

POL320H1F Modern Political Thought Summer 2023

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Office hours by appointment

Course Description

This course will consist of close readings of sections of some of the most important political thinkers of the 18th and 19th centuries. We will address fundamental questions in the history of political philosophy including whether modernity and rationality have helped move humanity closer to freedom and emancipation and to what extent the movement of history has led to forms of domination and exclusion. This period of political thought is important because it marks a re-emergence of normative concepts which might otherwise be associated with Ancient political thought - the common good, virtue, the authority of reason. However, these concepts find new voice in the distinctive and increasingly complex political and economic conditions characteristic of 'modernity'. Thus, we will trace the evolution of these concepts in order to understand their renewed relevance to modern political life. Along with the broader themes of freedom and domination, this course will explore questions of human nature, liberty, legitimate political authority, progress, rationality, and utopianism.

Readings

All of the texts below will be available via a UToronto library link or are available to read for free online. Because many of the texts have several translations, we strongly recommend you use the edition listed below to ensure consistency with quotations and page references.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Basic Political Writings*. Hackett 2012 edition translated by Cress (ISBN-10: 1603846735 / ISBN-13: 978-1603846738) (Available online through UofT Libraries: <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/lib/utoronto/detail.action?pq-%20origsite=primo&docID=1014682>).

Immanuel Kant, *Toward perpetual peace and other writings on politics, peace, and history*. Yale University Press. (ISBN-10: 030012810X / ISBN-13: 9780300128109)(Available online through UofT Libraries: <https://www-degruyter-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/document/doi/10.12987/9780300128109/html>).

Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Allen W. Wood, J. B. Schneewind, and J. B. (Jerome B.) Schneewind. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002. (Available online Utoronto Library)

David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*. Available online via *Hume Texts Online*: <https://davidhume.org/texts/m/>

David Hume, *Essays Moral, Political and Literary*. Available online via *Hume Texts Online*: <https://davidhume.org/texts/empl1/> and <https://davidhume.org/texts/empl2/>

Nakae Chōmin, *A Discourse by Three Drunkards on Government*. Translated and edited by Noboku Tsukui; edited by Jeffrey Hammond. Boston: Weatherhill, 1984 (ISBN-10: 0834801922, ISBN-13: 978-0834801929)(to be posted on Quercus).

Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* and *A Vindication of the Rights of Man*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009 (ISBN-10: 019955546X, ISBN-13: 978-0199555468). (Available online through UofT Libraries: <https://oxfordworldsclassics-%20com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/view/10.1093/owc/9780199555468.001.0001/isbn-%209780199555468>).

Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Edited by L.G. Mitchell. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009 (ISBN-10: 9780199539024, ISBN-13: 9780199539024)(Available online through UofT Libraries: <https://oxfordworldsclassics-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/view/10.1093/owc/9780199539024.001.0001/isbn-9780199539024>).

John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty, Utilitarianism, and Other Essays*. Edited by Mark Philp and Frederick Rosen. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015 (ISBN-10: 0199670803, ISBN-13: 978-0199670802) (Available online through UofT Libraries: <https://oxfordworldsclassics-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/view/10.1093/owc/9780199670802.001.0001/isbn-9780199670802>).

Grade Distribution

- Tutorial attendance and participation: 10%
- Mid-term summary: 10%
- Argumentative essay: 35%
- Final exam: 45%

Tutorials

Regular tutorial attendance is essential for students to get the most out of the readings and to best develop student comprehension skills. These are dense texts and your essays will require you to accurately reconstruct the authors' arguments. Tutorials will be led by doctoral students with extensive expertise in political theory who can help with your success in this effort. A portion of your grade will be determined by regular tutorial attendance *and participation* (see above).

Summary (Due date: May 21st):

You will write a short summary (max 500 words) of one of the works we cover in the first few classes (from Rousseau or Kant). The objective of this assignment is to give a *clear and concise* reconstruction of one of the arguments presented in these works. You are *not* required to make your own argument, nor are you required to give a comprehensive account of the work in question. You must instead demonstrate your comprehension by distilling the important features of an argument and presenting them in an organized manner.

Essay (Due date: June 4th):

You will write an essay of 2000-2500 words on a topic that will be distributed in advance. The essay must be *argumentative* – you must have a clear thesis and advance this thesis with the help of an argument that references the course material. Similar to the first assignment, you must give a plausible reconstruction of the relevant course material (which will depend on the essay question you have selected). Different from the first assignment however, you must advance a critical argument that defends a clear position in response to the essay question.

Final Exam (Date TBD):

The final assessment will be a formal exam lasting three hours and consisting of two parts. The first part of the exam will consist of short answer questions which test your knowledge of the works we have covered throughout the course. You will be marked on the *quality* of your answer in addition to its general accuracy. The second part of the exam will consist of two essays which will require you to make a critical comparison of some combination of the works we have studied in the course. You will be given a pool of potential essay questions, but will only need to select two. The exam is *cumulative* and may cover any of the material listed on the syllabus and conveyed in the lecture (including the syllabus itself).

Explanation of Essay Grades

Grades for essays will range from F to A+. Since we do not believe in grade inflation, and since we use the whole range of grades, to help you interpret your performance in the course, we provide here a very rough idea of what grades in the C to A ranges mean. A grade in the **C** range

indicates some basic problems that require immediate attention and perhaps some pedagogic help. I take a **B-** to be a below average grade which suggests some problem that needs attention. A **B** reflects average work; it is a respectable though perhaps unhappy grade. It indicates a need for improvement in future work. Usually there are no major errors, and there is a good, above-average comprehension of the material – though there may be problems of written expression, or of precision, or the work amounts to a regurgitation of texts or class discussion, etc. We consider a **B+** to be a very good grade reflecting above-average and promising work. General qualities usually include an excellent comprehension of the material, excellent organization of paper, excellent written expression, no major errors, meeting all basic requirements of assignment, attaining a basic level of analytical rigour, and going beyond a mere regurgitation of texts and class work. Moving into the A-range requires not just comprehending the material and presenting it well, but a critical engagement with the material that captures its subtleties and displays some spark of creative originality and/or superior analytical rigour. (All of this means that an excellent paper that is also excellent because it was a “safe” paper to write will probably end up with a B+. And, in fact, sometimes, depending on where you are at with the material, that is exactly the kind of paper you need to write.) An **A-** is an excellent grade reflecting a paper that is almost flawless in the basic requirements (excellent comprehension of material, organization of paper, written expression, etc.); there is also a critical engagement that captures the complexities and subtleties of the material, and that displays some combination of superior analytical rigour and/or creative original insight. A grade of **A** reflects a top-notch work that is flawless in the basic requirements and that reflects an outstanding comprehension of the material in all its complexities and subtleties and displays a combination of superior analytical rigour and creative original insight. The writer had likely set themselves up with an intellectually challenging project (which of course sometimes carries with it some risk) and was able to pull it off. The very rare **A+** is similar; the plus comes from the fact that the reader was saying “wow!” while reading your paper.

What Grades are Not

Although it takes intelligence to write good papers, at the end of the day grades are NOT an evaluation of your intelligence. And grades are certainly not an indicator for how much the professor or TA likes you or how smart he or she thinks you are. If you do poorly on your paper, remember that many very smart people write papers receiving poor grades. Sometimes it’s simply because you have not learned the relevant skills yet. Sometimes it is a matter of sheer luck (you got unlucky and picked a topic or line of argument that turned out to be a dead-end, and you had no way of knowing in advance!) University is an opportunity for you to take risks from which you can learn.

Essay Submission and Corrupted Files

Corrupted files submitted to Quercus or over email will not be accepted and will be considered late/not submitted. If you are worried that your files might get corrupted, you should copy and paste (**not attach**) the entire text of your essay into the textbox of an email and send this to your TA at the same time as you submit on quercus to demonstrate the essay was completed on time.

Penalties:

- Essays will be penalized for exceeding the maximum word. **TAs will be instructed to stop reading the essay at the word limit point** (plus 150 words) and will assign a grade based on the material within the word limit.
- Late essays will be penalized at the rate of one third of a letter grade per day late including weekends. This means that an A paper will be graded as an A- if it is handed in one day late, a B+ paper will be graded as a B, and so on. Extensions will be granted only with a valid medical excuse, and only if your TA has given express written permission for late submission before the final essay deadline.

Exams and tests

- Final Exam: A 3-hour examination covering material from the entire course, during the June exam period.
- Make-up exams: Only students with documented medical problems or family emergencies may be permitted to take a make-up exam. Students who miss an exam for a valid reason should contact your college registrar as soon as possible and must express your request to take a make-up exam within *one week* of the missed exam. Further details on Arts and Science regulations concerning exams (and many other matters) are available at: <http://calendar.artsci.utoronto.ca/Rules & Regulations.html>.

Regrade Policy

Should you wish to challenge a grade you were given for an assignment or test, please observe the following steps. **Note that an assignment regrade can result either in a grade decrease, increase, or in no grade change at all.**

- 1) Wait a minimum of **twenty-four (24) hours** before contacting the TA who graded your assignment. **Do not contact the course instructors until you have first consulted with your TA.**
- 2) After digesting the feedback for 24 hours you may compose a one-page regrade request in which you address the comments and feedback the assignment received, indicating the **specific** ways in which these comments do not capture the quality of your assignment. **Write the TA who graded your assignment with this request attached.** The TA will then decide whether a different grade is warranted (please note it is possible for the grade to move in either direction)

- 3) If you are unsatisfied with the outcome of step 2, you can direct your request to the course instructors.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is fundamental to learning and scholarship. Participating honestly, respectfully, responsibly, and fairly in this academic community ensures that the University of Toronto degree that you earn will be valued as a true indication of your individual academic achievement, and will continue to receive the respect and recognition it deserves. Familiarize yourself with the University's [*Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters*](#). It is the rulebook for academic behaviour at the U of T, and you are expected to know the rules.

For further guidance, see [“How Not to Plagiarize”](#).

Normally, students will be required to submit their course assignments to the University's plagiarism detection tool website for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their material to be included as source documents in the University's plagiarism detection tool 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 University's plagiarism detection tool service are described on the company web site.

We treat cases of academic misconduct very seriously. All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following the procedures outlined in the *Code*. The consequences for academic misconduct can be severe, including a failure in the course and a notation on your transcript. If you have any questions about what is or is not permitted in this course, please do not hesitate to contact your TA. If you have questions about appropriate research and citation methods, seek out additional information from your TA, or from other available campus resources like the University of Toronto's [Writing website](#). If you are experiencing personal challenges that are having an impact on your academic work, please speak to your TA or seek the advice of your college registrar.

With these general guidelines in mind, please note that the use of generative artificial intelligence tools or apps for assignments in this course, including tools like ChatGPT and other AI writing or coding assistants, **is strictly prohibited**. Students may not copy or paraphrase from any generative artificial intelligence applications, including ChatGPT and other AI writing and coding assistants, for the purpose of completing assignments in this course. The knowing use of generative artificial intelligence tools for the completion of, or to support the completion of, an examination, term test, assignment, or any other form of academic assessment, may be considered an academic offense in this course.

Schedules of lectures and reading

Module 1: (May 8th): Syllabus Review and Introduction

Module 2: (May 10th): Rousseau I - Bruzzone

Discourse on the Origins of Inequality, Preface, and Part I: *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality, Part II*

Module 3: (May 15th): Rousseau II - Macleod

The Social Contract, selections: Bk. I and Bk. II (pp. 156-191), Also read Bk. IV chs. 1-2 (pp. 224-228).

Module 4: (May 17th) Kant I - Bruzzone

Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals, Part II and III (selections TBA)

Summary Due May 21st @ 11:59pm via Quercus

***Victoria Day*, (May 22nd) – NO CLASS**

Module 5: (May 24th) Kant II - Macleod

“What is Enlightenment?” All (pp. 17-23)

“On the Common Saying: “This May be True in Theory, but it does not Apply in Practice” Pts. 2 and 3 (pp. 44-66)

“Perpetual Peace” All (pp. 67-109)

Module 6: (May 29th) Hume - Macleod

An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals: Sections 1-4, 9; Appendices 1-4, and “A Dialogue.”

Essays Moral, Political and Literary: “Of the Original Contract”, “Of Passive Obedience”, “Of Commerce”, “Of Refinement in the Arts”, “Of the First Principles of Government”, “Of the Origin of Government”, and “That Politics May be Reduced to a Science”.

Module 7: (May 31st): Burke - Bruzzone

Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789)

Reflections on the Revolution in France, pp. 3-63, 75-97, 245-50

Term Essay Due June 4th @ 11:59pm via Quercus

Module 8: (June 5th): **Wollstonecraft** - Macleod

A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, Prefatory Letter, Introduction, chs. 1-4, 6, 9

Module 9: (June 7th): **Mill I** - Macleod

On Liberty, selections in chs. 1-4 (pp. 5-44, 55-68, 73-82)

Module 10: (June 12th): **Mill II** - Bruzzone

“On the Subjection of Women”, chs. 1, 2, & 4 (pp. 409-454, 484-505)

Module 11: (June 14th) **Chomín** - Bruzzone

A Discourse by Three Drunkards on Government (entire) (pp. 47-137)

Module 12 (June 19th): Review Class

Final Assessment period - TBA

Other Important Information

Quercus, Emails, and Communications

All students should ensure that they are registered on the course on Quercus, as reading materials and course announcements will be posted electronically. You should regularly check your utoronto email account to make sure that you receive important email notices. Please use your *regular utoronto email* for all course-related email communication. Course instructor and TA emails are listed at the top of the syllabus. We strongly prefer regular email communication to the Quercus inbox application. We will endeavour to respond to emails within 72 hours, but please be patient if we are slow to respond, and please do not expect responses on evenings or weekends. Email is for short clarification questions only. If you have concerns or questions that cannot be answered in a short response, please see us during office hours.

Course Accessibility and Supports for Students

You are not alone: To be human is to need the support of others. Please get help if you're experiencing difficulties and are in distress about personal or academic matters.

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach your Instructor or your TA and/or the Accessibility Service Office (<https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/departments/accessibility-services/>) as soon as possible.

Accessibility Services staff are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals, and arrange appropriate accommodations. Information on these services can be found on their website (<http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as>). Accessibility Services can also be reached by phone (416-978-8060) or email (accessibility.services@utoronto.ca). The sooner you let them know your needs, the more quickly they can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.

If you have preferences regarding your gender pronouns, please inform the Instructors or your TA.

Other Supports for Students

Students also have access to mental health and safety, and research and writing resources:

Mental Health & Safety

- Navi: Your mental health wayfinder (<https://www.vicereprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/navi/>)
- Guide to available resources (<https://safety.utoronto.ca/>).
- Health & Wellness Centre (<https://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/hwc>).
- Crisis Support: Students in distress can access a range of free crisis lines available from the University of Toronto and the City of Toronto, as listed below:
 - University of Toronto: <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/task/support-when-you-feel-distressed/>
 - City of Toronto: <https://www.toronto.ca/311/knowledgebase/kb/docs/articles/311-toronto/information-and-business-development/crisis-lines-suicide-depression-telephone-support-lines-non-crisis-mental-health-services.html>.

Most of these crisis lines are available 24 hours a day and some address specific problems that students may be experiencing. Immediate assistance is available as follows:

- My SSP for University of Toronto Students: 1-844-451-9700.
- Good 2 Talk Student Helpline: 1-866-925-5454
- Gerstein Crisis Centre: 416-929-5200
- Distress Centres of Greater Toronto: 416-408-HELP (4357)
- The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH): 250 College Street (walk-in)

Research & Writing

- Research and writing guide (<https://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/>).
- Chicago Manual of Style citation guide
(https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-2.html).
- Writing Centres (<http://writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres/>).