

**POL484HF/2026H1F**

**Key Concepts in French Political Thought: the state, social mores and the individual through Bodin, Montesquieu and Rousseau**

**Fall 2021**

**Lecture and discussion:** Thursdays 2-4 pm, UC 148.

**Instructor:** Rebecca Kingston, Professor of Political Science

**Office hours:** Sid Smith 3113, Fridays 12-2. Please email to make an appointment.

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**Course description:**

This course is designed to introduce students to key concepts in the history of French political thought through the study of three iconic texts. We will explore the particularities of the conceptions of the state, social mores (or customs) and the individual as they appear in Bodin's *Six Books of the Republic*, Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws*, and Rousseau's *Confessions* respectively. This serves as both a study of the French political thought tradition in its own right, as well as a background to the spring continuation of this course that will explore the works of three French thinkers who reflect more concertedly on some of the more complicated relations among the state, custom and the individual (namely Condorcet, Tocqueville and Foucault).

**Objectives:**

There are three main objectives for this course. The first is to work with students to improve their skills in close textual analysis. We will focus on the reading of the primary texts themselves and seek to uncover the nuances of meaning in each author's depiction of the concept to be illuminated by their text.

A second objective is to use these texts to come to a deeper understanding of the interconnections among the state sovereignty, customs and individuals, and to come to some idea of how to assess their relative normative importance in political reflection and theory. So, while the first step is to come to an understanding of how each of the thinkers studied understand the respective nature of the sovereignty, customs and the individual, the second step is to begin to come to some independent assessment for our selves and thinking critically of their relative weight and priority for political theorising in general.

A third objective of the course is to begin to place this conceptual work in a larger perspective in political theory. What does this way of approaching the tradition leave out and what other sensibilities may be necessary to include? Are these concepts that need to be superseded and rejected or refined for suitable contemporary purposes? To what extent are sovereignty/custom/the individual relevant categories in political analysis and to what extent should they be?

**Course requirements:**

Short paper (3-4 pp. instructions below) due October 21 <sup>st</sup>	15%
Seminar presentation on the week of your choice (10-15 minutes for undergraduates and 20-30 minutes for graduate students)	20%
Term paper (undergraduates 15 pp., graduate students 20-25 pp.) due December 9 <sup>th</sup>	50%
Participation	15%

**Short paper instructions:**

The purpose of this short paper is to broaden and deepen your understanding of the work of Bodin or Montesquieu. Offer a close textual analysis of one of the chapters assigned from either of these two authors. No secondary source material is required. Try to discern the meaning of some of the key terms invoked by your chosen author through a close look at how those terms are used in the text.

The paper should be 3-4 pp. double-spaced and standard bibliographic and footnote notation is required. Penalties for late papers are 2% a day including weekends.

**Seminar presentation:**

Students will do a presentation on the week of their choice (undergraduates 10-15 minutes, graduate students 20-30 minutes) related to the reading assigned for that week. The presentation is meant to serve as an opportunity for you to try out some of the ideas that will inform your final paper.

**Term paper:**

Please consult with me about your topic before starting to write your term paper. Your seminar presentation also can serve as an opportunity for feedback on your choice of a topic. Here are a few options for your paper but you are welcome to follow other themes or approaches as long as you consult with me about it ahead of time.

Of course, standard bibliographic and footnote citations are required. To help guard against plagiarism, students are required to hand in their papers through Quercus. Late papers are 2% a day, including weekends.

As required by the university, here are the terms of use for the new plagiarism detection tool Ouriginal: 'Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays through Quercus to Ouriginal for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Ouriginal reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism.' Please contact the Educational Technology office at FAS for further information [tts.artsci@utoronto.ca](mailto:tts.artsci@utoronto.ca).

### **Accessibility:**

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible: [accessibility.services@utoronto.ca](mailto:accessibility.services@utoronto.ca) or <http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca> .

### **First month of classes on Zoom:**

In conjunction with the Faculty of Arts and Sciences guidelines, while I will be holding the seminar in person in the designated classroom, I also will be offering access to the class via Zoom for those students who are unable to attend. This will only be available synchronously with no recording to be posted. This will only be done through September after which all classes will be held in person. I will provide a link to the class through the course website on Quercus.

### **Required texts that should be available through the University of Toronto Bookstore (or to order online):**

1) Bodin. *On Sovereignty*, ed. Julian Franklin (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992). This text offers a selection and translation of sections from Bodin useful for our purposes in this course, though a small part of Bodin's larger opus *Six Books of the Republic*. I have ordered print copies that are available at the UT Bookstore and it would be preferable for you to purchase these print copies so that you can read and mark it up for your purposes of analysis. Still, there is also a digital copy available to consult through UT library: <https://www-cambridge-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/core/books/bodin-on-sovereignty/1265AACC6237BF32D1AB9C545B4B71F6> .

2) Montesquieu. *Spirit of the Laws* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

3) Rousseau, *Confessions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

### **Other useful sources for consultation:**

Bodin's writings in digitized form and other works related to Bodinian studies can be found at the Bodin Project <https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/bodinproject/home> . For a deeper dive into Bodin's text that is still somewhat manageable you may wish to consult the new useful edition of Book 2 of the *Six Books of the Republic* with the French version and Latin version printed alongside each other, with a long interpretative introduction all by Mario Turchetti (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2020). A facsimile reprint of the English 1606 edition with notes comparing the French and Latin versions is available for order through Harvard University Press here: <https://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674733169> . You can also check the University of Toronto library catalogue for links to various digitized editions. Further useful bibliographic information on both primary and secondary sources can be found in the course text. Note also Daniel Lee's new book, *The Right of Sovereignty: Jean Bodin on the sovereign state and on the law of nations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021) just out this month.

There are many resources available for work on Montesquieu. Apart from the obvious secondary sources in the library, students may benefit from the short articles in the Dictionnaire

Montesquieu that offer concise introductions to many of the concepts and themes found in Montesquieu's work. It can be accessed here: <http://dictionnaire-montesquieu.ens-lyon.fr/en/home/> . There are three recommended French editions of *Montesquieu's Esprit des lois*. The first is edited by Robert Derathé and found in the Classiques Garnier collection and while first published in 1973 it is still excellent for its editorial work. You can also find the full text in the Pléaïde edition in the second volume of Montesquieu's *Oeuvres complètes*. Finally, a newer edition of Montesquieu's Complete Works (*Oeuvres complètes*) has been published recently with volumes 5 and 6 devoted to a critical edition of *Esprit des lois*, published through the Voltaire Foundation of Oxford University.

There is a large amount of scholarly material on Rousseau. The standard French critical edition of *The Confessions* is found in the Pléaïde edition of Rousseau's complete works. See *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Bernard Gagnebin et Marcel Raymond (Paris: Gallimard, 1959-95), 5 vols. Students might also find it helpful to consult the three-volume biography of Rousseau by Maurice Cranston that sheds light on some of the divergences between Rousseau's presentation of his material and his own experiences. There is also a very helpful select bibliography in the course text.

### **Course Outline and Weekly Readings (subject to possible revision over the course of the semester):**

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| Week 1 (September 9 <sup>th</sup> )  | - <b>Introduction.</b> I will discuss the syllabus and offer a brief introduction to the texts to be studied this semester, as well as answer any questions you may have about the course. |
| Week 2 (September 16 <sup>th</sup> ) | - <b>The State via Bodin.</b><br>- <b>Read:</b> <i>On Sovereignty</i> , Book I, chapter 8, pp. 1-45.   |
| Week 3 (September 23 <sup>rd</sup> ) | - <b>The State via Bodin</b><br>- <b>Read:</b> <i>On Sovereignty</i> , Book I, chapter 10, pp. 46-88.  |
| Week 4 (September 30 <sup>th</sup> ) | - <b>The State via Bodin</b><br>- <b>Read:</b> <i>On Sovereignty</i> , Book II, chapters 1 and 5, pp. 89-126.  |
| Week 5 (October 7 <sup>th</sup> )    | - <b>Customs/mores via Montesquieu</b><br><b>Read:</b> <i>The Spirit of the Laws</i> , Books 1 to 5  |
| Week 6 (October 14 <sup>th</sup> )   | - <b>Customs/mores via Montesquieu</b><br>- <b>Read:</b> <i>The Spirit of the Laws</i> , Books 6-8, 11-13  |

- Week 7 (October 21<sup>st</sup>)      - **Short paper due today! (See Short Paper Instructions above for further information).**
- Customs/mores via Montesquieu**
- Read: *The Spirit of the Laws*, Books 14, 16, 19-21**
- Week 8 (October 28<sup>th</sup>)      -**Customs/mores via Montesquieu**
- Read: *The Spirit of the Laws*, Books 24-26 and 28-29.**
- Week 9 (November 4<sup>th</sup>)      -**The Individual via Rousseau**
- Read: *The Confessions*, Books 1-3**
- Week 10 (November 11<sup>th</sup>)      -**No Class! Reading Week.**
- Week 11 (November 18<sup>th</sup>)      -**The Individual via Rousseau**
- Read: *The Confessions*, Books 4-6**
- Week 12 (November 25<sup>th</sup>)      -**The Individual via Rousseau**
- Read: *The Confessions* , Books 7-9**
- Week 13 (December 2<sup>nd</sup>)      -**The Individual via Rousseau**
- Read: *The Confessions*, Books 10-12**
- Final Paper Due December 9<sup>th</sup>!**