

Senior Sem: Political Theory PSCI-4024-002 TTH 03:30 PM - 04:45 PM HLMS 241

Instructor:

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Office Hours: Wed, 10 a.m. - noon

Course Focus:

This seminar illuminates foundation thought in modern political philosophy. The topic will be Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws*, which we will read closely week by week. We will also read *his Considerations on the Greatness of the Romans* and his *Persian Letters*, while referencing other writings and commentaries. Prior to beginning the text, we will establish a context for the discussion with a general overview of the history of political philosophy, with a focus on Montesquieu's most direct predecessors. Our goal is to understand the larger conversation in which Montesquieu took part and his place within that conversation. We also want to consider whether the philosophical ideas that informed his work bear any implications for the political events that unfolded subsequently.

Learning Objectives:

- In the following class sessions we will explore *Spirit of the Laws* in detail, interjecting mid-way reflection upon the other works.

TEXTS:

W. Allen, "Montesquieu's Manner of Discovering Man's Duties." Course pack in Canvas.

Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, Course pack provided in Canvas.

Montesquieu, Charles de Secondat, baron de, 1689-1755. *Persian letters*. edited with an introduction by Stuart D. Warner. translated by Stuart D. Warner and Stéphane Douard. South Bend, Indiana : St. Augustine's Press, [2017].

Montesquieu, Charles de Secondat, and David Lowenthal. 1965. *Considerations on the causes of the greatness of the Romans and their decline*. New York: Free Press.

REFERENCES:

- W. Allen. "That All Politics is Local: Book 18 of *Spirit of the Laws*." Provided in Canvas.
- W. Allen. "Translating Power." Provided in Canvas.
- W. Allen. *The Personal and the Political: Three Fables of Montesquieu*. Provided in Canvas.
- W, Allen and R. M. Peterson. "The Ethics of Montesquieu and the Natural Law." Provided in Canvas.
- Montesquieu.
- "Essai touchant les loix naturelles." Provided in Canvas.
- Montesquieu. "Défense de L'Esprit des Lois." Provided in Canvas.
- Bibby, Andrew Scott. 2015. *Montesquieu's political economy*. [Dissertation text available at this link: <https://search-proquest-com.proxy1.cl.msu.edu/docview/893128142>]
- Montesquieu's science of politics: essays on the spirit of laws. edited by David W. Carrithers, Michael A. Mosher, and Paul A. Rahe. Lanham, MD : Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, [2001].
- Pangle, Thomas L. 2010. *The theological basis of liberal modernity in Montesquieu's Spirit of the laws*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Rahe, Paul Anthony. 2009. *Soft despotism, democracy's drift: Montesquieu, Rousseau, Tocqueville, and the modern prospect*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Rahe, Paul Anthony. 2009. *Montesquieu and the logic of liberty: war, religion, commerce, climate, terrain, technology, uneasiness of mind, the spirit of political vigilance, and the foundations of the modern republic*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Carrese, Paul. 2003. *The cloaking of power: Montesquieu, Blackstone, and the rise of judicial activism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Available for 7-day borrow from Ebsco at <https://web-a-ebSCOhost-com.proxy1.cl.msu.edu/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/ZTAwMHhuYV9fMzE1NDkwX19BTg2?nobk=y&sid=b94f6586-9579-4af7-a49d-0ef0ee7d2ab1@sessionmgr4008&vid=3&format=EB&rid=1>
- Montesquieu's science of politics : essays on the spirit of laws. edited by David W. Carrithers, Michael A. Mosher, and Paul A. Rahe. Lanham, MD : Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, [2001], ©2001.

- Carrithers, David Wallace, and Patrick Coleman. 2002. *Montesquieu and the spirit of modernity*. Oxford: Voltaire Foundation.
- Drei, Henri. 1998. *La vertu politique: Machiavel et Montesquieu*. Paris: Harmattan.
- Schaub, Diana J. 1995. *Erotic liberalism: women and revolution in Montesquieu's Persian letters*. Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield.

SEMINAR SCHEDULE:

Weeks:

1. *Spirit of the Laws*, Preface, Books 1-2
2. Books 3-5
3. Books 6-8
4. Books 9-10
5. Book 11
6. *Considerations on the Greatness and Decline of the Romans*
7. Books 12-13
8. Books 14-17
9. Books 18-19 and *The Persian Letters*
10. Books 20-21
11. Books 22-24
12. Books 25-26
13. Books 27-29
14. Books 30-31

REQUIREMENTS:

1. Classroom participation
 - a. Attendance at all class sessions
2. Final Paper

The paper must be submitted by 5 pm December 13, 2019.

METHOD This is a seminar class, designed to call upon the participants' talents of reading, observation, and conversation. Properly speaking, the texts are our teachers. We have the obligation to get to know them and to discuss them with our colleagues in a responsible manner. The first "student" in the seminar will have the obligation to open conversation with a question and to encourage all others to participate.

Participants will be asked to write an essay that identifies and analytically defines the

central themes of the seminar and discusses them contextually. The excellence of the writing will be as important as the correctness of the argument. In fact, I have never seen a case of bad writing and good thinking in a single production. If someone believes that is possible, however, and wishes to challenge the proposition that a paper ill written cannot qualify for meritorious evaluation even when its argument is otherwise sound, I respond at the outset that it will be the policy of this seminar to make good writing a pre-condition for meritorious evaluation of every paper (please see appendix to this syllabus for criteria used to evaluate written work).

IMPORTANT NOTES TO STUDENTS:

- It is *strongly* recommended that you complete as much of the reading as possible before the course begins.
- **CLASS PARTICIPATION:** Discussion among students and professors is the essence of a seminar class. **Participation is expected at all sessions.** Students are strongly encouraged to consider upcoming obligations prior to registering for classes. **There will be a 1-point credit deduction for each class missed** without official excuse or advance permission.

If a student has a known conflict prior to registration that will make it difficult or impossible to attend all class meetings, the student should NOT register for the course. That said, we know that emergencies do come up over the course of a semester-long course. If, after the start of the semester, a medical, family, or other emergency should arise that makes it impossible for a student to attend a particular class meeting, the student should contact the course instructor prior to missing class. If the emergency circumstances make it impossible to make contact prior to missing class, the student should make every effort to contact the instructor as soon as possible. Scheduled sporting events, family vacations, or coaching responsibilities do not constitute excusable emergencies. Coaches should consider their season-long obligations - including practices, tournaments, and playoffs - prior to registering.

- **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** Any willful plagiarism on papers or cheating on exams will result in an “F” for the course.

Grade calculation

Where grades (as opposed to narrative comment) are called for, I will use the following scale:

96-100 =	4.0
90-95 =	3.5
84-89 =	3.0
78-83 =	2.5
72-77 =	2.0

66-71	=	1.5
60-65	=	1.0
< 60	=	0.0

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Criteria Used in Evaluating Written Work

While there will be many opportunities for oral discussion of written work, it will be helpful to adopt a grading scale and to commit ourselves to the use of certain explicit criteria.

The scale is numerical, as follows:

- 1- excellent
- 2- good
- 3- satisfactory
- 4- poor
- 5- very poor

To receive a 1 rating a paper should demonstrate the following:

- a. There should be a clearly stated thesis and a clearly developed line of argument.
- b. There should be a sense of organization in both the individual paragraphs and in the theme as a whole.
- c. The individual paragraphs should be developed and related logically to one another and to the thesis of the paper as a whole.
- d. There should be few glaring errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc.
- e. Generalizations should be supported by concrete supporting evidence, and the paper should avoid stereotyped lines of argumentation.

To receive a 2 rating a paper should have all the ingredients of an excellent essay (1 rating), except that there will probably be minor problems in one or two of the above areas (a-e).

To receive a 3 rating a paper should demonstrate the following:

- a. The basic criteria for a satisfactory essay is that the student must make himself understood and must communicate ideas in spite of some technical problems.
- b. It follows that a paper receiving a 3 rating should demonstrate by college standards an adequate sense of organization, paragraphing, argumentation, spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc. Otherwise, of course, the student will not

communicate ideas clearly and concisely.

Essays receiving a 4 rating are generally characterized by any combination of the following:

- a. There is oftentimes an insufficient development of ideas.
- b. The student often avoids discussing the topic.
- c. There are frequent errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc.
- d. There is no clearly stated thesis and no clearly developed argument.
- e. Principles of organizing both paragraphs and the theme as a whole are ignored or applied in a very haphazard manner.
- f. There is oftentimes a lack of adequate subordination and coordination of ideas, thus resulting in too many short, choppy sentences.
- g. Generalizations oftentimes go unsupported by concrete detail, and the line of argument (if one exists) is oftentimes a rehash of clichés and stereotypes.

Essays receiving a 5 rating are generally characterized by the inability to make oneself understood due to frequent and major problems in many of the above areas (a-g of the 4 rated essays). Due to these problems the essay is almost incoherent

RULES GOVERNING WRITTEN COMPOSITIONS

General

1. A margin of about an inch should be observed at the left and a margin of one-half inch on the right of every theme.
2. Paragraphs must be indented another inch.
3. All compositions should be neatly written.
4. One line should be left between the title and the composition.
5. Choose words carefully to avoid repetition and to give variety.
6. All numbers up to 100 should be written out except in addresses, dates, and statistics, or where consistency demands that the Arabic numbers be used.

Punctuation

11. A comma is used after *yes and no* in answering questions.
12. Nouns of address are set off by commas.
13. Words in a series are separated by commas.
14. The second and all following items in addresses and dates should be set off by commas.
15. Words in apposition are set off by commas.
16. Commas should be used before conjunctions joining coordinate clauses.
17. Introductory adverbial clauses must be followed by a comma.
18. Participial groups coming first should be set off by commas.
19. Participial groups coming far after their nouns should be set off by commas.
20. Participial groups used to explain why or how or when should be set off by commas.
21. Direct quotations are indicated by comma, quotation marks, and capital letter. They are closed by period or question mark and quotation marks.

Examples of three types of quotations:

- (a) John said, "May I go to the show?"
- (b) "May I go to the show?" said John.
(If this had not been a question, a comma would have been used)
- (c) "May I," said John, "go to the show?"

22. Non-restrictive clauses should be set off by commas.
23. A period is used at the close of a declarative sentence.
24. A period is used after all abbreviations.
25. A question mark is used after an interrogative sentence.
26. An exclamation mark should be used only after an exclamatory sentence.
27. The first word of every sentence should be capitalized.
28. The first and all other words except prepositions, articles, and conjunctions in the title should be capitalized.
29. Proper nouns and proper adjectives should be capitalized.

Grammar and Structure

31. A pronoun should always refer to a definite antecedent.
32. A participle should always modify a noun or pronoun.
33. Verbs should always agree with their subjects in number.
34. Tense consistency should be observed.
35. The correct case form of pronouns should be used.
36. Every sentence must be complete.

Spelling

41. All words whose spelling is not known should be looked up in a dictionary.
42. Final e is dropped before adding ing, ed, er, est.
43. A word ending in a single consonant preceded by a single vowel and having the accent on the last syllable doubles the final consonant before adding ing, er, est, ed.
44. *i* before *e* except after *c* or when sounded as *a* as in neighbor and weigh.
45. The plural of words ending in *y* preceded by a consonant is formed by changing *y* to *i* and by adding *es*.
46. The correct form of abbreviations should be used.
47. The singular possessive of a noun is formed by adding an apostrophe and *s*. The possessive form of a pronoun does not use an apostrophe.
48. The plural possessive of a word whose plural ends in *s* is formed by adding an apostrophe.
49. The plural possessive of a word whose plural does not end in *s* is formed by adding an apostrophe and *s*.
50. Words should be properly divided at the end of the line.
51. An apostrophe is used in contractions to designate the omission of a letter or successive letters: e.g.
they're=they are -it's=it is - doesn't=does not I'd=I would or I should