education, work, etc. The main role of politics or government is to make sure these different principles are properly applied. W. argues that using the same idea of justice in all areas of human conduct will create injustice instead.

M. Sandel (contemporary): Justice: What is the Right thing to do?

Sandel is a master at relating contemporary practical questions of justice (what is just about the recent government bailout, the draft, same-sex marriage, inequalities in America, etc?) to theories of justice by some great political thinkers and the American constitution. He tries to show that questions of justice are still central to securing the 'blessings of liberty.'

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Semester Calendar

(subject to some adjustments)

Week 1: **Jan 11-13**

Introduction: The principal American 'founding documents' and the key issues of politics: the use of **constitutional power** for the sake of **freedom, justice and good government**.

Week 2: Mo Holiday, Wed. Jan.20 only: The modern emphasis on Individual rights and freedom.

Reading: Benjamin Constant's essay on ancient and modern freedoms (online)

Week 3: Jan. 25-27 The Federalist Papers.

How is freedom protected by the Federal Constitution? What is the rule of the sovereign people in governing? How is government prevented from abusing power? How does the Constitution serve as the 'fundamental law' regulating politics? What is the

understanding of 'justice' in this system? **Reading:** Federalist Papers 10, 49, 51, 57, 78, 1(Introduction)

Week 4: Feb. 1-3 The Federalist continued

Week 5: Feb. 8-10 Mo: Federalist, **Wed:** Introduction to Locke, and the nature of equal individual rights to 'life, liberty and property.' The 'reasonable' nature of liberty, and the education for liberty. **Readings**: Second Treatise, chaps. II, III, V, VI (through paragraph 65), chap. VII (through paragraph 90), chap. VIII (through paragraph 99), chap. XI.

Week 6: Feb. 15-17 Locke

Week 7: Feb. 22-24 Aristotle. What are the characteristics of a citizen? How are such characteristics (or political virtues) created in a political community? How does A.s teaching compare with popular notions of 'citizenship' today? **Reading**; Nichomachean Ethics, books 1,2,5,8-9. **Feb. 24, first short paper due**

Week 8: Mar 1-3 Aristotle and Locke compared. Review: Citizenship, private freedom and government: **Midterm exam, Wed. 3rd**

Week 12: Mar 29-31 **Week 9: Mar 8-10** Is government based on a different 'morality' than the lives of private citizens? Machiavelli and his teaching of the 'Necessities of state:'**Reading**; The Prince, chaps. XV-XXVI; VIII-IX.

Week 10: Mar 15-17 Karl Marx's attack on Locke and the US. Constitutional democracy: the promises of communism as 'true democracy.' **Reading:** The Communist Manifesto (online)

Week 11: Mar 22-24 **Spring Break**

Week 12: Mar 29-31: Justice in Modern Democratic societies: M Walzer. Reading: Preface, chaps. 1,3,4, 8,12, 13.

Week 13: Apr 5-7 Walzer, and M. Sandel: Justice, what's the right thing to do? Reading: chaps. 1 through 4; 7 through 10.

Week 14: Apr 12-14 Sandel continued

Week 15: Apr 19-21 Sandel continued. **Apr. 21, 2nd short paper due**

Week 16: Apr 26-28 Walzer and Sandel compared. Course summary and semester review

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Final Examination. For the date, please check the college exam schedule

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VARIOUS UNIVERSITY POLICIES CONCERNING RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS OF FACULTY AND STUDENTS

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING UNIVERSITY POLICIES VERY CAREFULLY!!!

(1) The Boulder Provost's **Disability Task Force** recommended syllabus statement:

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to
me a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs
be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact: 303-492-8671, Willard 322, and http://www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices

If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see guidelines at http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices/go.cgi?select=temporary.html

Disability Services' letters for students with disabilities indicate legally mandated reasonable accommodations. The syllabus statements and answers to Frequently Asked Questions can be found at http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices

Policy on Religious Observances

(2) It is the responsibility of every instructor to clearly explain his or her procedures about absences due to religious observances in the course syllabus so that all students are fully informed, in writing, near the beginning of each semester's classes. Campus policy regarding religious observances states that faculty must make reasonable accommodation for them and in so doing, be careful not to inhibit or penalize those students who are exercising their rights to religious observance. Faculty should be aware that a given religious holiday may be observed with very different levels of attentiveness by different members of the same religious group and thus may require careful consideration to the particulars of each individual case.
See http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html

A comprehensive calendar of the religious holidays most commonly observed by CU-Boulder students is at http://www.interfaithcalendar.org/

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, {{insert your procedures here}}
See full details at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html

REGULATIONS CONCERNING CLASS ROOM BEHAVIOR

(3) Faculty and students should be aware of the campus -Classroom Behavior' policy at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html as well as faculty rights and responsibilities listed at http://www.colorado.edu/FacultyStaff/faculty-booklet.html#Part_1

These documents describe examples of unacceptable classroom behavior and
provide information on how to handle such circumstances should they arise.
Faculty are encouraged to address the issue of classroom behavior in the
syllabus.

Maintaining the appropriate learning environment:
Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate
learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards
may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are
especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with
differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation,
gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to
the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your
request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise
me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate
changes to my records. See policies at
http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html and at
http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code

(4) The Office of **Discrimination and Harassment** recommends the following
syllabus statement:

The University of Colorado at Boulder policy on Discrimination and
Harassment, the University of Colorado policy on Sexual Harassment and the
University of Colorado policy on Amorous Relationships apply to all
students, staff and faculty. Any student, staff or faculty member who
believes s/he has been the subject of sexual harassment or discrimination or
harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability,
creed, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status should contact the
Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office
of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. Information about the ODH, the above
referenced policies and the campus resources available to assist individuals
regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at
http://www.colorado.edu/odh

Honor Code:

The Honor Council
recommended syllabus statement:

All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-735-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Other information on the Honor Code can be found at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html and at http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/