POL320Y1Y: Modern Political Thought
2021-22
[DRAFT of September 3, 2021: will be updated as further information becomes available]

Instructor: Professor Melissa S. Williams
3040 Sidney Smith Hall

Office hours: Wednesdays, 2-4 PM or by appointment
(in person and online)

Email: melissa.williams@utoronto.ca

Lecture: In person (and online, if/as required by pandemic conditions)

Lecture location: Lash Miller Chemical Labs, 80 St. George St, Room 162

Lecture time: Tuesdays, 6:00-8:00 PM EDT

Tutorial: In person or online (make sure you check the format of the tutorial in which you’re enrolled)

Course description:

This course examines central themes of the modern era through the careful reading of texts in 18th and 19th political thought that have shaped the way we think about politics today. We will explore the meaning of “modernity” and its association with the territorial state as the dominant form of political order. We will pay particular attention to how different thinkers interpret the ideals of freedom and equality as the foundations of legitimate political order. Is the history of modernity a story of progress in the direction of human freedom? Or is it inseparable from new forms of domination – imperialism, colonialism, slavery, and class- and gender-based oppression – that develop in tandem with the modern state? Does the advance of modern rationality bring enlightenment and emancipation, or does it diminish our humanity?

The practice of studying classic texts in order to deepen our understanding of such questions is itself a kind of tradition, the tradition of political philosophy or political theory. By joining this course you become a participant in this tradition. Like most traditions, the tradition of political philosophy evolves over time in response to changes in the social world. In this course, we’ll expand on this practice by putting texts from East Asian, Black Atlantic and South Asian traditions into conversation with texts in the Euro-American “canon.”
### Teaching Assistants:

Kavita Reddy (Head TA)  
kavita.reddy@mail.utoronto.ca  

TA#2: TBA

### Readings:

Reading texts closely is the most important part of your learning in political theory. The thinkers we’ve chosen to study have profoundly shaped political thought in the modern world. They are all brilliant, and if you enter into conversation with them they will challenge you to think differently about yourself and your political world. For each text, I’ve prepared a set of reading questions to help focus your encounter with it, and these will be posted in Quercus in advance of the scheduled reading assignment. We encourage you to keep a reading journal of your notes on the text, and to take the time to write out your answers to a few of the questions (or to your own questions) each week. If you do this as part of your regular study regimen, you’ll be well prepared for essays and exams. Feel free to post your questions and brief reflections about the readings on the weekly Discussion Forums on Quercus!

The following required texts are available for purchase at the UofT Bookstore or from online booksellers. Some of them (as indicated) are available electronically through the UofT Libraries system. There are many different translations and editions of many of these texts. Be sure to read these particular editions and use them in your course assignments. I strongly encourage you to get your own copy of these texts so that you can mark them up as you read them, an important way of interacting with the text and making them your own. All other readings will be posted on the course portal (Quercus) the Module for the week in which they’re assigned.


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**Lectures and Tutorials:**

This course combines lectures and tutorials to orient your reading of the texts and to deepen your understanding through class discussion. In lectures, Professor Williams will provide historical context for each text, outline its key arguments, identify some challenges for interpretation, and link back to the overarching themes of modernity and human freedom. Attending lectures is important for your success in the course, as they will help make the texts more accessible and prepare you for your tutorial discussions, essays, and exams. You should make time to do the readings and review the reading questions before the lecture on a given text, every week.

Tutorials are also essential to your learning, and tutorial attendance is mandatory. See below for further details.

**In person and online course components**
Lecture: The lecture component of this course is scheduled to meet in person as far as pandemic conditions and public health regulations allow. To accommodate students who need to quarantine in the first couple of weeks of classes, the Faculty of Arts and Science requires that lecture material be available online. I will consult with students to see whether any will need to have online access to the lecture during these early weeks of term. If so, it may be necessary to hold lectures online for those weeks, via Zoom. Please stay tuned to announcements on Quercus for further information.

Tutorials

Some of the tutorials for this course have been designated as in-person; others will be held online, via Zoom. As with lectures, it may be necessary to hold some of the in-person tutorials via Zoom in the early weeks of the course to accommodate students who have to quarantine.

Course requirements:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tutorial participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Term Essay</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>• Draft due 9:00 AM on Monday, October 18 for optional peer review</td>
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<td>• Final essay due by 9:00 PM on Monday, October 25.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-term Test</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>• Take-home, due by 5:00 PM on Thursday, December 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second Term Essay</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<td>• Draft due 9:00 AM on Monday, February 14 for optional peer review</td>
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<td>• Final essay due by 9:00 PM on Monday, February 28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam (3 hours)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<td>• During Final Assessment Period</td>
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1. Tutorials

Regularly scheduled tutorials are crucial for your learning experience in this course, and tutorial participation is therefore a course requirement. Tutorials will be led by skilled doctoral candidates who are deeply knowledgeable about the history of political thought. Through tutorial discussion, you will refine your interpretation of the texts we are studying and your judgment about whether the visions of politics they offer are convincing or appealing.

2. Essays

The challenge of framing your own interpretation of the course texts comes to a head in writing essays. You will hone your interpretive skills by writing two term essays, for each of which you will submit a draft prior to the final due date. You will participate in a peer review process with your class colleagues, offering one another advice as to how to improve your essays before you finalize your revisions.
2.1. **First Term Essay:** You will write an essay of 1500-2000 words on an assigned topic on Rousseau. You should submit your draft of the essay via the Quercus portal, no later than 9:00 AM on Monday, October 19, in order to be matched for an optional peer review session later that week. The final essay is due by 9:00 PM on Monday, October 25, through the Quercus portal. You must submit an Academic Integrity Checklist with your final essay. If you participate in the peer review process and submit your Peer Review Comment Sheet along with your final essay, you will receive 1 bonus point on your essay.

2.2. **Second Term Essay:** You will write an essay of (2500-3000 words) on an assigned topic. You will submit your draft of the essay via the Quercus portal, no later than 9:00 AM on Monday, February 14, in order to be matched for an optional peer review session later that week. The final essay is due by 9:00 PM on Monday, February 28, through the Quercus portal. You must submit an Academic Integrity Checklist with your final essay. If you participate in the peer review process and submit your Peer Review Comment Sheet along with your final essay, you will receive 1 bonus point on your essay.

2.3. **Penalties:**

   2.3.1. Essays will be penalized for exceeding the maximum word limit at the rate of 2 points per 100 words over the limit.

   2.3.2. Your essay will not be graded until you have submitted the Academic Integrity Statement.

   2.3.3. Late essays will be penalized at the rate of 2 percent per day of lateness, including weekends. 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.

3. **Exams and tests:**

   3.1. **Mid-term Test:** A take-home test to be completed within a 2-hour period, covering material from the first term, due by 5:00 PM on Thursday, December 9.

   3.2. **Final Exam:** A 3-hour examination covering material from the entire course, during the April exam period.

   3.3. **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 TA Kavita Reddy (kavita.reddy@mail.utoronto.ca) 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](http://calendar.artsci.utoronto.ca/Rules_&_Regulations.html).
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”.

To remind you of these expectations, and help you avoid accidental offences, we will ask you to include a signed Academic Integrity Checklist with every assignment (downloadable from Quercus). If you do not include the statement, your work will not be graded.

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.

Quercus, E-mail, and Communication

All students should ensure that they are registered on the course on Quercus, as reading materials and course announcements will be posted electronically. If you would like to change your Quercus profile (e.g., to make sure that your preferred name appears correctly), follow the instructions here. You should regularly check your utoronto email account to make sure that you receive important email notices.

Please use the Quercus Inbox tool for all course-related email communication. 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

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 Kavita Reddy (kavita.reddy@mail.utoronto.ca) and/or the Accessibility Services Office (https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/accessibility-services/) as soon as possible.

If you have preferences regarding your gender pronouns, please inform the professor and your TA.

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.

Other Supports for Students

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

Mental Health & Safety

- 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/
- 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/).
- Writing Centres (http://writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres/).

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.

Schedule of lectures and readings

Fall Term


After opening the course with an acknowledgement of the land on which we are meeting to learn together, we will read the UofT Land Acknowledgement as a text in political theory:

We would like to acknowledge this sacred land on which the University of Toronto operates. It has been a site of human activity for 15,000 years. This land is the territory of the Huron-Wendat and Petun First Nations, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. The territory was the subject of the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and Confederacy of the Ojibwe and allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. Today, the meeting place of Toronto is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work in the community, on this territory.

- Revised by the Elders Circle (Council of Aboriginal Initiatives) on November 6, 2014.

Suggested background readings:


Week 2 (September 21): Rousseau I

Discourse on the Origins of Inequality, Preface and Part I (pp. 45-69 and Rousseau’s notes, pp. 93-116)

**Tutorials begin**
Week 3 (September 28): Rousseau II
*Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*, Part II (pp. 69-92 and Rousseau’s notes, pp. 117-120)

Week 4 (October 5): Rousseau III
*On Social Contract*, Books I and II; also read Book IV, chs. 1-2 alongside Book II (pp. 156-191, 224-228)

Week 5 (October 12): Rousseau IV
*On Social Contract*, Books III and IV (pp. 191-252)
*The State of War* (pp. 255-265)

**Draft First Term Essay for optional peer review due by 9:00 AM on Monday, October 18**

Week 6 (October 19): Kant I
“What is Enlightenment?” (pp. 54-60)
“On the Common Saying: ‘This May be True in Theory, but it does not Apply in Practice,’” (pp. 61-92)

**Final First Term Essay due by 9:00 PM on Monday, October 25**

Week 7 (October 26): Kant II
“Perpetual Peace,” (pp. 93-130)

Week 8 (November 2): Burke
*Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* (1789)

November 9: Reading Week (no class)

Week 9 (November 16): Wollstonecraft

Week 10 (November 23): Mill I
*On Liberty*, chs. 1-4 (pp. 5-90)

Week 11 (November 30): Mill II
*On the Subjection of Women*, chs. 1, 2 & 4 (pp. 409-454, 484-505)

Week 12 (December 7): Mill III
*Considerations on Representative Government*, chs. 1-5, 18 (pp. 181-248, 388-405)
**Midterm test due by**
5:00 PM on Wednesday, December 9**

**Winter Term**

**Week 13 (January 4): Nakae Chōmin**
*A Discourse by Three Drunkards on Government* (entire) (pp. 47-137)

**Week 14 (January 11): Hegel I**
*Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Preface and Introduction

**Week 15 (January 18): Hegel II**
*Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Part I, sections 41-51; 72-77; Part II, sections 105-114; Part III, ss. 142-169, 181-190, 231-49.

**Week 16 (January 25): Hegel III**

**Week 17 (February 1): World History and Self-Emancipation: Jean-Jacques Dessalines and The Haitian Revolution**

The American Declaration of Independence (1776), available at: [https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript](https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript)


Jean-Jacques Dessalines, The Haitian Declaration of Independence (1804), available at: [https://today.duke.edu/showcase/haitideclaration/declarationstext.html](https://today.duke.edu/showcase/haitideclaration/declarationstext.html)

Jean-Jacques Dessalines, “I Have Avenged America” (1804), available at: [https://haitidoi.com/2013/08/02/i-have-avenged-america/](https://haitidoi.com/2013/08/02/i-have-avenged-america/)

**Week 18 (February 8): World History and Self-Emancipation: Frederick Douglass**
Frederick Douglass, “The Battle with Covey,” from *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, ch. X (pp. 58-73) (Boston: Anti-Slavery Office, 1849), available at: [https://heinonline-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/HOL/Page?collection=slavery&handle=hein.slavery/nafredd0001&id=2&men_tab=srchresults](https://heinonline-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/HOL/Page?collection=slavery&handle=hein.slavery/nafredd0001&id=2&men_tab=srchresults)

Frederick Douglass, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” (1852), available at: https://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/what-to-the-slave-is-the-fourth-of-july/


**Draft Second Term Essay for optional peer review due by 9:00 AM on Monday, February 14**

Week 19 (February 15): Marx I
On the Jewish Question” (pp. 1-26)
“Toward a Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right” (Introduction) (pp. 27-39)
Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, “Alienated Labor” (pp. 58-68)

February 22: Reading Week (no class)

**Final Second Term Essay due by 9:00 PM on Monday, February 28**

Week 20 (March 1): Marx II
Theses on Feuerbach (pp. 98-101)
The Germany Ideology, Part I (pp. 102-156)

Week 21 (March 8): Marx III
The Communist Manifesto (pp. 157-186)
“The Indian Revolt” (1857) in On Colonialism (Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2001)), pp. 152-155
Marx to Engels (Oct 8, 1858), in On Colonialism, pp. 320-321.

Week 22 (March 15): Nietzsche I
On the Genealogy of Morality, Preface & Essay I

Week 23 (March 22): Nietzsche II
On the Genealogy of Morality, Essays II and III

Week 24 (March 29): Gandhi
Hind Swaraj, Preface to the English edition; Foreword; chs. 1-9, 13-14, 16-17, 20 (pp. 5-48, 64-72, 77-97, 110-117)

**Final Exam: During Final Assessment Period (April 11-29, 2022)**