

**POL 2040F - Horizons of Political Reflection**

**Prof. R. Beiner**

**Fall, 2010**

Office Hours: Fridays 1-2

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**Intro.**

**Sept. 17**

Reading: Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation"

**1 HANNAH ARENDT**

**Sept. 24**

Reading: The Human Condition, Chap. IV ("Work")

Supplementary reading: the rest of The Human Condition (University of Chicago Press); "Hannah Arendt on Hannah Arendt", in Hannah Arendt: The Recovery of the Public World, ed. M.A. Hill (St. Martin's Press); debate with Eric Voegelin in The Review of Politics, Vol. XV (1953), pp. 68-85; Beiner, Philosophy in a Time of Lost Spirit (U. of Toronto Press), Chaps. 13 & 20.

[Videos of interviews with HA are readily available on the Internet. For an audio of an HA lecture, see: <http://www.bard.edu/hannaharendtcenter/projects.html>]

**2 MICHAEL OAKESHOTT**

**Oct. 1**

Reading: "Political Education"

Supplementary reading: the rest of Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays (original Methuen edition, or, even better, the expanded Liberty Press edition); K. Minogue, "Oakeshott and Political Science", Annual Review of Political Science 7 (2004): 227-46.

**3 LEO STRAUSS****Oct. 8**

Reading: "What is Political Philosophy?"

Supplementary reading: "Persecution and the Art of Writing" (in book of the same title, published by University of Chicago Press); Natural Right and History (University of Chicago Press); correspondence with Hans-Georg Gadamer [available from the instructor]; correspondence with Karl Löwith [available from the instructor]; Allan Bloom, "Leo Strauss", in Bloom, Giants and Dwarfs (Simon & Schuster); Stanley Rosen, Hermeneutics as Politics (OUP), Chap. 3; Stephen Holmes, The Anatomy of Antiliberalism (Harvard U.P.), Chap. 3; Beiner, Philosophy in a Time of Lost Spirit, Chap. 13 & exchange with Pangle in Appendix to Chap. 13. [For an audio of an LS lecture, see: [http://leostrausscenter.uchicago.edu/meno\\_audio.shtml](http://leostrausscenter.uchicago.edu/meno_audio.shtml)]

**4 KARL LÖWITH****Oct. 15**

Reading: "Nature, History, and Existentialism"; "The Quest for the Meaning of History"

Supplementary Reading: Meaning in History (U. of Chicago Press); Gadamer, "Karl Löwith", in Philosophical Apprenticeships (MIT Press), pp. 169-175; Habermas, "Karl Löwith: Stoic Retreat from Historical Consciousness", in Philosophical-Political Profiles (MIT Press), pp. 79-97; Richard Wolin, "Karl Löwith and Martin Heidegger - Contexts and Controversies", in Löwith, Martin Heidegger and European Nihilism, ed. Richard Wolin, trans. Gary Steiner (Columbia U.P.), pp. 1-25; Beiner, "Kant, the Sublime, and Nature," in Kant and Political Philosophy, ed. Beiner & Booth (Yale U.P.), pp. 276-288.

**5 ERIC VOEGELIN****Oct. 22**

Reading: The New Science of Politics, Chap. VI ("The End of Modernity")

Supplementary reading: the rest of The New Science of Politics; Faith and Political Philosophy, ed. Peter Emberley & Barry Cooper (Pennsylvania State U.P.). [A lecture by EV is available on a DVD entitled "Voegelin in Toronto."]

**6 SIMONE WEIL****Oct. 29**

Reading: The Need for Roots, Part I ("The Needs of the Soul")

Supplementary reading: the rest of The Need for Roots; "Draft for a Statement of Human Obligations", in Two Moral Essays, ed. Ronald Hathaway (Pendle Hill); Gary A. Lewis, "Consent to the Universe", in Democratic Theory and Technological Society, ed. Day, Beiner, & Masciulli (M.E. Sharpe), pp. 280-298.

**7 HANS-GEORG GADAMER****Nov. 5**

Reading: "Hermeneutics as Practical Philosophy"; "Hermeneutics and Social Science"; "A Letter by Professor Hans-Georg Gadamer"

Supplementary reading: the rest of Reason in the Age of Science; Charles Taylor, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man", in Philosophy and the Human Sciences (Philosophical Papers, Vol. 2, published by Cambridge U.P.), pp. 15-57; Beiner, Philosophy in a Time of Lost Spirit, Chap. 10; Beiner, "Gadamer's Philosophy of Dialogue", in Gadamer's Repercussions, ed. Krajewski (U of California Press); "Gadamer on Strauss", Interpretation, Vol. 12, no. 1 (Jan. 1984), pp. 1-13; "Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and the Critique of Ideology", in The Hermeneutics Reader, ed. Kurt Mueller-Vollmer (Continuum), pp. 274-292; "Reply to My Critics", in The Hermeneutic Tradition, ed. G.L. Ormiston & A.D. Schrift (SUNY Press), pp. 273-297.

**8 JÜRGEN HABERMAS****Nov. 12**

Reading: The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity (MIT Press), Chap. XII: The Normative Content of Modernity.

Supplementary reading: The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 1; The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, Chaps. IX-X; Beiner, Philosophy in a Time of Lost Spirit, Chap. 10; "A Review of Gadamer's Truth and Method," in Understanding and Social Inquiry, ed. Dallmayr & McCarthy (U. of Notre Dame Press), pp. 335-363; "On Hermeneutics' Claim to Universality", in The Hermeneutics Reader, ed. Mueller-Vollmer, pp. 294-319; "Interpretive Social Science vs. Hermeneuticism", in Social Science as Moral Inquiry, ed. N. Haan et. al. (U. of California Press), pp. 251-269; "Reconciliation Through the Public Use of Reason", Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 92 (March 1995); chapters on Arendt, Löwith, & Gadamer in Philosophical-Political Profiles (MIT Press); "After Historicism, Is Metaphysics Still Possible?", in Gadamer's Repercussions, ed. Krajewski (U of California Press); "Legitimation Problems in the Modern State", in Communication and the Evolution of Society (Beacon Press).

[Videos of JH lectures & interviews are readily available on the Internet.]

**9 MICHEL FOUCAULT**

**Nov. 19**

Reading: Discipline and Punish, Part Three, section 3 ("Panopticism")

Supplementary reading: the rest of Discipline and Punish (Vintage Books); Charles Taylor, "Foucault on Freedom and Truth" in Philosophy and the Human Sciences, pp. 152-184; Beiner, Philosophy in a Time of Lost Spirit, Chap. 9.

[Videos of MF lectures & interviews are readily available on the Internet.]

**10 ALASDAIR MacINTYRE**

**Nov. 26**

Reading: "Politics, Philosophy and the Common Good" in The MacIntyre Reader, ed.

Kelvin Knight (U of Notre Dame Press), pp. 235-252; Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues (Open Court), Chap. 11.

Supplementary reading: After Virtue (U. of Notre Dame Press); "The Privatization of Good", Review of Politics, Vol. 52 (1990), pp. 344-361; Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry, Chap. X ("Reconceiving the University as an Institution and the Lecture as a Genre"); Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self (Harvard U.P.); "Contexts of Interpretation", Boston University Journal, Vol. XXIV, no. 1 (1976), pp. 41-46; Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry, Chaps. II and IX; "Miller's Foucault, Foucault's Foucault", Salmagundi, no. 97 (Winter 1993); "Philosophy: Past Conflict and Future Direction", Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association, Suppl. Vol. 61, no. 1 (Sept. 1987), pp. 81-87; "Moral Arguments and Social Contexts", Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 80, No. 10 (Oct. 1983), pp. 590-591. Stephen Holmes, The Anatomy of Antiliberalism (Harvard U.P.), Chap. 4. Lecture by MacIntyre ("A Culture of Choice and Compartmentalization") can be viewed at: <http://ethicscenter.nd.edu/archives/videos.shtml>; for another AM video, see: [http://www.ucd.ie/news/2009/03FEB09/110309\\_macintyre.html](http://www.ucd.ie/news/2009/03FEB09/110309_macintyre.html)

**11 JOHN RAWLS**

**Dec. 3**

Reading: "Justice as Fairness: Political not Metaphysical"

Supplementary reading: A Theory of Justice (Oxford U.P.); Michael Sandel, Liberalism and the Limits of Justice (Cambridge U.P.); "The Priority of Right and Ideas of the Good", in Collected Papers, ed. Samuel Freeman (Harvard U.P.), pp. 449-471; Political Liberalism (Columbia U.P.); "Reply to Habermas", Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 92 (March 1995).

**12 RICHARD RORTY****Dec. 3**

Reading: "The Priority of Democracy to Philosophy"

Supplementary reading: Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature (Princeton U.P.), Part 3; Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity (Cambridge U.P.); "Postmodernist Bourgeois Liberalism", in Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth (Philosophical Papers, Vol. 1, published by Cambridge U.P.), pp. 197-202; Beiner, Philosophy in a Time of Lost Spirit, Chap. 8; "Being That Can Be Understood is Language", London Review of Books, March 16, 2000, pp. 23-25; "Habermas and Lyotard on Postmodernity", in Habermas and Modernity, ed. Richard Bernstein (MIT Press), pp. 161-175; "Trotsky and the Wild Orchids", in Rorty, Philosophy and Social Hope (Penguin).

Seminar topics

**1** How does the idea of "worldliness" function as a political category in Arendt's political philosophy, and how does it reorient our notions of politics (with respect to, for instance, the political relevance of art)?

**2** In "Rationalism in Politics", Oakeshott writes:

"The notion of founding a society, whether of individuals or of States, upon a Declaration of the Rights of Man is a creature of the rationalist brain, so also are 'national' or racial self-determination when elevated into universal principles. The project of the so-called Re-union of the Christian Churches, of open diplomacy, of a single tax, of a civil service whose members 'have no qualifications other than their personal abilities', of a self-consciously planned society, the Beveridge Report, the Education Act of 1944, Federalism, Nationalism, Votes for Women, the Catering Wages Act, the destruction of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the World State (of H.G. Wells or anyone else), and the revival of Gaelic as the official language of Eire, are alike the progeny of Rationalism. The odd generation of rationalism in politics is by sovereign power out of romanticism."

Why is Oakeshott opposed to these various political projects, and how is his notion of "the pursuit of intimations" intended to help avert them?

**3** "His politics were the politics of philosophy and not the politics of a particular regime" (Allan Bloom). Explain what this means, and discuss why one should be concerned with "the politics of philosophy".

- 4** Is Habermas's phrase, "Stoic retreat from historical consciousness", a fair characterization of Löwith's philosophical outlook?
- 5** What does Voegelin mean when he claims that "Hobbes countered the Gnostic immanentization of the eschaton which endangered existence by a radical immanence of existence which denied the eschaton" (p. 179)? What does Voegelin see as being at stake, politically, in this Hobbesian legacy (as well as the Puritan movement to which Hobbes was responding)?
- 6** How do you respond to Weil's suggestion that the notion of obligations is philosophically prior to the notion of rights?
- 7** In his letter to Richard Bernstein (Appendix to Bernstein's book, Beyond Objectivism and Relativism), Gadamer writes (in criticism of Habermas), "I cannot really make sense of a phronesis that is supposed to be scientifically disciplined, although I can imagine a scientific approach that is disciplined by phronesis". Explain what he means by this.
- 8** The three basic components of Habermas's theory are: the notion of communicative action; the idea of a "de-differentiation of value-spheres"; and a certain conception of the relationship between "system" and "lifeworld". How do these three components of the theory fit together so as to generate a distinctive account of "the normative content of modernity"?
- 9** If Foucault is right about modern society as such being "disciplinary" and bound up with techniques of ubiquitous surveillance, what becomes of the notions of autonomy and citizenship that we otherwise more or less take for granted?
- 10** What does MacIntyre mean by a "politics of local community"? What kinds of social and political transformation would be required in order to realize this politics?
- 11** Why does John Rawls believe that the best definition of liberalism is one that eschews "metaphysical" (broader moral-philosophical) commitments?
- 12** Is the idea of universal truth as dispensable as Rorty suggests? ("Priority of Democracy to Philosophy", p. 177: "For pragmatist social theory, ...truth is simply irrelevant".)

Grading:

Seminar presentation: 30%

Class participation: 30%

Final essay, 15 pages, comparing two of the thinkers covered in this course  
(due January 4, 2011): 40% [By my math, that works out to at least 66 possible combinations of thinkers. That doesn't count three-way comparisons, or comparisons with thinkers beyond these 12 – which I'm also open to as possibilities.]