

University of Toronto
Department of Political Science

POL 381 Y1Y “Topics in Political Theory: Realist Political Theory”
Syllabus for Academic Year 2019-20
Date: 12 August 2019

Meets: Thursdays, 2-4 p.m., room TBA

INSTRUCTOR:

Andrew Sabl Department of Political Science
(rhymes with “bauble”) Sidney Smith Hall (100 St. George St.), Room 3030.
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Fall Term office hours: Thursdays 4:15-6 p.m., or by appointment.

THEMES:

This course will explore the “realist” tradition of political thinking. Realism can mean many things (and this course will explore what it might mean). It is perhaps best understood in contrast to its opposite, so-called “ideal” theory (think of Plato, Rousseau, Thomas Aquinas, and in our age Rawls, Dworkin, and Nozick).

Ideal theorists seek to construct systematic, more or less universally valid theories of a just—or equal, or legitimate, or free—society, so as to be able to criticize existing institutions and practices for falling short of the ideal. Their methods and assumptions include:

- utopianism* (imagining perfect orders so as to attack existing ones);
- moralism* (a belief that justice and other moral principles should always trump nonmoral considerations, e.g. self- or group interest, self-preservation, and custom);
- *rationalism* (a belief that people’s reason can and should govern their “base” passions);
- universalism* (a search for principles independent of time, place, and circumstance);
- harmonism* (a neologism: the conviction that much, perhaps all, political conflict is regrettable, a sign of bias or partiality, and that we should aspire to have much less of it).

Realism adopts the opposite assumptions. It begins from political and social experience, current and historical. While respecting the force of moral appeals, it does not treat them as sovereign as a matter of either fact or right: in politics, morality is typically one consideration among many. It doubts that most people most of the time are ruled by reason, much less the philosophically soundest reasons. It accepts the possibility that many political standards may differ according to time, place, circumstances (the level of wealth, the distribution of power, etc.), and regime type. It assumes that conflict is permanent and must be managed through non-rational means (including institutional design, rhetorical persuasion, the channeling of passions and interests towards more rather than less benign ends, and the deployment of one set of power to avoid another). It focuses not on idealized systems but on the perspective of agents and the requirements of real-world political action. And it insists that good political theory must always be based on a knowledge of, and respect for, real politics.

This course will explore the insights and virtues of the realist tradition, considered as a

QUERCUS AND EMAIL: Course assignments and guidelines will be posted on Quercus. You **MUST** have a valid UTOR email and are expected to consult Quercus regularly as well as enabling prompt (same-day) Quercus announcements to allow communication of urgent matters.

The professor will respond to emails within 24 hours whenever possible. In the rare case that a substantive question is not answered within that time, you should feel free to send it again, and will never be marked down for doing so (politely). *Please consult the syllabus or Quercus before asking questions that are answered there.* Those asking complex questions may be encouraged to attend office hours in lieu of being given a very lengthy response.

WRITING ESSAYS:

This course assumes that you are prepared to work on improving your prose style and argumentative skill. Moreover, it regards clear, well-structured and forceful writing as the hallmark of strong analytic and synthetic thought. That is: passive, indirect constructions let a writer get away with not stating and defending—in other words, possibly not having—a definite position. The Writing at U of T website (<http://writing.utoronto.ca/>) contains a variety of online resources, links to writing centers and other forms of support. Writing assistance is also available through every college. *You are strongly encouraged to take extensive advantage of all these resources.* Not only the worst but also the best writers are constantly trying to improve.

Other resources for improving your writing will be posted on Quercus.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense and will be dealt with accordingly. Students must read “Tips for Avoiding Academic Misconduct” <http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai/students/avoid-misconduct/tips-for-avoiding-academic-misconduct> and the University’s “How not to Plagiarize” document, <http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize/> and are encouraged to discuss with the instructors if they are unsure of what constitutes plagiarism or academic dishonesty. Plagiarism applies not only to essays, but also to more informal forms of writing.

SUBMITTING PAPERS AND OTHER ASSIGNMENTS: TURNITIN.COM

Normally, students will be required to submit their course assignments and essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their work to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.

Quercus contains resources for submitting papers via TurnItIn. **Please do not turn in hard copies at the Political Science desk: they will not be received.**

You should ensure that you have a hard copy and an electronic copy of all work submitted, and you are strongly advised to retain the rough work, notes, and draft material that went into the essay or assignment.

Students have the right to refuse to use Turnitin.com. In this case, students will be expected to submit an electronic copy of their essay to the professor by email, accompanied by their outline, thesis statement and annotated bibliography, as well all their notes and rough drafts, **by the time each paper would normally be due on TurnItIn.**

LATE WORK POLICY:

Late papers and other assignments will be penalized four points on the 100-point U of T grading scale per day late or part thereof. Exceptions may be granted to students who have faced serious medical or other emergencies, and who have substantial and convincing documentation fully accounting for the length of delay. If you are facing such a situation, inform the instructor as soon as possible—and, whenever possible, *before* the assignment is due.

CLASS ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION:

Students are expected to read the readings listed for each class section *before* coming to class. The lectures will not summarize the reading. On the contrary, they will assume that you have covered the reading material and will therefore analyze or explain the reading, or place it in a larger context. The papers as well as the fall and end-of-year exams will be based on material covered in both the readings and the class lectures and discussion.

At the end of every lecture, and on Quercus, students will be told of one or more specific passages that will serve as the basis for class discussion in the next lecture. Students should come to class prepared to ask questions about, and express opinions on, these passages in particular.

TEXTS:

All the readings marked on the syllabus are required, unless otherwise stated. Readings may be modified at the Instructor's discretion – you must consult Quercus regularly for new, revised or updated assignments.

Materials drawn from academic journals and books in electronic format are available through the U of T library site by finding the “electronic resource” listing under the journal or book title. However, most of the material discussed in the course will be taken from books that are available at the U of T bookstore, and will also be on reserve in the library.

Though some of these books are very large, reading will typically consist of less than 80 pages a week—often much less if the material is dense and/or difficult. Only portions of the big books will be assigned. Winter term's texts will be much shorter and less expensive than Fall's. Although you are encouraged to refer to used copies, **please use the editions assigned, so that we are all literally on the same page and using the same translation.** That said, the instructor will refer to universal indicators (e.g. section and paragraph number) whenever possible and available, to allow for cross-referencing.

Assigned books (in alphabetical order; the numbers at the end are ISBN-13 numbers for easier used book shopping; Fall books in **bold**).

Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, trans. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998). ISBN-13: 9780521468435.

Raymond Geuss, *Philosophy and Real Politics* (Princeton Univ. Press, 2008). ISBN-13: 9780691137889.

Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist* (available online, or use any print edition): see below.

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Edwin Curley (Hackett Publishing Co., 1994). ISBN-13: 9780872201774

David Hume, *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, rev. ed. (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1985). ISBN-13: 9780865970564.

_____, *The History of England* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund), Volume 5 (or online version thereof: to be announced).

Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield (2d. ed., Univ. of Chicago Press, 1998). ISBN-13: 9780226500447

Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 2011). ISBN-13: 9780226584003

Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, expanded ed. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2007). ISBN-13: 9780226738925

Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, in the following edition: Robert B. Strassler, ed., *The Landmark Thucydides*, rev. ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1998). ISBN-13: 9780684827902.

Max Weber, *The Vocation Lectures*, trans. Rodney Livingstone, ed. David Owen and Tracy B. Strong (Hackett Publishing Co., 2004). ISBN-13: 9780872206656

CLASS SCHEDULE

FALL TERM

Sept. 5 – Course Overview

Sept. 12 – Thucydides Wk 1

The Peloponnesian War (in *The Landmark Thucydides*): Book 1: paragraphs 6-9, 11, 18, 20-23, 31-44, 68-88, 96-99, 118-125, 135-146.

Themes: the complexities of interest and power, and how appeals to justice interact with appeals to interest and power.

Specific focus passages (for in-class discussion): 1.31-43, 1.68-72.

Sept. 19 – Thucydides Wk 2

The Peloponnesian War (in *The Landmark Thucydides*): Book 2.35-46, 47-65, 67, 71-74; Book 3.2-6, 9-15, 26-32, 36-49, 52-68, 81-84.

Themes: democratic morale (how to sustain the confidence of democratic publics under adversity); credibility and confidence (how to convince potential allies and adversaries that one's intentions are durable and will not change)

Specific focus passages (for in-class discussion): 2.59-65, 3.9-14 (and as much of 3.52-68 as we can: highly relevant to the allies/adversary question).

Sept. 26-Thucydides Wk 3

The Peloponnesian War (in *The Landmark Thucydides*): Book 4.2, 17-23, 26-28, 36-41, 46-68, 58-65, 78-88, 105-7, 108, 112-114. Book 5.20-26, 43-48, 52, 69, 78, 82, 84-116.

Themes: Political ethics. Promise-keeping and treaty-breaking; truth and lying; treason and the breaking of faith (and their costs); ruthlessness and mercy; the ethics of unequal power and status; the question of whether honesty is the best policy—and the circumstances under which it might or might not be.

Focus passages (for discussion): 5.84-116 (the “Melian dialogue” and its aftermath).

Oct. 3- Thucydides Wk 4

The Peloponnesian War (in *The Landmark Thucydides*): Book 6.1, 6, 8-31, 33-41, 53, 60-61, 76-92; Book 7.7.17-18, 28, 47-50, 55-58, 69, 86-7; Book 8.1-2, 12-14, 17-18, 27, 45-54, 63-77, 81-2, 86-94. (The book 8 passages are in some ways the most important: if you must skimp on reading, go easier on books 6 and 7 and concentrate on 8.)

Themes: (a) leadership and personality in Thucydides: how he assesses the different political figures he treats and evaluates their moral and nonmoral virtues and vices; (b) the role of accident and unexpected circumstances in Thucydides' politics, and the implications of accident for a realist view of politics and political strategy.

Focus passages (for discussion): 8.45-54, 8.86.

Oct. 10 – Augustine Wk 1

Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God Against the Pagans*:

Book 1.Preface and chapters 9, 11, 35 (henceforth written like this: 1.Preface, 9, 11, 35); 2.7; 4.33, 5.17; 11.1; 12.8, 14.1, 4, 9-13, 15, 25, 28; 15.1, 2, 4; 17.7; 18.2, 48; 19.1, 4, 5, 13, 24-5, 27-8; 21.12. (This looks like a lot but it's a little more than 70 pages overall: the chapters are short.)

Theme: Augustine's view of human nature and political life.

Focus passages: 14.15, 15.4, 19.27-8.

****Paper due Friday, Oct 11, based on material up to October 3, i.e. Thucydides.**

Oct. 17 – Augustine Wk 2

Theme: Augustine's political ethics and how it follows (or doesn't) from his deeper foundational assumptions about human nature and political life.

Augustine, *City of God*:

1.15, 24; 2.18; 3.13, 16; 4.3, 4, 15, 18-19, 5.13-16, 18, 19, 20, 24; 9.5; 15.5; 19.6-7, 12, 14, 15, 17, 19, 25; 20.2; 22.30.

Focus passages: 19.6, 7, 17.

Oct. 24 – Machiavelli Wk 1

—Machiavelli's letter to Francesco Vettori (10 Dec. 1513), pp. 107-111 of the Mansfield translation of *The Prince*.

—*The Prince*, Dedicatory Letter and Chapters 1-14 (pp. 3-60).

Themes: agency and institutions; realism vs. moral constraints; the criterion of "success" and whether realism can do without explicit normative standards.

Focus passages: Chapters 8 and 9.

Oct. 31-Machiavelli Wk 2

Readings:

The Prince, Chapters 15-26.

Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996): Book I, chapters 9-10, 14, and sections 4-5 of chapter 16; Book III, chapters 1 and 3 (that's pp. 28-33, 41-2, 35-47, 209-121, 214-15): selections available under "Files" on Quercus.

Focus passages and themes to be announced.

****Nov. 7 – READING WEEK: NO CLASS.**

Nov. 14 – Hobbes Wk 1

Hobbes, *Leviathan*—Edwin Curley edition (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co.) recommended:

Skim chapters 1, 2, 3, 8;

Read Introduction and chapters 4-7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 17, the last paragraph of 18, and 26.

****Note:** Curley includes in his edition his own translation of some chapters of the Latin edition of *Leviathan* whose sense differs from the English version published in Hobbes's time. *Feel free to ignore these translations from the Latin* (marked "OL" by Curley): the English version, and only that, is assigned.

Themes: Power and Interest; Honour and Dishonour.

Focus passage for discussion: Chapter 10.

****Second paper due Friday Nov. 15 based on material up to Oct. 31, i.e. Machiavelli.**

Nov. 21 – Hobbes Wk 2

Leviathan: chapters 12, 14-20, 22, 43, 46, 47, Review and Conclusion.

Themes: The artificial commonwealth and its authority; will as a realist category (or not); the (attempted?) displacement of religion.

Focus passage: to be announced.

Nov 28: IN-CLASS FALL TEST. TWO HOURS LONG; CLOSED-BOOK, CLOSED-NOTES; WILL BEGIN PROMPTLY AT 2 P.M.

WINTER TERM

Jan. 9 – Hume Wk 1

David Hume, *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*: Selected essays to be announced.

Themes: Human nature; power and interest; particular circumstances and general laws; the role of personality in political outcomes.

Focus passages: to be announced.

Jan. 16: Hume Wk 2

Themes: to be announced.

David Hume, *The History of England*, ed. William B. Todd (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1983): Volume 5. (If you can't obtain a hard copy, a .pdf copy of the whole book, [preserving the page numbers](https://oll.libertyfund.org/sources/1511-facsimile-pdf-hume-the-history-of-england-vol-5/download), is available at: <https://oll.libertyfund.org/sources/1511-facsimile-pdf-hume-the-history-of-england-vol-5/download>)

Chapters LII-LIV. More specifically (if you must limit the number of pages): pp. 217-250, 269-79, 283-308, 325-330 (Strongly recommended: 308-325).

Note the following as historical background:

As our reading begins Charles I, king of England and Scotland (separately: they're not yet one kingdom), faces

(a) discontents in—and ultimately rebellion in, and a threatened invasion of England from—Scotland, chiefly because of his religious policies (he favors Anglican-style church government and liturgy, involving powerful bishops, extensive religious ceremonies and the Book of Common Prayer, whereas Scotland has turned strongly Calvinist or Presbyterian, opposed to all these);

(b) opposition in parliament, which had begun under his predecessor James I to assert its “privilege” to approve taxation, entertain public petitions, and freely debate and oppose royal measures (whereas under the Tudor monarchs Henry VII, Henry VIII, Mary Tudor, and Elizabeth I, kings and queens had exerted near-absolute authority—“prerogative”—and parliament had pretty much gone along);

(c) discontent among the people, who are to a large extent turning Puritan (quasi-Calvinist, not unlike the Scottish Presbyterians) and starting to regard Anglican

ceremonies and the authority of Anglican bishops (“prelacy”) as at best unnecessary, at worst Satanic.

In response to these national, constitutional, and religious challenges, Charles I has dismissed the previous (English) parliament, has begun a long period of governing solely by his royal authority, and has resolved to raise money for the army, navy, and other public purposes through innovative and irregular—to his enemies, unconstitutional—means. Needless to say, this only makes his enemies angrier, more determined to oppose his rule by any possible means, traditional or innovative.

Jan. 23 –*The Federalist*

Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay (collectively “Publius”), *The Federalist*—any edition, but the Gideon edition is good and available online at: <https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/carey-the-federalist-gideon-ed> :

Numbers 1-4, 6, 9-11, 48-9, 51, 63, 70-72.

Themes: political science and technologies of representation; the priority of security (and commerce to that end); the justification of power vs. the checking of power; causes and remedies of faction; fame, interest, and political office; divisions of political labour.

Focus passages: to be announced.

Jan. 30 – Weber

Reading: *Politics as a Vocation*: all.

Themes: administration as a temptation to anti-politics; violence as the limit case of power; mass politics and the alienation of elites; agency, leadership, and “spiritual proletarianization”; political ethics (conviction and responsibility); ethical pluralism and the limits of reason.

Focus passages: to be announced.

Feb. 6– Schmitt

Reading: Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, selections to be announced.

Themes: The “realist” rejection of ethics and economics; friends and enemies; sovereign decision; the real or alleged limits of liberalism.

Focus passages: to be announced.

Feb. 13 – Niebuhr

Niebuhr, *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness*: read it all if you can but assigned are:

Foreword to the first edition; Chapter 1; Chapter 2, sections I, II, and IV; Chapter 3, section III; Chapter 4, sections III and IV; Chapter 5, sections II, III, and V.

(In pages: xxx-xxxiv, 1-50, 59-79, 106-118, 138-52, 162-76, 182-90.)

Themes: Optimism, cynicism, and hope; Interest and power as facts, not ideals; Humility and “proximate solutions”; Christian realism as a (fleeting) public philosophy.

Focus passages: to be announced.

****Feb. 20 – READING WEEK: NO CLASS**

Feb. 27 – Shklar

Judith N. Shklar, “The Liberalism of Fear”, in *Liberalism and the Moral Life*, ed. Nancy L. Rosenblum (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989): 21-38.

_____, “The Sense of Injustice”, in *The Faces of Injustice* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1990), 83-126.

Themes: Realist and idealist liberalism; the limits of justice and the sense of injustice; realism and pessimism; realist moral psychology (and the debt to Nietzsche); the alleged conservatism of realist thought (and of the alternatives).

Readings (all available on the course website under “files”):

Mar. 5 - Geuss Wk 1

Geuss, *Outside Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002):

Chapters 2 (“Neither History nor Praxis”) and 9 (“Genealogy as Critique”).
(available on course website under “Files”).

Geuss, *Philosophy and Real Politics*: Introduction

(the whole book is available in the bookstore, and we’ll be reading the rest next week. But the Introduction is also available on the course website under “Files”).

Themes: Marxist and critical realism; the problems and questions of post-20th-century politics; ideal theory as failed experiment; genealogy as an alternative to justification; politics vs. applied ethics; an outline of Geussian realism.

Mar. 12 - Geuss Wk 2

Reading: *Philosophy and Real Politics*, Parts I and II, and Conclusion.

Themes: Political Theory vs. “Applied Ethics”; Critical Hobbesianism; Power, Priorities, and Legitimacy; Realism’s Tasks; Costs of Idealization; The Question of Audience.

Mar. 19 – Williams

Bernard Williams, *In the Beginning Was the Deed: Realism and Moralism in Political Argument*, ed. Geoffrey Hawthorn (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007): Chapters 1, 2, and 5

(“Realism and Moralism in Political Theory”, “In the Beginning Was the Deed”, and “The Liberalism of Fear”): Available on Quercus under “Files”.

Themes: Realist justification and its limits; realism, relativism, and history; political disagreement and agreement; wet vs. dry liberal realism; radical vs. liberal realism

Focus passage: Williams, “The Liberalism of Fear”, 54-58 (on the audience of political theory).

****Paper outline due Mar. 19 in class (an online submission method may also be provided).**

Mar. 26 – Contemporary reviews and treatments

(Readings are all available on the course webpage on Quercus under “Files”).

William A. Galston, “Realism in Political Theory”, *European Journal of Political Theory* 9, No. 4 (2010): 385-411.

Enzo Rossi and Matt Sleat, "Realism in Normative Political Theory", *Philosophy Compass* 9/10 (2014): 689-701.

Marc Stears, "Liberalism and the Politics of Compulsion", *British Journal of Political Science* 37 (2007): 533-553.

Themes: The autonomy of politics (?) and the place of ethics; the question of feasibility; conflict and coercion; the question of human nature.

Apr. 2 - Course Conclusion

Work by Andrew Sabl (will not appear in the exam); course review session.

Andrew Sabl, "Realist Liberalism: An Agenda". *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 20, No. 3 (2017): 349-364.

APRIL 3 - ANALYTIC PAPER DUE 10 p.m. via Quercus.

FINAL EXAMINATION: DATE AND TIME TO BE SCHEDULED.

Three hours long, closed-book, closed-notes, covering material from the whole course (but material from the Winter term will be stressed).