

PT120 Introduction to Political Theory: State versus Nature

Seminar Leader: Jeffrey Champlin

Course Times: Fri 14:00-17:15,

Location: P24-0-Seminar Room 8/ *First session only in P24-0-Conference Room*

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Office Hours: Fri 17:30-18:30 and by appointment

Course Description

This course offers a historical introduction to political theory through the contrast between the political human and its “natural” other. Philosophers continually appeal to this distinction, starting with the difference between man and animal, to justify particular modes of power. We begin with Aristotle's definition of the human as the “political animal” and then move to Augustine's rejection of this term in favor of a peculiar theological citizenship. Entering the modern period, we contrast the uses that Hobbes and Rousseau make of the “state of nature” as the precondition of the social contract that assures legitimate authority. As industrialization conquers the modern world, Marx seeks to overcome alienation through a materialism that asserts that “nature is man's inorganic body.” Finally, our approach to more recent political thought will be guided by Arendt's conception of world alienation, marked by an age in which humans “seek to make life also artificial.” As we study these thinkers and others, we will see how the opposition between state and nature works both as a method of inclusion *and* exclusion as conceptions of rights and political participation expand. At the same time, we will consider how this powerful contrast helps us grasp the Faustian modern drive to remake the world—a drive that exposes humanity to dangers of political totalitarianism and environmental devastation.

Requirements

We will make the most of the liberal arts seminar format by developing ideas and analysis through a process of discussion and writing. Toward that end, each student will contribute a short presentation and write a midterm and final paper. Overall class participation is also essential, and will be evaluated based on consistently preparing the readings and class engagement.

Attendance

Attendance at ALL classes is expected. Since the class meets once a week, more than one absence in the semester will significantly affect the participation grade for the course. Please consult the Student Handbook for regulations governing periods of illness or leaves of absence.

Assessment

Class presentations: Students will present on one text as per a sign-up sheet. Each presentation of about 15 minutes will examine key passages of your choice as guided by a commentary handout that I

will provide. You are encouraged to write your midterm or final papers on the text that you present on. In this manner, your essay can expand on the insights and questions that arose from your class contribution and the discussion that follows your readings.

Writing Assignments

Students will write two papers. The first will be focused on one author and the second will develop a longer comparative analysis of two texts we have studied in the class. The midterm paper will be 2,000 words, the final will be 3,000 words.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

From the Student Handbook: *essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than C. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.*

Grade Breakdown

Class participation (quality and quantity): 25%

Presentation: 20%

Midterm essay (2000 words): 25%

Final essay (3000 words): 30%

Course Materials

The course will have a reader that all students should purchase. The texts marked with an (*) are available at the library for students on financial aid and then on a first come, first served basis. The Derrida and Saadawi should be purchased, along with other books as needed based on the library's holdings.

Books:

Aristotle, *The Politics*, 0140444211; 9780140444 (*)

Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*, 9780872201781 (*)

Derrida, Jacques. *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, Stanford University Press, 2005.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *On the Social Contract*, 1853267813; 9781853267819(*)

---. *Discourse on Inequality*, 9781419116162 | 9781419111112 (*)

Saadawi, Ahmed. *Frankenstein in Baghdad*. Penguin Books; 2018, ISBN-10: 0143128795

The following texts will be in the course reader or provided in class:

Agamben, Giorgio. "Introduction," *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*.

Arendt, Hanna. "The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man" from *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.

---. Prologue and chapter 1 of *The Human Condition*

Augustine. *City of God*, book 11

Haraway, Donna. "Anthropocene, capitalocene, plantationocene, chthulucene: Making kin." *Environmental humanities* 6.1 (2015): 159-165.

Latour, Bruno. "Agency at the Time of the Anthropocene." *New literary history* 45.1 (2014): 1-18.

Marx, Karl and Engles, Friedrich. "Communist Manifesto" and "Estranged Labor" (From: *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*)

Mbembé, J-A., "Necropolitics," *Public culture* 15.1 (2003): 11-40.

Schellnhuber, Hans Joachim, "'Earth System Analysis' and the Second Copernican Revolution" (Nature, 1999)

Serres, Michel. *The natural contract*. University of Michigan Press, 1995. (Selections.)

Schedule

September 7

Introduction, readings provided in class.

September 14

Aristotle. *Politics*. books 1-4.

September 21

Aristotle. *Politics*, books 5-8.

Agamben. "Introduction." *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*.

September 28

Augustine. *City of God*, book 19.

October 5

Hobbes. *Leviathan*, Introduction, part 1.

Schellnhuber. "'Earth System Analysis' and the Second Copernican Revolution" (Nature. 1999).

October 12 **No class**. rescheduled in completion week.

October 19

Hobbes. *Leviathan*, part 2.

Rousseau. *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*.

October 26

Rousseau. Chapters 1 and 2 from *The Social Contract*.

Serres. *The Natural Contract* (selections).

Midterm papers due October 26

November 2 FALL BREAK

November 9

Marx. "Estranged Labor".

Marx and Engels. "Communist Manifesto".

November 16

Arendt. Prologue and Chapter 1 of *The Human Condition*.

Haraway. Donna. "Anthropocene. capitalocene. plantationocene. chthulucene: Making kin."

November 23

Arendt. "The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man" from *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.

Mbembe. "Necropolitics."

November 30

Derrida. "The Reason of the Strongest (Are There Rogue States?)." In: *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*. Stanford University Press. 2005. xi-55.

Saadawi. *Frankenstein in Baghdad* 1-141

December 17

Derrida. "The Reason of the Strongest (Are There Rogue States?)" *Rogues*, 56-107.

Saadawi. *Frankenstein in Baghdad*. 141-281.

December 14

Latour. "Agency at the Time of the Anthropocene."

December 21 Completion week. **Class mandatory this week to makeup for the week of October 12.**

Concluding discussion and writing workshop on final paper.