

PS116 The Idea of the State

Seminar Leader: Stefania Maffei
Course Times: Tue & Thu 9:00-10:30
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Office Hours:

Course Description

This course follows the development of the idea of the state from the Early Modern period through the critique of the state in nineteenth- and twentieth-century philosophy to contemporary debates on transnationality and cosmopolitanism. Central to our deliberations will be the questions of legitimacy, security, property, and representation that are the cornerstones of modern political thought. Most notable among the texts considered will be Machiavelli's *The Prince* and the theories of the state elaborated by Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau. Turning to the idealist transformation of the English outline of the state in German philosophy, we consider the Hegelian concept of the absolute state and its anti-capitalist critique by Marx and Marxism. The final section of the course examines contemporary analyses of the functioning of state power, such as the Althusserian theory of ideology, Foucault's concept of biopolitics, and de- postcolonial, and feminist conception of the state in the global era.

Requirements

Attendance is required in all classes. Absences are registered in all classes. More than two absences in a semester will affect your participation grade for the class. For periods of illness or leaves of absence consult the Student Handbook.

All texts must be read in advance before the related session. We will focus together on the main passages and arguments, using different discussion methods (for example close reading, group discussion, and silent discussion). Each student will contribute with two text presentations, a midterm and a final paper. In the class presentation, which should be no longer than 15 minutes, students are invited to expose the main thesis of the text, also referring to central quotations, and to formulate an own position or a question, in order to stimulate the common general discussion. Midterm papers should be 2,000 words (about 7 pages) and final papers 3,000 words long (about 10 pages). They should be conceived as a further development of the presentations, as a critical discussion of the presented text in relation to other readings and approaches.

Grade Breakdown

Midterm Essay 20%
Final Essay 30%
Presentation 20%
Participation 30%

Course Readings

Books to be purchased:

Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Norton Critical Edition, 1992. ISBN 10, 13: 0393962202; 978-0393962208.

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Oxford University Press, 2008. 0199537283; 978-0199537280.

John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2018. 1722894121; 978-1722894122.

Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Wordsworth Classics of World Literature, 1997. 1853267813; 978-1853267819.

G.W.F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1991. 0521348889; 978-0521348881.

K. Marx/F. Engels, *The German Ideology*, Prometheus Books, 1998. 1573922587; 978-1573922586.

Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, Picador, 2010. 0312203411; 978-0312203412.

Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Penguin Classics, 2001. 0141186542; 978-0141186542.

All other readings will be made available at the beginning of the course as PDF files.

Schedule

September 04

Introduction, no readings

September 06

Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* (Chapters I-XIV)

September 11

Has to be postponed (possibly in a double session on December 13th)

September 14

Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chapters XV-XXVI

September 18

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, part II chapters 17-23

September 20

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, part II chapters 24-31

September 25

John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, chapters I-VI

September 27

John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, chapters VII-XIII

October 02

John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, chapters XIV-End

October 04

Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, books I-II

October 09

Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, books III-IV

October 11

G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, § 33 (introduction)

October 16

G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, selections from part I and II

October 18

G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, selections from part III

October 23

Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, introduction and selections; *On the Jewish Question*

October 25

K. Marx/F. Engels, *The German Ideology*, selections

October 30

K. Marx/F. Engels, *The German Ideology*, selections

Submission of mid term papers

November 1

Luis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of capitalism*, selections

November 06

Luis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of capitalism*, selections

November 08

Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, lectures of Jan. 10th and 17th 1979

November 13

Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, lectures of Jan. 31st and March 3rd 1980

November 15

Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, lectures of March 28th and April 4th 1980, summary

November 20

Pierre Bourdieu, *On the State*, lectures of Jan. 18th and 25th, Feb. 15th 1990

November 11

Pierre Bourdieu, *On the State*, lectures of Feb. 7th and 21st, March 14th 1991

November 27

Étienne Balibar/Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class*, chapters 3 and 5

November 29

Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, chapter 1

December 04

Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, chapter 3 and 4

December 06

Hanna Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, part II chapter 6

December 11

Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, part II chapter 9

December 13

Judith Butler/Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Who Sings the Nation-State?*

Postponed session (date to be confirmed)

Silvia Federici, “War, Globalization and Reproduction” (2000), “Women, Land Struggles and the Reconstruction of the Commons” (2011)

December 18

Writing workshop on final papers

December 20

General discussion and course overview, submission of final papers